ABSTRACT

Conversations about workplace spirituality are becoming more frequent, which is raising the awareness about ethical responsibility. There are intensifying questions about the appropriate definition for the S-word at work place. Some call it religious change, some diversity and others call a mode of marketing for spiritual gurus. However, the growth of workplace spirituality is widely based on one’s personal responsibility towards the building of a mechanistic work environment to enhance spiritual and mental growth. Spirituality needs to be practiced for development of ethical leaders at workplace. Walter Earl Flucker an expert in the theory and practice of ethical responsibility quoted in his work Spirituality, Ethics and Responsibility “Spirituality demands that leaders cultivate and nourish a sense of self that recognizes the interrelatedness of life or a sense of community”.

The study has been designed with the perspective to analyse the rising importance of spirituality at workplace. The paper has been divided into five parts: Introduction; Interdependence between Spirituality, Ethics and Business; Spirituality and Workplace: A Contemporary View; Emergence of Virtuous Leaders; and Conclusion.

Keywords: Spirituality; Workplace; Ethics; Leadership; Management

INTRODUCTION

"Spirituality is the highest form of personal, political and social consciousness. It is important to use spirituality wisely and well in the 21st century - which will be a time of bridging ancient wisdom into the creative tapestry of contemporary times.”

A general believe is that spirituality is tied to religion, but there is a lot more to it than just following religion and believes and thus, aiming to be “a good person”. Others would say that it’s simply embodying their personal values of honesty, integrity, and good quality work. Again others would say it’s treating their co-workers and employees in a responsible, caring way. While, for some it means participating in spiritual study groups or using prayer, meditation, or intuitive guidance at work.

Spirituality has been making their business socially responsible in how it impacts the environment, serves the community or helps to create a better world. Quite a few business people these days are comfortable using the word “spirituality” in the work environment, as it’s more generic and all-encompassing than “religion.” Instead of emphasizing belief as religion, the word spirituality emphasizes on how the values can be applied and embodied. However, there are some who are not comfortable with the word spiritual and prefer to talk more about values and ethics when describing the same things that others would call spiritual. Key spiritual values embraced in a business context include integrity, honesty, accountability, quality, cooperation, service, intuition, trustworthiness, respect, justice, and service.
Spirituality is also a discipline that places emphasis on practice; it is something that we do. Prior to any act of cognition, spirituality has to do with the practical and day-to-day encounter with others and at the same time focuses on being friends and strangers, comrade and opposers, individual and collective, divine and demonic. In its active dynamic expression, spirituality has been life-generating and disfiguring. Using these indicators, spirituality can be viewed from three perspectives: a) formal notions of spirituality that are related to established religions; b) informal notions of spirituality that are "self-actualized" or self-defined by individuals or small groups that may or may not be associated with an established religious institution; and c) philosophical or ethical notions of spirituality related to values and perceived goods, (e.g. truth, beauty, justice, etc).

Spirituality is the core of the inner and social lives of ethical leaders. It informs the relationship between the private and public spheres of leadership at the intersections where worlds collide.

OBJECTIVE OF STUDY:

The study has been framed with the following objectives:

1. Analysing the emerging role of spirituality at workplace.
2. Appraising the rising interdependence of spirituality, ethics and business.
3. A macroscopic view of the importance of ethical behaviour among the managers.

Interdependence between Spirituality, Ethics and Business

Today there’s an emerging movement around the country to bring spiritual and ethical values into business. Many people no longer see profit alone as the bottom line. Instead they honour a “triple bottom line,” a commitment to “people, planet, and profit.” Since the beginning of the 20th century, there has been an increasing focus on the spirit, spirituality, and spiritual phenomenon in Western society. Lately, this focus has shifted to the modern workplace influenced from numerous articles and books, who have been championing the role of spirituality in improving organisations, markets and economies, and subsequently all of society. Contained within this discourse is the notion that spiritual individuals are ethical in business, and consequently, are of significant benefit to an organisation.

Spirituality can be termed as the actualisation of an inherently human capacity. It is actually about “becoming a person in the fullest sense”, as one authentically quests for their ultimate value. Consequently, in principle at least spirituality may be equally available to every human being seeking to live an authentically human life. There is also ample evidence to suggest that spirituality has become a real thing. While an individual’s spirituality is undoubtedly a personal experience, it is a subjective encounter with a spiritual reality, and to remove this reality has to eliminate the contribution to the content of the individual’s experience. The core values of spirituality are moral values to the extent that they resemble the objective moral goods of human nature.

Ethics is an individual’s moral judgements about right and wrong. Decisions taken within an organisation may be made by individuals or groups, but whoever makes them will be influenced by the culture of the company. The decision to behave ethically is a moral one; employees must decide what they need to think for the right course of action, as well as simultaneously attract customers. Thereby boosting sales and profits as the employees want to stay with the business, reduce the labour turnover and therefore increased productivity shall attract more employees wanting to work for the business, reduce recruitment costs and enable the company to get the most talented employees attract investors and keep the company's share price high.

Spirituality and profitability have become mutually exclusive nowadays. Bringing ethics and spiritual values into the workplace has lead to increased productivity and profitability as well as employee retention, customer loyalty, and brand reputation, according to a growing body of research. In addition spirituality has become a direct way to boost loyalty and enhance morale at workplace. Conversely, growing number of business people want their spirituality to be more than just faith and belief – they want it to be practical and applied. Thus, the employers are seeing spirituality as a medium to bring the
whole selves to work - body, mind and spirit. They have bottom lined the business on the tagline of “do well by doing well.”¹⁷

People at all levels in the corporate hierarchy increasingly want to nourish their spirit and creativity. When employees are encouraged to express their creativity, the result is a more fulfilled and sustained workforce. Happy people work harder and are more likely to stay at their jobs. A study of business performance by the highly respected Wilson Learning Company found that 39% of the variability in corporate performance is attributable to the personal satisfaction of the staff.¹⁰ Spirituality was cited as the second most important factor in personal happiness (after health) by the majority of Americans questioned in a USA Weekend poll, with 47% saying that spirituality was the most important element of their happiness.¹¹ Across the world, people increasingly want to bring a greater sense of meaning and purpose into their work life. They want their work to reflect their personal mission in life. So, many companies are finding the most effective way to bring spiritual values into the workplace is to clarify the company’s vision and mission, and to align it with a higher purpose and deeper commitment to service to both customers and community.

**Spirituality and Workplace: A Contemporary View**

Workplace spirituality has been a popular topic in the academic community over the last decade. There are three dynamics which have contributed to the lack of integration between strategic leadership and spirituality, viz. lack of clarity regarding the level of analysis, a focus on the interpersonal aspects of spirituality, and the dangers inherent in examining spirituality and leadership. Spirituality in the workplace is communicated and reinforced through the institution’s leaders, organizational culture, policies and work design among other factors. Sensitivity and interest in the person (employee) must be common to all approaches. It may be noted that all of a sudden spirituality has caught popularity and profits.³

Downsizing and greater demands on remaining workers has left them too tired and stressed to be creative -at the same time that globalization of markets requires more creativity from employees. To survive into the 21st Century, organizations must offer a greater sense of meaning and purpose for their workforce. In today’s highly competitive environment, the best talent seeks out organizations that reflect their inner values and provide opportunities for personal development and community service, not just bigger salaries. Unlike the marketplace economy of 20 years ago, today’s information and services-dominated economy requires instantaneous decision making and building better relationships with customers and employees. Also, spending more time at work means there is less time available for religious activities. The New York Times recently reported that a growing number of companies are allowing employees to hold religion classes at work. This accommodates busy professionals who are pressed for time and afraid they have abandoned their faith. Many people are feeling more...
comfortable in the public expression of their faith. Another factor in the popularity of spirituality at work is the fact that there are more women in the workplace today, and women tend to focus on spiritual values more often than men.  

When employees are encouraged to express their creativity they feel more valued and connected to the company. In this part of the world employee creativity is in many cases stifled or restricted by superiors. Staffs are requested to follow very strict and many times incoherent rules (whether they make sense or not seems not to be questioned by those who devise such rules) and negative or critical customer feedback hardly seems to make it to the decision and policy making ranks of private or government companies. Therefore, in such situations applicability of spirituality might help to overcome the negativity, as the participation of employee’s increase.

Emergence of Virtuous Leaders

Virtues are attitudes, dispositions or character traits that enable us to be and to act in ways that allow us to pursue our human potential for moral excellence. They permeate our state of being and dispose us to action. The possessor of virtue is a morally good person. Virtue enables us to have the appropriate emotions and inner states as well as moving us to act in a virtuous way. Virtues develop through learning and practice. The road to becoming virtuous requires a person to be consistently motivated by moral goods in their actions. After a time of repeating such actions, they acquire good habits.

However, virtues are not just habits. They are habits in that once acquired they become characteristic of a person. The more virtuous a person is, the more morally upright they are. In other words, their will is directed towards moral good. There is certain strength in a will that enables it to choose the moral good with ease in situations that would severely test ordinary people. This rectitude of the will influences the clarity of the intellect, enabling it to perceive what virtue demands in a particular situation. The core values of spirituality are moral values to the extent that they resemble the objective moral goods of human nature. Therefore a virtuous person perceives that it is worthwhile to live according to moral values. A spiritual person’s mindset is similar to that of a virtuous person.

Spirituality acts as a regulative idea which generates an embedded network of specific moral values that represents an ‘internalised disposition’ to act and be motivated in particular ways addressing an spiritual individual’s conception of what makes for excellence, in terms of their roles and responsibilities. This idea shall provide a standard that informs judgement and helps to govern moral choices made in the context of daily working practice. It can be a reference point that might help to regulate both motivation and conduct, so that a spiritual individual tends to conform to their internalised conception of good or excellent spirituality. To put this differently, motivations, decisions and actions that harmonise with a person’s regulative idea are appropriate and practiced, while those that clash with it are rejected.

Authentically spiritual individuals exercise certain virtues. These virtues are the outward workings of an inward mindset—their internalised regulative ideal. The individual provide their work organisations with significant advantages as they exercise these virtues in their work context. Perhaps, at least partially, they see work as a calling not just a job; and it is a job in which they want to do the best they can with humility while respecting others for example. The spiritual individual’s quest for a higher purpose, personal meaning and transcendent values in their workplace does not equate to an outward focus only; it rather creates a desire to integrate the self. For such individuals, spirituality is just a state of being, a process towards wholeness. Being virtuous is about seeking a fulfilled life, not just for others, but also for oneself. This internal focus leads to a number of outcomes that also indirectly benefit the organisation.

CONCLUSION

Spirituality, builds the understanding of being deeply connected. Being in touch with spiritual principles and values helps to stimulate the moral imaginations of individuals and can provide depth of
understanding of the many ethical problems that arise in business. The spirituality in business movement is one of the hopeful signs that business, as the most powerful institution in world today, may be transforming from within. What is emerging is a new attitude towards the workplace as a place to fulfil one’s deeper purpose. As World Business Academy cofounder Willis Harman remarked, “The dominant institution in any society needs to take responsibility for the whole, as the church did in the days of the Holy Roman Empire.” Each day, more and more business people are helping to create a better world by being more socially responsible in how they treat people and the environment. They are proving that spirituality helps, rather than harms, as “Work is love made visible.”

Finally the study concludes that spirituality has become the life-blood of business in the recent times. Spiritual people are empowered (and empower others) to look beyond self-interest to make a difference in and a contribution to society as a whole. Virtue is also useful in recognising and minimising the potential problems of some inauthentic spirituality. Thus, spirituality forms an internalised general regulative idea, based on four common aspects of spirituality: self-transcendence, interconnectedness, meaning and one’s ultimate concern, that governs what individuals perceive and value and how they act. These moral values practiced over time become virtues. Spiritually virtuous individuals contribute significant benefits to organisations.

It can thus be concluded that a strategic leader’s spiritual beliefs acts like schemas to filter or frame the information the leader considers, and that the influence of those beliefs is mediated by the leader’s constructive development and meta-belief and moderated by organizational context and leadership style. It is hoped that this framework can provide a foundation for future efforts to develop a multi-level theory of spirituality and leadership.

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