

# Spirituality and Skill for Leadership towards Sustainable Management

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## **Abstract**

*This paper discusses the skills and spiritual dimension in business ethics, leadership and sustainability management. Spirituality is understood as a meaning which connects people with all living beings and/or God/Ultimate Reality. In this sense, spirituality is a vital source in a socio-economic life. Whereas Skill is a derivation of education and talent, which leads a person to perform better and exert authority. The paper studies how skills and spirituality contribute to transforming contemporary management theories and practices. It discusses new leadership roles responsibilities that emerge for sustainability in business and shows how leaders can be inspired by skills and spirituality in a meaningful way. The concerns regarding this business issue has long existed, but it has been voiced with an increased urgency in recent years as a result of numerous business scandals, global financial crises, and a voluntary increasing unsustainable focus on market growth. To be true to this point of view, sustainability in management should help develop a mind-set where we are able to converge skill, spirituality and sustainable practices. Taking this point of view in addressing sustainability, management requires a more holistic perspective—one that interludes skills, spirituality and its relationship to leadership.*

**Keywords:** *Spirituality, Leadership, Spiritual Leadership, Skills and Spiritual Leader, Sustainable Management*

## **Introduction**

Today, the entire world is in quest to achieve economic power and control. The expression of this power and control has been percolated so fiercely across the globe that the entire value system in an environment is witnessing a distressing gap in the total character-build-up of an individual. Consequently, human beings are now functioning like animals as the drivers of value system. Ethics, moral, culture (learned behaviour); belief and trust have been eventually fading, resulting into an imbalance in the socio-economic environment throughout the globe.

Often, rationalist are of view that an educated and knowledgeable individual can better evaluate the magnitude of balance growth spectrum in an economy. A similar view has been cited by Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, a world-renowned leader of spirituality when she states that education are of two type, one which is to have one's livelihood while the other to attain internal peace and life balance. Deducing from the above, to attain both sustainability and enduring growth a fusion of both type of education should be encompassed. Frontrunner & leaders should thus aim at preaching and directing the law of the cosmos, inherent in the very nature of things such that

livelihood can be sustained.

On the contrary, currently what are witnessed in the global scenario are the widespread tensions between various countries, for want of economic power and control. There are illustrations which go to show, how countries are spearheading towards this power game such as the US Presidents and the various Gulf countries, the exit of UK from European Unions and, the effort in vain made by India, to have peace and friendly bilateral relation with its own neighbouring countries. This unrest is not only persisting between countries but is engulfing the domestic boundaries of all nations and consequently, the greed of economic power is found predominating throughout the globe. While, no room for non-economic values have been found. Earnest supplication is required to attain equilibrium between economic and non-economic environment throughout the globe to have a work balance.

Based on secondary data, this paper primarily aims to seek out the fundamental reasons for the cause of imbalance becoming so dominant in the society and secondly to determine a path through which leaders can obtain sustainability in management through skills (education) and spirituality.

The most recent step taken by the Indian Government, of demonetization, will go to show how the leader of the country known to have both spiritual values and skill made an effort to shape and bring a balance between have and have-nots without having a fear of losing his power. Also how with his skill set, policies were implemented to unveil the disparity and the unethical money laundering individuals that were creating an environment of imbalance and negative repercussions were driven out. This strike had brought a radical change in the Indian economy along with hopes for enduring growth and is a good example setter of how spirituality & skill, when

exercised hand in hand by the leader can bring sustainable management.

## Leadership

Statements in Social-Psychology have generated various comparison theories which explain that in humans, there is an innate need to be evaluated for their opinions, activities, actions and decisions. These factors, usually act as drivers for the desire to learn, about new things and about self, and create a usual comparison amongst their peers and subordinates.

Leadership signifies the process through which an individual is able to generate followers and motivate them to think, work and behave in a certain way. Morgeson et al. (2010) explained how a good leader can help team around a variety of sticky situations, coach them, and make them self-dependent so that they can manage events that occur in the pretext of their boundaries; thereby creating many leaders in one team. A textbook leader is "one who shows the way by going in advance; one who causes others to follow some course of action or line of thought."

The leader must become a rational person and lead by example. In order to lead, he must be able to possess certain set of skills that can motivate the organization and its team to perform effectively and efficiently, to its full potential.

A leader is a far broader concept than a politician. A politician is associated with politics, manipulation and providing direction to policy-makers of a country; whereas, leadership is a more inclusive concept. It could be safe to say that a politician is a subset of a leader, which means that politicians are/can be leaders, but not every leader is a politician.

A team leader must develop the role of leadership

through team efficiency. Team work is characterized by recurring cycles of mutually dependent interaction (Kozlowski et al., 1996; Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999). This view of team leadership is consistent with functional leadership theory (McGrath, 1962), which is the most prominent and well-known team leadership model (Fleishman et al., 1991; Hackman & Walton, 1986; Zaccaro et al., 2001).

### **Spirituality**

Spirituality is specifically, emotion of love for the seen and unseen, in the society and in the inner-self. It generally encompasses the consideration that the person is a part of a world, which is acting for a greater good for the society. A dictionary definition of spirit is "that which is traditionally believed to be the vital principle or animating force within living beings."

In an organization, spirituality acts a non-economic function for any individual, who is a leader, or aspiring to be one. Factors like respect for others, along with ethnicity, religion, language, family, education are developed by a spiritual organization, which in turn, acts as the behavioural shift in respect to the attitude to work, wealth, ethics and morale of people.

There is a major drawback to this discussion though. Spirituality is almost every time confused with religion and rituals. But in the recent time, it is becoming clearer that Spirituality is a far broader, more inclusive concept than religion (George et al., 2000). Religion can be explained as a subset of spirituality. It is associated with rituals, God's images, and tells us to be committed to something (Morgeson et al., 2010); whereas spirituality builds morale, compassion and love for the people around us, leading us to behave ethically and morally.

Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, also says that even

though, from a distance, spirituality and religion may seem different, but they are much more alike than we can imagine. This is because they both stand on the same platform and focus on doing well for the society, by love and compassion for others.

### **Skills**

We have seen that a leader must lead by example. For that, he/she requires a certain skill-set. A leader without skills would be like a sportsman without game-plan, or a teacher without teachability. Skills are necessary to perform tasks and jobs.

This is also a very important reason because a skilled leader would be able to influence the economic factors that influence the organization; which include business economic system, financial and non-financial system and the business cycle as a whole. If the leader does not have the skills required, the organization may turn to chaos, as the leader would not be able to exercise his/her power, and exert authority over others. This, in turn, would lead to non-achieving of organization's goals, and the organization would not be able to extract the maximum output from its employees, and also from the market. And since the organization would not be performing to its potential, it would open the doors for the Porter's Five Forces to act freely in its business environment.

Then the leader would turn to punishments and bickering in order to resume discipline, and sometimes could even move to unethical practices. This could leave the employees of that team or organization in bad taste and could potentially harm the reputation of the individual and the organization.

### **Spirituality at the workplace**

There have been extensive studies over the

millennia's discussing the connection between an individual and spirituality. But now, spirituality has been applied by individuals in their daily lives. It is because the people have finally understood that spirituality is way much broader than religion and other similar conceptions. It is clear that one can be spiritual without being religious.

Workplace Spirituality is a pretty recent phenomenon, which does not only discusses the individual behaviour, but as an organization. It is an application of what a spiritual individual can contribute in the organization, to further their own goals, as well as organizational objectives.

There has not been a proper definition to Workplace Spirituality, hence a working definition is created: "Workplace Spirituality is a connection between an individual self, its organization and spirituality to find a deeper meaning to what they are trying to do together, and apart, to work for personal and professional satisfaction, happiness, peace of mind, and develop a harmony between values, beliefs and thoughts."

### **Empowerment and Moral Authority**

We go back to the starting point, where the factors were to be discovered that were leading to a mismatch between the organization's expectations and reality. As Gibbons (1999), writes, "some hard choices about what is not spiritual will have to be made...leaders have an obligation to draw the line somewhere and to decide how to find a way to determine the ethical development of the people in the organization." (p. 71).

A deeper sense of understanding and meaning is what is known as Empowerment. If a person is at peace with himself, he would have a deeper sense of belief in himself. Such a person would be called Empowered. An empowered person would always try to be ethical in his behaviour towards others, in

society and in an organization. Thus, an empowered leader would be able to empower others and let them perform to their full potential, along with complete satisfaction at work.

Similarly, a skilled leader would have the power to exert authority. Thus, if a skilled leader is empowered, he would be exerting what is known as Moral Authority. Moral Authority is a source of openness, forgiveness, involvement in fellow's community, social responsibility and ethics (Koenig et al., 2001 mentioned by Ano, 2005; Moreira Almada, 2006). When both skills and spirituality combine, the miracle happens and the success comes towards the organization from all directions.

We have seen above that skills of a leader is an economic function, whereas its spirituality is a non-economic function. This is so because Skills of an individual allows for contributing in the revenue generation of the organization, whereas spirituality allows for contributing to organizational satisfaction, workplace satisfaction and solid, deep-rooted culture. Thus, a leader must be apt with necessary skill-set so as to be contributory in the organizational growth. There are numerous literatures that discuss the necessity of skills for a leader. But, a skilled leader must also be Spiritual and Empowered. A Skilled and Spiritual Leader would be compassionate towards his employees, and would understand the importance of finding meaning in the work he does, and would let other employees do the same too, and would be concerned with the whole person, both behavioural and performance-wise, and not just the employee's performance.

All the other Leadership Theories and Models discuss about how a leader must be Transformational, and how he must be able to direct the people to change their behaviour towards a certain things, and it has been immensely

successful as well. But this is what they say, 'Old Wine in the New Bottle'. These theories and models describe the leader and the behavioural patterns he must possess to bring success and changes in the organization, but one of the biggest drawbacks of these theories is that they could lead to employee unrest, employee burnouts, and thus, high attrition.

A Skilled and Spiritual Leader would not be just concerned about bringing the change in employee's performance, but a change in employee's morale. If we see this with two hypothetical situation: (a) There is a team, which is highly skillful, and has a very effective leader, but they do not believe in Spirituality, and (b) There is a team which is remotely skillful, but they do believe in Spirituality, and all the people in the team are highly Spiritual, including their Leader. What would happen in both the scenarios?

In the first case, the team would have continuous conflicts amongst themselves over ideas, viewpoints and decisions, as every individual's mindset is not the same; but since they would be lacking in Spirituality, the conflicts would continue to stay where they are, and all the people of the team will continuously ignore each other opinions, thereby creating more conflicts and, ultimately, hampering the success rate of the team.

In the second case, the team would be definitely working on the same frequency together, but there would be no fruitful result, due to lack of skills and smart work, which comes from proper knowledge and skill set of individuals and the leader.

In both the cases, even if, by certain mechanisms, the teams are able to achieve their desirable targets, would they be Sustainable? No, because both the teams would not have a proper mechanism that can work out every time they want to perform the task, and the sustainability of the teams and the

organization would not be possible.

Thus, in order to attain a Sustainable Management, the Leader and its team must be Skilled as well as Spiritual, so that the team and the organization could attain its proper potential and is able to generate maximum outputs and profits.

## Conclusion

Spirituality has been a very old concept, probably many thousands year old, which has always tried to bring the mankind closer to each other, and has shown great potential in the recent years, since the people have started to implement it in their lives and workplace. Workplace Spirituality cares for human life in the organization, which can lead to a radical shift in the economic conditions of the organizations.

Since there has been little research in the areas of Spiritual and Skilled Leadership, it is difficult to say what effects it would have on the leadership as a whole. However, there have been enough indications as to what potential benefits the organizations would have if they inculcate skills and spirituality in their leadership. From the perspective of employees, inculcation of skills and spirituality in leadership would mean a more productive and a more humane environment to work in, that could lead to faster achievement of individual goals and objectives, along with providing a sense of shared purpose. From the perspective of organizations, inculcation of skills and spirituality in their leadership would mean a better productive, performing organization, where the employees share mutual trust, commitment and support, which would lead in a better performing organization with high growth opportunities. This small study is a small step to demonstrate the positive impact of skills and spirituality on leadership for a sustainable management.

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