The Hunter’s Spirit in Leadership: An African Wounded Soul Theory Perspective

Lovemore Mbigi

Introduction

I was born and raised in indigenous African tribal culture in Southern Africa. I was raised in an indigenous Shona peasant culture in a village where no-one owned a car, a radio, a book, a newspaper or bank account. The economy was a cashless tribal peasant economy. The culture was rich in tribal traditions and beliefs, as well as rituals and ceremonies. The spiritual roots were deep. Ancestors, mythology and spirits played a dominant role in the life of the community. There was limited contact with Western civilisation and the mission school was the only symbol of modernity.

This went on until I was 18 years of age. At the age of three, I had been given over to my grandmother whose name at birth was Makawa, which means “you have fallen down”. She then became the tribal Rain Queen for the Oracle of Dembetembe. In terms of our tribal religious traditions, the Rain Queen is the representative of God on earth – an Archangel in terms of Western religious mythology. I was privileged to be her most trusted assistant – a prince to the Oracle – at a very young age (Mbigi, 1997).

In this tribal culture, conventional business entrepreneurship is highly revered and raised to a sacred dimension, encouraged, and treated as a gift from God. The role of conventional entrepreneurship is to create wealth for the individual, family and community.

Nature of entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurial ability is treated as a gift from the ancestor spirits. The tribal elders and shaman (sangoma) were always able to make the regression analysis and psychic visioning to establish from which great-grandfather or grandmother did this gift originate. Therefore, reincarnation plays a critical role in identifying and defining the nature and character of entrepreneurship. African tribal cultures are able to identify the genius of entrepreneurship in individuals when they are below the age of 10 years. The genius of entrepreneurship is
referred to as the Hunter’s Spirit (Mushavi) in the Shona tribal culture of Zimbabwe. It is associated with wealth creation activities such as trading, hunting, business ventures, business deals and enterprising agricultural activities (Mbigi, 1995). When entrepreneurship expressed itself through agricultural activities, it was referred to as Hurudza.

The distinguishing nature of entrepreneurship in terms of the Shona tribal culture is emotional independence and deep emotional wounds. As far as the tribal cultural perspective is concerned, emotional independence is a precondition for achieving financial independence and the building of personal wealth and fortune. Modern theories of entrepreneurship have overlooked the emotional and psychological aspects of entrepreneurship.

This would seem to suggest that the development and training of entrepreneurs should focus on nurturing the relevant emotional and psychological factors. Therefore, the training of entrepreneurs should be motivational and enable participants to develop personal growth strategies. The emotional independence of entrepreneurs is evidenced by their ability to defy the crowd in their pursuit of their ideas. They have a high degree of being emotionally detached from the community. They are totally absorbed in their ideas and work. In most cases their involvement in community activities is not deep, and it is distant. They normally make a token appearance at community rituals and ceremonies. The question then becomes, how do these entrepreneurs acquire their emotional independence, which leads them to financial independence and divergent thinking.

In terms of the Shona tribal wisdom, all forms of entrepreneurship acquire this emotional independence through traumatic and tragic events in their lives. It is ironic that it is the dark moments in our lives that force us to look beyond darkness and capture the shining light in the darkness of our existence. Severe emotional wounds are the lenses through which entrepreneurs get a clear view of their personal destiny. This makes sense. If the entrepreneur in the field of healing is to be able to help the sick and wounded, he/she must have experienced their pain and have overcome this kind of adversity him-/herself.

Consider the patron saint of American democracy, Abraham Lincoln, who went through a lot of painful personal tragedies and electoral defeats before he took public office as President of the United States of America. Consider Richard Branson’s personal struggle with academic performance as a dyslexic. Consider Oprah Winfrey’s difficult circumstances as a child and being abused as a young girl. Consider also Nelson Mandela losing his father at an early age and having to go to live with relatives, as well as his 27 years in prison. Think of groups that have been persecuted for centuries such as the Jews. They left Israel in AD 67 and lived for nearly 2,000 years under very difficult circumstances of anti-Semitic persecution, and they went through the Holocaust in Nazi Germany. Today, they are among the most enterprising groups on earth. Although they constitute 2 percent of the US population, 45 percent