Vision Actualisation and Spirituality: A Theoretical Model

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Abstract

As one stretches open the rolled-up scrolls of not-so-distant history, one can see instances of several Corporate scandals having marred the international business firmament over the years. This has led to a heightened recognition of the importance of spirituality, ethics and values in organisational life. The current study presents a theoretical model regarding how spirituality and organisational vision actualisation can coexist and dialectically influence and reinforce each other in a meaningful way and ensure fructification of long term objectives and sustenance of organisations. The model proposes that conceptual ramifications of organisational spirituality are organisational ethics, values and moral standards, which, when practised, give concrete manifestation to augmentation of productivity and lead to growth, fruition of organisational objectives and long-term sustainability of the organisation.

Keywords: *Spirituality, Vision actualisation, value actualisation, organisational ethics, morality, integrity, connectedness, wholeness, commitment, creativity, mutual respect*

Several Corporate scandals have marred the international business firmament over the years. As one stretches open the rolled-up scrolls of not-so-distant history, one can see instances galore. In 2001, one of the largest energy Companies of the world, Enron, crumbled due to accounting frauds and corruption. It had exaggeratedly boosted profits and hid huge debts of over $1 billion through a painstakingly planned accounting fraud and manipulations and bribery. Their accountant, Arthur Andersen, responsible for obstruction of justice by shredding the audit documents of Enron, also collapsed. In the 2002 scandal of Tyco International, a diversified manufacturing conglomerate, dealing with electrical, healthcare and safety equipment, its CEO Dennis Kozlowski and CFO Mark H. Swartz stole millions of dollars from Tyco, and indulged in extensive illegal financial transactions. WorldCom, the telecommunications major, made accounting misstatements to the tune of US$11 billion and its former CEO, Bernie Ebbers was interned for 25 years in 2005. Banco Intercontinental or BANINTER, which was the second largest commercial bank in the Dominican Republic, decayed due to fraud and political corruption in 2003. Deutsche Bank AG, a German global banking and financial services company, was caught in 2006 snooping on its board members, and also on the personal life of some of its investors. Volkswagen revealed in September 2015 that it had installed software on millions of cars to dupe the emissions testers into gauging the cars being more environmentally friendly than they actually were, investors dumped the company. Around the same time, electronics company Toshiba admitted that it

had overstated its earnings by nearly $2 billion over seven years. As a consequence, CEO and President Hisao Tanaka had to resign from the company. Investigators found that Toshiba had a top-down culture in which management decisions could not be questioned and employees were forced to adopt unethical accounting procedure by postponing loss reports or moving costs into succeeding years. HIH Insurance, Parmalat, Health South, AIG, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac- the list of Companies caught indulging in unethical practices goes on and on.

A great fallout of the occurrence of such Corporate scandals, has been a heightened cognition of the importance of spirituality, ethics and values in organisational life.

Spirituality at the Individual level

Spirituality is that which comes from within (Turner, 1999) and so different people draw different connotations of it. Therefore, it is difficult to give a universal definition of spirituality.

Holistically, the self of individuals constitutes of body, mind, emotions, and spirit, in totality. The interplay between individuals' spiritual yearnings, emotions, psychological capacity, and capability to learn are deeply interwoven (Howard, 2002). The body and the soul of individuals are inextricably intermixed and constitute a spiritual phenomenon. Thus, spiritual reality is a unifying oneness (Howard, 2002).

Mitroff and Denton (1999) say that spirituality is the basic acceptance that there is a superlative power, a being, and a force, in whatever manner one may christen it, that governs the entire universe. There is a purpose behind everything and everyone. Spirituality is also about being holistic; being able to see that everything is interconnected with everything else (Zohar & Marshall, 2000).

According to Moxley (1999), being spiritual is about being completely human, and about integrating all the energies that are parts of individuals.

Thibault et al. (1991) define 'spirituality' as: 1) Pertaining to one's inner resources, especially to one's ultimate concern, 2) The basic value around which all other values are focused, 3) The central philosophy of life - which guides conduct, and 4) The supernatural and non-material dimensions of human nature.

Spiritual dimensions of life, couched with the values of self and selflessness, activate a positive difference towards 'Well Being' (Chan & Lew, 2005).

Spirituality versus Religiosity

Spirituality, sometimes defined in a faith perspective is about four sets of connections - connection with self, with others, with nature and environment, and with the higher power (Howard, 2002). For some, it has a religious connotation and for others it does not (Neck & Milliman, 1994).

The terms spirituality and religiosity have distinctively different connotations. Turner (1999) says that one thing that spirituality is not, is 'organized religion'. In Campinha-Bacote (1995), Peterson and Nelson aver that religion represents an organized body of beliefs and practices, inexorably accompanied by the behaviors representing and expressing those beliefs. On the contrary, spirituality is something that goes beyond religion and religious practices and embraces inspiration, meaning, and purpose of life. Spirituality also includes forgiveness, and relatedness.

Mitroff and Denton (1999) also found support to the view that religion and spirituality differ. Tepper

(2003) defines spirituality as the extent to which an individual is motivated to find sacred meaning and purpose to his or her existence', but not associated with religion (Mitroff & Denton, 1999). Ashmos and Duchon (2000) have said that spirituality at work, despite religious imagery, is not about religion or conversion, or about getting people to accept a specific belief system. Rather, it is about employees who understand themselves as spiritual beings whose souls need sustenance at work.

Spirituality at Workplace

An increasing realization of the unifying oneness of spiritualism has propelled organisations to incorporate the spiritual dimension - something that has less to do with rules and order and more with meaning, purpose, and a sense of community (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).

Benefiel (2003) labelled spirituality and organizational science as irreconcilable foes, but observed that "spirituality and management, once thought incompatible, have in the past decade fallen in love". Spirituality has inevitably crept into the workplace and businesses are turning inward in pursuit of a "soul", to foster creativity and inspire leaders (Galen & West, 1995).

Spirituality is about experiencing real purpose and meaning at work beyond pay checks and performance reviews (Marschke et al., 2011). These days many prospective employees give less priority to compensation and benefits than working in an ethical, value-oriented organisation where employees are not treated as mere cogs in the wheels, but essentially as human beings, having various levels of skills and competencies.

Spirituality in the workplace is about people who perceive themselves as spirited beings, whose spirits desire and need to be invigorated through work (Marschke et al., 2009). Workplace

spirituality refers to yearnings of employees to give expression to their ethical traits at work, both in terms of rendering personal support to fellow colleagues in times of need and in making ethical and equitable decisions. It is the desire to do purposeful work that serves others. It involves longing for connectedness and wholeness (Ashar & Lane-Maher, 2004). White (2001) emphasizes that spirituality at work is becoming important because people want to feel connected to work that is important, and to each other at work. Spirituality is about people sharing and experiencing some common attachment, attraction, and togetherness with each other within their work unit and the in the organization, as a whole (Hong, 2012).

According to White (2001), there are two basic reasons to nurture a conducive environment for the human spirit: to oust fear and to harness the internal energy of the employees. Spirituality fetches happiness and a sense of fulfilment in the employees. Personal fulfilment and high morale in turn usher in outstanding performance and lead to organizational success (Turner, 1999).

Organizations have started to absorb that encouraging spirituality increases loyalty and augments morale (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). White (2001) highlights that spirituality at work is becoming important because people want to remain connected to work that is important and enjoy a network of relationships with each other at work.

Organisational Ethics

Johnson (2012) defines ethics as involving judgments about the rightness or wrongness of human behaviour. Morality is a set of rules of society and the social class with respect to the content and manner of mutual relations of people and human communities. Organizational ethics applies moral standards and principles to the

organizational context (Johnson, 2012). Ethical behaviour in business is "behaviour that is consistent with the principles, norms, and standards of business practice that have been agreed upon by society" (Trevino & Nelson, 2011). Organizational ethics means identifying the unique characteristics of organizations and determining what sets ethical choices and actions apart from other forms of decision making and behaviour (Johnson, 2012).

These days organisational ethics are taken as one of the most important components that move not only organisational efficiency, but organisational existence as well (Kwon Choi, 2013).

In recognition of the importance of ethics in organisational contexts, many of the Organisations have adopted a code of ethics, which consists of general statements, sometimes altruistic or inspirational, that serve as principles and as the basis for rules of conduct (Ferrell et al., 2013). Codes of ethics not only inspire staff to study the ethical precepts upon which the business for which they work is grounded, but they are also an indication to the public that a code exists within a company (Whyatt et al., 2012).

Vision, Mission and Values

Vision is an inspirational image of the future that an organization is aiming to achieve. Vision focuses on tomorrow. The word vision means the conception of an image. A vision would stretch the organization's capabilities and image of itself. It gives shape and direction to the organization's future. Vision should resonate with all members of the organization and help them feel proud, excited, and part of something much bigger than themselves.

Mission is a precise description of what an organization does. It is the core purpose of the

business or the very raison d'être of its existence. It would describe the business the organization is in. It is a definition of "why" the organization exists currently. The mission statement consists of the organization's products, services, markets, values and concern for public image. It is a concise statement of business strategy and is developed from the customer's perspective and it should fit with the vision for the business.

While a mission statement is a brief description of the organisation's reason for existence and answers the question "what we do.", a value statement answers the question "how we do it" and embodies a collation of essential corporate behaviour for an organisation (Trevino & Nelson, 2011, p. 224).

At the individual level, values can be defined as "one's core belief about what is important, what is valued, and how one should behave across a wide variety of situation (Trevino & Nelson, 2011). Organizational values, or core values, as they are sometimes christened, are like the signposts and provide direction to the way of life in the Organization. Core values are not summation of individual values of all employees, but are common streaks, which cut across all such diverse values. These are the organization's essential and enduring tenets – a small set of general guiding principles; which are understood, shared and endorsed by all.

If vision is the dream towards the realization of which the Organization makes efforts to, values are like the directions by taking recourse to which the Organization achieves fruition of the cherished dream. Most organisations have between three to five such values, which are central to their collective identities (Johnson, 2012). Effective organizations identify and develop a clear, concise and shared meaning of values/beliefs, priorities, and direction so that everyone understands and can contribute, once the defined values permeate every

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aspect of the Organization. Trevino and Nelson (2011) define values and mission statements and credos as general statements of guiding beliefs. According to their assertions, it is important that values and mission statement are closely aligned with other dimensions of the culture. They compare values with the glue that holds the ethics and social responsibility enterprise together (Trevino & Nelson, 2011).

Even as values form the foundation of a business' management style, values form the bed-rock to provide the requisite motivational syndrome to the employee mass for actualization of the business vision of the Company. Many Japanese businesses have used the value system to provide the motivation to make them global market leaders. They have created an obsession about winning that is communicated at all levels of the business that has enabled them to take market share from competitors that appeared to be unassailable. For example, at the start of the 1970's Komatsu was less than one third the size of the market leader – Caterpillar – and relied on just one line of smaller bulldozers for most of its revenues. By the late 1980's it had passed Caterpillar as the world leader in earth-moving equipment. It had also adopted an aggressive diversification strategy that led it into markets such as industrial robots and semiconductors.

Change is a ubiquitous feature of organisational life (Burnes, 2004). Global business is changing radically due to enormous changes in the environments. Technological advancements and changing dynamics of the market, changing expectations and attitudes of the customers along with melting geo-political boundaries is making the business environments volatile. To sustain and compete in such a scenario organisations need breakthrough and innovative systems and practices for a competitive edge in the market. In to-day's Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous

backdrop, the importance of organizational values has greatly increased and values must be followed by every member of the organization (Gupta et al., 2014).

Research studies have demonstrated that the primary differentiator between successful companies and those which were not have been whether they have had developed a core ideology and an envisioned future or not. In Built to Last authors Collins and Porras (1997) offer a look at what makes visionary companies so outstanding and successful. To determine what makes the winners tick, they took eighteen truly exceptional and long-lasting companies like General Electric, 3M, Merck, Wal-Mark, Walt Disney and Boeing and compared them to a close competitor. For example, Sony is compared to Kenwood, Wal-Mart is compared to Ames and GE is compared to Westinghouse and the like. Throughout, the authors asked: 'What makes the truly exceptional companies different from other companies?' Drawing upon a six-year research project at the Stanford University Graduate School of Business, Collins and Porras, in the process, dispel some myths about what makes successful company. One of the most interesting myths that they dispel is the myth that you initially need an excellent product to becoming a visionary company. They found that some of the best companies followed more of a trial and error process that eventually led them to create many good and successful products. Another myth they dispel is the myth that only charismatic leaders can build visionary companies. The authors also take a close look at core ideologies in the companies, profitability and risk taking. One of the conclusions they have arrived at is that the great companies outperformed the comparison companies because, among other things, they took pains to develop a Core Ideology (i.e. Core Values) and an Envisioned Future (i.e. Vision). According to a recent study by Watson Wyatt, companies whose employees understand the mission and

goals enjoy a 29 percent greater return than other firms (Heathfield, 2017).

Milliman et al. (2003) have found that organizational values are the most important spiritual factor at workplace. The primeval importance of organisational values is confirmed by Nordström and Riddersträle (2002), authors of the book Funky Business, who aver that "nowadays values determine loyalty" (p. 244).

Spirituality in Vision Actualisation

Spirituality at workplace focusses on the needs of the employees and as a result better productivity is attained as valued employees, being better satisfied, tend to show better performance (Altaf & Awan, 2011). Employee spirituality has a direct linkage with intrinsic satisfaction which is derived from elements related to work itself, such as feelings of achievement, responsibility, advancement, and growth (Herzberg, 1968).

Of late, organizations are realizing that encouraging spirituality increases loyalty and improves morale (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). A spiritual workplace inspires employees to be more creative, to adapt to changes more positively, and to attain better adjustments as they experience augmented level of job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and organizational commitment (Martin et al., 2005; Gupta et al., 2014).

Spirituality inevitably spawns creativity, which becomes the foundation of business success in an era where innovation is just a six-month advantage. According to Neck and Milliman (1994), spirituality can positively affect employee and organizational performance. It can lead individuals to experience consciousness at a deeper level, thereby increasing their intuitive abilities. This can help individuals develop a more purposeful and compelling organizational vision, which can increase innovation.

Studies conducted by McLaughlin (1998) emphasized on workplace spirituality as it increases the profitability of organizations by better performance. Vaill (2000) emphasizes the importance of spirituality at work by focusing on the role of a managerial leader. A managerial leader, according to him, manages and leads a system of spiritually conscious and spiritually concerned people.
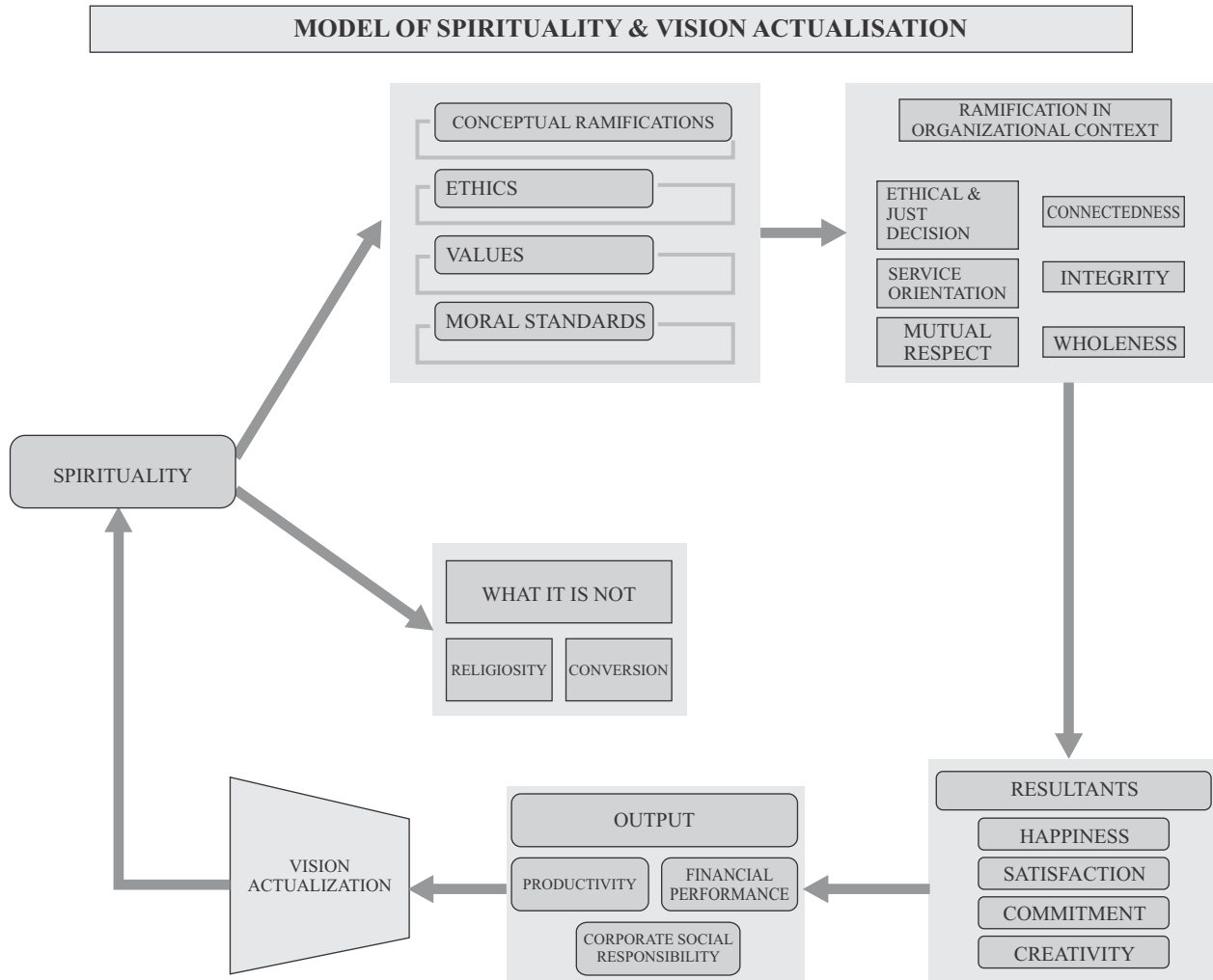
The web of relationships at work manifests the mechanisms of the whole. Therefore, when spiritual individuals recognize that the survival, success, and well-being at work depend on their mutual dependence in a collaborative system, they move towards greater congruence and efficiency. The emerging desire to form a "community" within the culture demonstrates that teams and organizations that powerfully connect to their spirit, achieve exponential gains in products and services, and they find that work is sacred (White, 2001).

A Model on Spirituality and Vision Actualisation

Money making has inevitably been one of the prime movers of organisations through ages. However, incessant search for growth and money making often leads to organisational decay and extinction, sooner than expected. Sri Aurobindo (1954) says "Money is the visible sign of a universal force, and this force in its manifestation works on the vital and physical planes and is indispensable to the fullness of the outer life. …………………… This is indeed one of the three forces – power, wealth, sex – that have the strongest attraction for the human ego and the Asura and are most generally misheld and misused by those who retain them. The seekers or keepers of wealth are more often possessed rather than its possessor".

The management model proposed below depicts how spirituality and organisational vision actualisation can coexist and dialectically influence and reinforce each other in a more meaningful and sustainable way.

MODEL OF SPIRITUALITY & VISION ACTUALISATION

CONCEPTUAL RAMIFICATIONS	RAMIFICATION IN ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT
ETHICS	ETHICAL & JUST DECISION — CONNECTEDNESS
VALUES	SERVICE ORIENTATION — INTEGRITY
MORAL STANDARDS	MUTUAL RESPECT — WHOLENESS

SPIRITUALITY

WHAT IT IS NOT
RELIGIOSITY CONVERSION

VISION ACTUALIZATION

OUTPUT
PRODUCTIVITY   FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE
CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

RESULTANTS
HAPPINESS
SATISFACTION
COMMITMENT
CREATIVITY

Even as some of the concepts mentioned in the above diagram have been elucidated in the earlier part of this paper, the same need recapitulation and some new concepts introduced require elucidation. As has been explained, the various strands of spirituality at workplace constitute self-transcendence, experiencing real purpose and meaning in work and a human concern for fellow employees. Spiritualism is not religiosity, which is conceptualised as dogmatic involvement in religion or religious activities. Spiritualism is also not conversion or the process of changing from one faith to another.

The conceptual ramifications of organisational spirituality are organisational ethics, values and moral standards. Organisational ethics depict a system or code of moral standards of the organisation. Values are broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs to others. These are deeply

held beliefs, attitudes and opinions: certain basic assumptions underlying how people in an organization see, perceive and understand things around them. Morality is the composite of ideas and philosophical principles by which an individual or organization governs whether actions are right or wrong.

The organizational ramifications of spirituality are ethical and just decisions by the organizational leaders. Justice demands giving each person what he or she deserves. Distributive justice becomes vexed when conflicts of interest are created while scarce goods and services are distributed, and people hold different opinion about who should get what. Just distribution of compensation is of as much criticality in organizational settings, as fair proceedings and fair outcomes emanating from just processes. Service orientation as an organizational ramification implies that there is an incessant desire among employees to get ahead, identify and address others' requirements, quite often even before these are expressed. Mutual respect is defined as a appropriate regard for the dignity of any employee or any position. Every person who has a place in God's world, fulfils a meaningful role ordained for him. The challenge is to decipher that divine meaning in each such role. Mutual respect is the consideration that everyone does not carry the same beliefs and values. Respecting the values, notions and conviction of others whilst not imposing one's own is the sine qua non of mutual respect.

Integrity is defined as the adherence to moral and ethical principles. Integrity is, therefore, the result of strong ethics. Gandhiji was one of the greatest examples of integrity in modern times, and the many moving stories about his life demonstrate the power of teaching this character trait by example.

Every single person is an individual, but he or she is also connected to others and to his or her environment. Connectedness connote of things that bind people together. Happiness and joy ooze out when individuals connect to something larger: family, community, planet. It is this propensity to connect that springs real happiness. The wider the connection, the deeper the happiness. Wholeness is an offshoot of connectedness. Wholeness implies prevailing in a state of complete oneness or total unity. Wholeness implies that everyone in the organisation wants to be a part of the big picture, the raison d'etre of organisational existence. But the challenge is how to make it feasible. Helping employees appreciate how all the functions working together as a team contribute to the business is part of telling that big picture story. That big picture, systemic thinking knotted to individual contributions, helps people realize how their small contributions eventually brings in big results and leads to satisfaction.

Employee commitment is a natural corollary of job satisfaction. The simple meaning of commitment is a promise to do or give something, a promise to be loyal to someone or something, or the attitude of someone who works very hard to do or support something. Honouring of commitments implies to commit in full conscious understanding of both the value of success and the consequences of dishonoring the commitment.

Creativity is the ability to see the world in from different perspectives, to discern veiled patterns in seemingly unrelated things, to perceive connections and to engender solutions. There is an old story about a man searching for his lost keys under the light post of a pavement in a dark night, even though they were last seen elsewhere. When a passer-by asks why he continues to search in the wrong spot, the man replies, "Because the light's better over here." Too often, individuals as well as organisations keep searching within our own sphere of knowledge rather than seeking solutions wherever they may be found. However, to maintain

a competitive edge in today's business environment, organizations need to turn away from more traditional forms of management and opt instead for a model which emphasizes individual creativity at all levels.

The Model in Operation

The model depicts that when an organisation follows ethics, values and moral standards in letter and spirit, these lead to ethical and just decisions throughout the decision-making process at all levels, starting from the level of leaders to executors. Service orientation permeates all actions.

In the work environment, employees must contribute to an organizational atmosphere of working as a cohesive unit, valuing and respecting each other and placing the achievement of the group over personal aspirations. An organisation can be successful only when members of the team performing unimportant tasks are given their due respect and importance. A person who cleans operation theatres and sterilises operating instruments is as vital for the success of an operation as the surgeon. If the operation theatre is not clean and the instruments cent per cent sterilised, no matter how skilful the surgeon may be, operations will never be successful. Patients will develop post-operative infections, which in turn will cause complications and retard their recovery or even endanger their lives. The cleaner will only perform with dedication if he or she is treated with dignity and honour. This is example of a hospital, but the same principle is applicable to every field, be it menial or high tech, shoe making or rocket technology.

Communication, coordination and cooperation among team members is an essential component for organizational success. In the twenty-first century, only a connected company gets a competitive advantage. The web of relationships that exists and persists among team members in an organisation facilitates lifetime commitment of employees in the organisation.

Integrity comprises of the personal inner sense of "wholeness" deriving from honesty and consistent uprightness of character. Integrity comes from a congruence between thoughts, feelings, words, and actions - when all that one is and does springs from the inner core values.

As cited in Carter (2014), according to Hellen Keller, "Many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification but through fidelity to a worthy purpose." An adherence to ethical principles and steadfast pursuit of core values helps employees achieve their objectives consistently which in turn facilitates vision actualisation. Strong employee satisfaction leads to employee commitment and loyalty. Every great company is distinguished by the special attitude and commitment of its employees. Most companies strive for employee commitment through compensation and financial incentives tied to performance goals. Pride is more powerful than money. Employee pride – the admiration of co-workers as well as family and friends, the spirit of teams in pursuit of a dream, and the high that comes from having done a job well – is the powerful motivational force that compels individuals and companies to excel.

A satisfied and committed workforce ensures augmentation of productivity and financial performance. Better financial output, coupled with a culture of service orientation, ensures fulfilment of Corporate Social Responsibility and the organisational obligations of being a responsible corporate citizen. These lead to actualisation of the organisational vision, which, in turn, ensures reinforcement of organisational spirituality.

Conclusions

The study highlights importance of spirituality and proposes that the spiritual dimensions in work contexts have a logical relationship with the actualisation of organisational vision and mission through a theoretical model. The authors are of conviction that the proposed model of spirituality and vision actualisation is the ideal model for long term success and sustainability of organisations. The model offered in this study is the subject of further empirical investigation. The association between variables through quantitative studies can further reveal significant relationships, which have emerged through theoretical analysis.

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