SPIRITUALITY IN ORGANIZATIONAL WORK LIFE: EXPLORING RELATIONSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

Globalization throws new challenges in managing the projects, people, production and market places. To meet the growing challenges of the corporate world driven by technology, competition coupled with a demand for attracting and retaining high quality of work force, the corporations in recent times have lost sight of vibrant force; i.e., the spirituality and the emotional feeling drives the human force towards new order and peace. The world now is experiencing spiritual renaissance and resulting in global spirituality. In organizations, spirituality represents a specific form of work feeling that energizes action. Spirituality and ethics are necessary in any type of organizations. The ethical behaviour of a spiritual leader/manager inspires others to do good and ethical congruence among the organizational members takes place. This congruence then spreads to management operations, systems and even extends to customers. The globalization and liberalization have necessitated a shift in the organizational work life through integration of spirituality in managing organizations. Spiritually embedded organizations based on Indian culture and ethos intends to provide a holistic approach to life. Attempts to connect the relationship between one’s spiritual experiences and its application in the work life would protect the Triple bottom line, i.e to save the planet from environmental pollution, bring quality in people’s work life and sustain profitability in organization leading to holistic development.

Keywords: Spirituality; Ethics; Organizational Work Life

INTRODUCTION

Globalization throws new challenges in managing the projects, people, production and market places. People are experiencing increasing insecurities from downsizing; mergers, modernization and expansion. People started looking their security beyond their job. The rapid technological change has been dehumanizing to a great degree the work place environment. These trends have increased the stress levels on the job. People have also started experiencing the emptiness of a materialistic, consumer focused high-stressed life style and that they want to say NO to that way of life. People feel that a rich and satisfying life is seldom directly related to material wealth, power or workaholic life style. People have also realized of the negative consequences of our current business paradigm that strives to maximize shareholder wealth by promoting rampant consumerism. As a result, they want to alienate themselves from the current trends of environmental degradation, unethical business practices, violation of fundamental human rights and the gulf between rich and poor. People also crave and cry for deeper meaning in their lives and work, for greater peace of mind, and for more caring relationship with family, friends and colleagues.
To meet the growing challenges of the corporate world driven by technology, competition coupled with a demand for attracting and retaining high quality of work force, the corporations in recent times have lost sight of vibrant force; i.e., the spirituality and the emotional feeling drives the human force towards new order and peace. In the realm of behaviour, “spirituality is a subconscious feeling that energizes individual action in relation to a specific task. Spirit has been defined as “an animating life force, an energy that inspires one toward certain ends or purposes that go beyond self”. In organizations, spirituality represents a specific form of work feeling that energizes action. The workplace is now seen as one of the most important source for community to search for meaning in life because people spend considerable amount of time at work place and that they feel that the search for meaning is one of the primary motivations in their life. This paper explains spirituality and explores its relationship in Organizational context in a limited way.

**OBJECTIVE**

The objectives of the study:

1. To explain the importance of spirituality in organizations.
2. To examine the congruence between spirituality and ethics.
3. To explore the relationship of spirituality in organizational context.

**Spirituality: Lessons from Hindu Scripture**

Our Indian ancient culture teaches four goals of human life that should be in balance. They are

1. Dharma – living in harmony with creation
2. Arta – Producing wealth
3. Kama – Achieving desires
4. Moksha – Experiencing spiritual fulfilment

Dharma is the basis for Arta, Kama and that Moksha is the finality in life. Today one could witness the imbalance in the goals of human life. This naturally results in global Hyper-competition, global greed, global consumerism and global stress. All these demand spiritual renaissance in corporate life. The world now is experiencing spiritual renaissance and resulting in global spirituality. Successful leaders attribute ‘people’ are the root cause for corporate success and excellence and not themselves.

The true meaning of spirituality i.e. “Adyatma” has been explained by Lord Krishna in the 3rd sloka of chapter 8 of “Bhagawad Gita”. The Supreme Imperishable is Brahman which never dies and is indestructible. Adhyatma is the name of Brahman being manifested as Individual Self or Jivatma. The activity of the Brahman which brings about the cessation of property in beings produces something or the other is called Karma or in other words Karma is that which brings an end to desires. So, Adhyatma or spirituality is nothing but our own Swabhava or true nature and we reach it by getting rid of Bhava which is the feeling of “I and Mine” and the process of renunciation of Bhava or desires is Karma. Let us understand this in broader sense. Bhava develops duality in human beings which makes them see themselves as different from others. To get rid of this duality and realizing the Oneness is Adhyatma or spirituality. To get the ability to understand what is real and what is unreal or Maya is spirituality. To realize the truth that we are the manifestations of that Supreme Brahman is spirituality. To realize that we are the Atman or Soul which is indestructible wrapped in a body which is destructible is spirituality. Spirituality is different from religion. Religion is practicing rituals, adhering to dogma, and attending services. Spirituality.... had more to do with life’s deeper motivations and an emotional connection to God.

Spiritual wisdom can be attained through

- Raja-Yoga (Meditation)
Bakthi-Yoga (Love the Lord)
Jnana-Yoga (Know the reality)
Karma-Yoga (Do the work without expectation)

Swami Vivekananda asks us to combine all four yogas for the maximum utilization of all our faculties. Wherever you are, whatever work has been given to you, doing that work in the spirit of worship one can reach the ultimate reality and attain happiness, peace, infinite joy.

Spiritual values such as absence of pride, freedom from hypocrisy, non-violence, forgiveness, guilelessness, devout service of one’s preceptor, purity of body and mind, steadfastness, subjugation of the mind, aversion to the objects of senses, absence of egotism, absence of attachment, equipoise of mind (Bhagawad Gita, Chapter 13, verses 7-11) are invigorating force to human race to practice relentlessly to atone sins and attain moksha.

Congruence between Spirituality and Ethics

Spirituality and Ethics are necessary in any type of organization. The people when they are working in the organization should realize this reality that every action of theirs is so critical for the organization that it can take the organization to the higher pedestal or can drag the organization down. Through spirituality and ethics one get an insight of what is right and what is wrong for the organization. The ethical behaviour of a spiritual leader/manager inspires others to do good and ethical congruence among the organizational members takes place. This congruence then spreads to management operations, systems and even extends to customers. This congruence helps the society and the contribution of the organization gets recognized and organization evolves to a higher level fully transformed.

The Organizations can be viewed to be on the right path when

- Organization is ethical
- Organizational members are ethical
- Management operations are ethical
- Management systems are ethical
- Customers are ethical

When all the above converge, these features confirm achieving excellence in business in an ethical/spiritual manner maintaining continuity in business and enhancing social value in society in a sustained way.

Spirituality in Organizational Work Life

The World Economic Forum at Davos devoted a lot of time to explore the theme ‘Spirituality in Business’. As is evident, there are so many companies now adopting the concepts of spirituality in organizational work life and they are getting benefit out of it. But the question is why this paradigm shifts? There are obviously so many reasons.

One reason being globalization. It has come, whether it is to our liking or not. At least on the economic front globalization has come and the globe has become a village now. Advancement in communication technology has annihilated the geographical distances among the nations. Hence, advancement of rapidly changing communication technology can be said to be the first reason for this paradigm shift.

The second reason is liberalization. This has changed the approach of the nations towards economy and other related factors. Consequently, interdependence of one nation on another has come. Competition has to give way to interdependence. Productivity is now a must which previously was an option. Now if there is no productivity you will be written off from the market. You cannot understand
it from the meltdown that has come now. So the Bhagavad Gita says ‘yoga karmasya kaushalam’ – ‘Yoga is dexterity in action, efficiency in action.’ That is an essential lesson taken up by most of the companies.

In Organizations, the fourth wave is now coming slowly. The first wave was the British style of management when work-study, work measurement, method study were in vogue, i.e., Taylor’s Measurement of work-study was in vogue. The second wave was the American style of management when Peter Drucker became the Guru of all. The third wave was the Japanese style of management when TQM (Total Quality Management), Zero-Defect Management and other things became popular. Now slowly but surely, the fourth wave is coming, not only in India, but all over the world. “Spirituality based management intends to provide a holistic approach to life. This kind of management is based on Indian ethos and spiritual culture. Spirituality is now an in-subject. For example, The Business Week, that is, the magazine published in New York, in one of its recent issues says that many companies in America are now adopting the Vedantic Style of management based on spirituality; they have named it as ‘Karma-capitalism’.

The Week Magazine brought out an issue on 20 April 2008 with the cover page showing an interesting headline ‘CEO’s and Spirituality’. The story quoted a number of CEOs to reveal how they are trying to adopt spirituality in their personal lives and also in their companies for improving the productivity as well as the quality of their own lives and the lives of their staff members.

CEO’s

Subhas Chandra Goyal
Anu Agha
Adi Godrej
Indu Jain
V.L. Dhoot

Name of the Organization
Chairman of Zee TV
Ex-Chairman of Thermax TV
Chairman of Godrej Industries
Chairman of Bennett and Coleman Ltd
Chairman of Videocon

Above mentioned CEO’s practice spiritual values regularly both in their personal life and the organizations they work at. There are number of cases like this, which could not be highlighted due to want of space.

Spirituality at work breeds awareness, which in turn breeds intuition, and intuition in turn leads to creativity (Freshman, 1999). From an organizational member’s point of view, referring to religious beliefs help business leaders to make effective decisions. Cavanagh (1999) claims the importance of relationships and highlights the benefits gained by developing an integrated perspective on firm, family, neighbours, community and self.

Where the organization values spirituality, employees:

1. Will be less fearful of their organizations
2. Will be far less likely to compromise their basic beliefs in the workplace
3. Will perceive their organizations as significantly more profitable
4. Report that they can bring significantly more of their complete selves to work – particularly creativity and intelligence.

Spirituality provides organizations and employees with an entirely different way of knowing and experiencing work (Flier, 1995). The ‘deeper’ an individual employee’s spiritual experience the greater the benefits to them – in their career – and the organizations in which they work (Aburdene, 2005). In combination, spirituality provides employees with the inner awareness to better identify and pursue the in-and-extra role aspects of their daily work. Reinforcement of organizational spirituality can be resulted in indirect benefits for human resources management and the working climate, such as
motivation, feelings of belonging and pride in working for an environmentally friendly organization, alignment with organizational goals, and increased ease of attracting and keeping good employees (Boiral, 2009).

While organizational spirituality is considered a highly personal and philosophical construct, nearly all of the academic definitions acknowledge that spirituality involves a sense of wholeness, connectedness at work, and deeper values (Gibbons, 2000). Organizational spirituality involves the effort to find one’s ultimate purpose in life, to develop a strong connection to co-workers and other people associated with work, and to have consistency (or alignment) between one’s core beliefs and the values of their organization (Mitroff & Denton, 1999). Accordingly, organizational spirituality can be defined as “… the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community” (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). It is important to note that for some people spirituality at work involves a religious connotation while for others it does not (Neck & Milliman, 1994). In fact, historically much of the interest in spirituality has been rooted in religion. However, for many others spirituality at work today does not involve a connection to any specific religious tradition, but is based on their own personal values and philosophy (Cavanagh, 1999; Mitroff & Denton, 1999). In the last decade, there has been a growing body of literature on spirituality at work (Gibbons, 2000). Much of the researches have been concentrated on describing personal spiritual experiences at work (Konz & Ryan, 1999), rather than the impact that dimensions of organizational spirituality have on individual work attitudes and behaviours. While the focus on personal spirituality experiences is essential, it is also important to conduct research which helps us to understand the potential positive impact on employee attitudes that can occur when management supports individuals’ needs in the organizational on a spiritual level (King & Nicol, 1999). The studies which have been involved with this topic of employee attitudes often simplistically assume that spirituality at work always has a positive impact (Gibbons, 2000), rather than formally postulating and empirically testing for these relationships. Attempts to connect the relationship between spiritual experiences in life and its application in the work life of the organization would protect the Triple bottom line, i.e to save the planet from environmental pollution, bring quality in people’s work life and sustain profitability in organization leading to holistic development.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the need of the hour is to create a business environment that would contribute for the adoption of spiritual experiences in one’s personal life in business practices and to resolve conflicts and the growing challenges on various corporate issues. A real transformation in organizations takes place only when the people, who are running the organizations, are guided by the principles of spirituality and ethics. The spirituality in organizational work life should be recognized and adopted as a best practice and this would lead to sustainable economic development and ensure social harmony.

REFERENCES


