Research Paper Education

Imapct of Religfion and Spirituality at Workplace

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ABSTRACT

Religion & Spirituality are two different terms but have co-relation with each other. Religion binds as and leads to the spirituality. Religion has relevance to all aspects of human life, social life, economic life & political life resulting in acquisition of values on spiritual plans. As society consists of individual, following the path of religion, the individual leads a disciplined life, which truly transforms him from an animal human to divine human. Though the latest inventions and progress in Science & Technology have made human life very comfortable, yet this outer achievement has not resulted into the inner unity & peace of mind or inner happiness. Eat, Drink & Merry cannot bring this happiness that is why one of the reasons for the present day decline is deterioration of moral values and the neglect of religion.

Religion is defined as, "the relationship between man and the super human power he believes in and depends upon". A religious & spiritual man has a strong character, rises above himself and lives for others. He tries to make the world a better place by practicing and propagating the true moral values of life in his workplace.

Our modern society has become a complex organisation. The organisation consists of human beings, their relationship, interaction, ideas, value, beliefs, ethics, religion and their conduct. The people with varied life styles, culture, religion, age, education, socio-economic status and value system congregate at the same work place for similar objectives. Our lives which have adopted machine like approach to living are contributing to the loss of soul.

The need for spiritual connection has become very important to the workers more so because of varied organization structure giving rise to the feeling of insecurity regarding his place in the whole system at work. Now organizations are laying more emphasis on workplace spirituality and even the workers are looking forth at workplace which fulfills their spiritual needs.

Workplace spirituality is about people before who perceive themselves as spirited beings, whose spirits and desires need to be energized through work. Spirituality at work is about leaders & followers who understand themselves as spiritual beings who have sense of meaning & purpose for their living. The humble efforts would be made through this paper to explore and describe the relationship of religion & spirituality at work place.

KEYWORDS | Religion, Spirituality, Work Place, Inner Happiness, Value System, Divine human being.

INTRODUCTION

1. Religion and spirituality are often mistakenly understood two different terms. There is no clear-cut consensus about what the difference is between religion and spirituality. In general religion refers to a more organized practice and spirituality refers to a more personal experience. Being teacher educators we are already teaching spirituality in many ways and all we need to do is acknowledge these teaching practices. However, even though I concur with this point of view, I also think teaching spirituality is more complex when viewed in the context of personal wellness, workplace, health and social responsibility

2. Religion is a specific fundamental set of beliefs and practices generally agreed upon by a number of persons or sects and it is the idea that ritual, prayer, spiritual exercises, or certain principles and conduct arise naturally as a human response to the belief in such a being or eternal principle. Most of the world religions have been founded on faith that "God is the Creator, the Operator and the Destroyer of the Universe". All the religions have given different answers to basic three questions:

I. Where have we come from?
II. What is the purpose of our life on earth?
III. Where do we go when we die?

3. Seven Basic Religions of the World: We could divide all the basic Seven Religions into two basic categories: The Judaic and The Hindic:-

- The Judaic family consists of religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam. They believe that God created the world and sent Adam and Eve to propagate the human race. These religions believe that one day all life will end. There will be a day of judgment when all people will rise from the graves and be sent to heaven or hell, based on the good and bad deeds they did when alive.
- The Hindic family consists of religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. They believe that life is a continuing cycle of birth, death and rebirth. According to this cyclical theory heaven or hell exists on earth alone. If one does good deeds in life on earth, he is rewarded. Similarly, someone who has done bad deeds in life is punished, after death he is reborn into a lower/worse from of life, before being forgiven. The Hindis is equivalent of salvation or release from this endless cycle of birth and death is the union with the divine.

4. The divine mission of our life is to realize God, which is a privilege bestowed only on human beings. From here we can either drop down to lower species of can go back to God and escape the cycle of birth and death. So, we should be mindful of our destination and follow the spiritual path. As Guru Arjan Dev Ji says in (Sri Guru Granth Sahib -Page 378),

"Bhaee Prapat Manukh Dehurya, Gobind Milan ki eh Teri bariya"

"Man has got this human life, This is his opportunity to meet God.".Sikhism believes in attainment of the Supreme Being i.e. to get in tune with God.

DEFINITIONS AND MEANING OF RELIGION

5. Webster's Dictionary defines spirituality as: relating to, consisting of or affecting the spirit, or relating to sacred matters/

or concerned with religious values. Interest in spirituality as a scholarly topic has grown in recent years, possibly as a result of the confluences of disparate events. Cacioppe (2000) has argued that the modern world is plagued by social, economic, and environmental problems that are the result of human greed and a lack of love and compassion. He contends that these large-scale problems have triggered in humankind a renewed search for harmony and peace, a search that is essentially a spiritual journey.

6. According to the Random House Dictionary of the English Language (1979), "Religion is a concern over what exists beyond the visible world (operating through faith and intuition, as opposed to reason)". It generally includes the idea of the existence of a single being, a group of beings, an eternal principle, or transcendental spiritual entity that has created the world that governs it, that controls its destnies or that intervenes occasionally in the natural course of its history.

DEFINITIONS AND MEANING OF SPIRITUALITY

7. The term spirit means "animating or vital principle in man and animals" It is derived from the Old French spirit which comes from the Latin word spiritus : "soul, courage, vigor, breath", and is related to spirate mean "to breathe".

Mc Cormick (1994) defined spirituality as an inner experience an individual has that can be evidenced by his or her behavior. Gibbons (2000) discusses spirituality in the context of deeply held values.

Neck and Milliman (1994) define spirituality as "expressing our desires to find meaning and purpose in our lives and is a process of living out one's set of deeply held personal values". Dehler and Welsh (1994) explain that spirituality is an individual's inner source of inspiration.

Mitroff and Denton (1999) define spirituality as "The basic feeling of being connected with one's complete self, others and the entire universe". The core of spirituality is about people sharing and experiencing some common attachment, attraction and togetherness within their work unit and the organization as a whole (Harrington, 2004; Mitroff & Denton, 1999).

Nash (2001) has found three main components in the definitions of spirituality – the inner self or sense of oneness, presence of a force higher than the self and purpose & meaning in everyday life. Therefore, spirituality is generally viewed as some "internal substance", a value, belief, attitude or emotion that affects people's behavior (Moore & Casper, 2006).

8. Concept of Spirituality: can be summarized as

- an internal process of seeking personal authenticity, genuineness, and wholeness as an aspect of identity development;
- the process of continually transcending one's current locus of centricity (e.g., egocentricity);
- the development of a greater connectedness to self and others through relationships and union with community:
- the process of deriving meaning, purpose, and direction in one's life; and
- exploring a relationship with an intangible and pervasive power or essence or center of value that exists beyond human existence and rational human knowing.

The above definitions make reference to external and internal dimensions. However, religion begins as an external phenomenon. Its primary concern is external to the visible world and is centered on the existence of a supreme-being or eternal principle. It includes an agreed upon set of beliefs and practices that are external to the individual. Religion can exist separate and apart from the individual but the spirituality cannot.

Spirituality is perpetually an internal process though there is the moving outward from oneself through self-transcendence, connectedness to self and others, and relationship with that which lies beyond the known and knowable world. In a way, the inner world expands to include the outer world.

The innate human attribute exists in spirituality. All people bring this as an integral part of themselves to the workplace. Spirituality is a state or experience that can provide individuals with direction or meaning or provide feelings of understanding, support, inner wholeness or connectedness. Connectedness can be to themselves, other people, nature, the universe, God, or some other supernatural power.

9. Workplace Spirituality: Meaning

Spirituality in the workplace is about individuals and organizations seeing work as a spiritual path. It is an opportunity to grow and to contribute to society in a meaningful way. It is about care, compassion and support of others' about integrity & people being true to themselves and to others. It means individuals and organizations attempting to live their values more fruitfully in the work they do.

Examples of organizational spirituality include: mediation time at the beginning of meetings, retreat or spiritual training time set aside for employees, appropriate accommodation of employee prayer practices and openly asking questions to test if company actions are aligned with higher meaning and purpose.

Spirituality at work is not a fringe idea. Spirituality cannot be taught. It needs true aspiration and strength of truth to work towards perfection only then it can be called as workplace spirituality.

Workplace Spirituality or Spirituality in the Workplace is a movement that began in the early 1920s. It emerged as a grassroots movement with individuals seeking to live their faith and/or spiritual values in the workplace. In an age of uncertainty, where downsizing and having to do more with less is the norm, employees are fearful and insecure.

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Spirituality in the workplace or workplace spirituality is about people who perceive themselves as spirited beings and whose spirits and desires need to be energized through work. It is about experiencing real purpose and meaning at work beyond paycheques and performance reviews. Workplace spirituality is not about religion or about accepting a specific belief system. Spirituality at work is about leaders and followers who understand themselves as spiritual beings who help in providing meaning and purpose for their lives. It is also about membership where people experience a sense of belongingness and connectedness to one another and their workplace community. Academicians and experts suggest that workplace spirituality reflects employee experiences such as a sense of meaning, purpose, community and transcendence at workplace.

10. The Need for Spirituality at Work

It is an absolutely false assumption to think that spirituality only exists in religious context. Spirituality essence lies in the interaction of people. This interaction allows human beings to view each other with dignity and respect. This dignity and respect remains whether the person is materially present or absent at the workplace. When we view our fellow human being with the eyes of dignity and respect, putting our minds together to work for the well-being of everyone then we automatically celebrate our presence as a community of people at work place.

11. Views of Researchers on Spirituality at work

Everyone looks for an atmosphere of trust, where everything a business does is grounded in sustainable values, where the beliefs and values of the employees are aligned with the work

they do, where work is creative and meaningful, where employees feel supported, and where a sense of community enables employees to integrate their personal growth into their daily work life thus enabling them to live lives with greater congruity.

Usually overload of work result in not only poor health conditions but also mental circumstances. These problems then become a threat to the organizations in the form of poor performance and lack of ability to reach standards.

Workplace spirituality is one way to deal with stressful overload conditions, Amal (2011). In fact spirituality at work addresses human activities such as personal development, learning, compassion and searching for meaning or higher purpose (Gull and Doh 2004). Findings of Pawinee and Duchon (2012) did not reveal a direct effect for the meditation, however spirituality does relate to work performance. Moreover, the practice of meditation is also found to partially mediate the relationship between workplace spirituality and work performance.

The spiritual paradigm essentially recognizes that people work not only with their hands but also their hearts or spirit as well (Ashmos and Duchon 2000). It is when people work with a committed spirit they can find a kind of meaning and purpose, a kind of fulfillment which means the workplace can be a place where people can express their whole or entire selves.

Thus enabling the expression of human experiences at its Workplace spirituality, meditation, and work performance deepest, most spiritual level may not only reduce stress, conflict, and absenteeism, but also enhance work performance (Krahnke et al. 2003), employee well-being, and quality of life (Karakas, 2010)

12. Factors for Workplace Spirituality:

- **Fear of unknown:** this millennium created an opportunity for the people all over the world to reflect on where the human race has come from, where it is headed in future and what role business plays in the future of the human race.

- **Life Style:** in this world of completion every worker is suffering from stress which leads to various health hazards related to both mind and body.

- **Baby-Boomers:** who are hitting middle age resulting in large demographic part of the population asking meaningful questions about life and purpose.

- **Mergers and Acquisitions:** destroyed the psychological contact that workers had ajob for life. This led some workers to search for more of sense of inner security than looking for external security form any company.

13. Characteristics of a Spiritual Workplace

If desired characteristics of spiritual workplaces are identified, they can help in understanding the role that spirituality plays in the organizations. This would help in reflecting the manner in which workplace spirituality can function to positively impact the bottom line and the value it might bring to members of the work community. The following characteristics can be correlated with workplace spirituality to create positive environment.

- **Develop Principles:** Principles are the fundamental norms, rules or values that represent what is desirable and positive for a person, group, organization, or community. They help in determining the rightfulness or wrongfulness of the actions. Organizations too have begun to realize the benefits of treating the whole person by actively supporting the formulation of ethical principles that promote personal growth, long-term character development and personal connections of faith and work development. Employees are encouraged to develop an accurate and realistic impact that other people have on them and the vice versa.

- **Cultivate Inclusion:** Inclusion is an organizational practice in which different groups or individuals having different backgrounds like origin, age, race and ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation and identity are culturally and socially accepted, welcomed and treated equally. Today the businesses are increasingly becoming core sources of community.

- **The spiritual Organization:** is one which respects and values individual's life experiences and the lessons learned from them. The exclusion has taken place at the workplace which included people with physical disabilities, people whose skin color or ethnic origin differs from those of the majority population and those who have been discriminated against due to gender or sexual orientation. With changing times organizations are seeing the value of their employees working together in community toward a common vision. They have started to believe that the concept of love and acceptance within a cultural context builds a community that supports the work of the company and that has a direct impact on the bottom line.

- **Emphasize Sustainability:** The organizations need to realize the links between sustainability and an awareness of limited resources. An understanding of sustainable growth and development includes a well-thought-out strategy that identifies potential long-term impacts or implications of actions that could have an eventual negative impact on business. At the same time employees who are considered to be the frontline of organizations should also be sustained for long run.

- **Prize Creativity:** Creativity is a phenomenon whereby something new and valuable is created. Creativity is a necessary part of any business cycle. When the technology, market shifts, and demographic changes force organizations to rethink products and services, creativity is the key to successfully navigate those changes. The spiritual workplace recognizes that being creative is not necessarily reserved for a special few but that all people have creative capacities. A spiritual workplace is one which provides resources to help people to uncover their creative potential and to practice creativity within the organization.

- **Value Contribution:** Today's spiritual organization should deliberately implement a vision that is built around contributions to the betterment of mankind. These contributions should be welcomed from employees, customers, suppliers and all who are associated with it. Spiritual workplaces recognize and value the contribution made by all concerned. Thus, spiritually aware managers and businesses consider themselves servants of employees, customers, and the community.

- **Promote Vocation:** By acknowledging a person's search for spiritual growth and fulfillment, organizations should lay the groundwork for spiritual development to assist in engendering understanding among employees. Organizations that understand workplace spirituality go beyond being supportive of learning and development. They help employees develop a sense of "calling" or identification of passion about their lives and their work. Grounded religious faith development is recognized as an important and deeply personal part of growth for many people, one that can help them more easily recognize their vocations.

These six characteristics should be considered as building blocks towards a model of workplace spirituality. An organization that complies to follow this model will be able to create environments which would produce ethical, moral and creative work teams.

14. Benefits of a Spiritual workplace

A spiritual workplace is characterized by not merely being a place to just earn our daily bread but to being a place of livelihood where one both survives and is fully alive to expressing one's spirit. Livelihood has at its core three meanings for work: survival, enlivening of the Individual Self (you're aliveness), and enlivening of the Collective Self (their aliveness). Today, the or-

ganizations should try to benefit the most by creating work culture and work environment which is for the workers. The benefits of Spiritual Workplace can be highlighted by the following points:

➢ **Increased Ethical and Moral Behaviour:** An important value of ethical behavior for a business is the development of trust. We trust people who operate in an ethical framework. Employees trust employers. Employers trust employees. And customers who trust a company stay customers longer. Thus, the spiritual workplaces provide an environment where the workforce can breathe. This helps in fostering ethical and moral behaviour.

➢ **Increased Authenticity in Communication:** The spiritual workplace helps in creating a safe place. By safe place it is meant that the truth is allowed to be safely and respectfully spoken, where old problems clear up, new possibilities emerge, and people feel more aligned. They work together in a trusting team. An authentic communication network is created with building spiritual workplaces.

➢ **Source of Creativity:** Creativity is the cornerstone of business. When we are more in touch with the source of creativity, there is also revitalization, renewal and resilience. It allows coming up with new products and services that really are of service. It allows doing more with less. As the organizations today are moving into more service and technological economy, there is a need to continually expand innovation and creativity. But organizations can't demand that of people. "Human capital" has to be treated differently from "financial capital." One needs to create an atmosphere in which creativity and innovation flourish; and that is accomplished through the bountiful expression of spirit. The spiritual workplace caters to this need of the hour.

➢ **Promotes the Expression of Talent, Brilliance and Genius:** Spirituality in the workplace helps in promoting talent, brilliance and genius. It leads to increased self-fulfillment, contentment and a deep sense of belonging. This helps in connecting all three, thus providing an outcome that is out of this world.

15. RECOMMENDED INITIATIVES AND PRACTICES FOR SPIRITUALITY AT WORKPLACE

• **Practice one's Own Beliefs:** All employees must have equal freedom to practice their own personal spiritual beliefs at workplace increases productivity, this does not mena that "every" belief qualifies to be spiritual. Furthermore, when opinions and views differ, there can eb clashes. It is essential to keep organizational interests above spiritual, as far as possible. One should never be dominating and impose one's views on others.

• **Discipline at work:** Everyone knows the power of positive thinking so one should think positive and practice discipline in work.

• **Moral and Morale:** Spirituality increases the quotient of both moral and morale and hence decreases stress. There is a lot of scientific data that confirms the positive effect that spirituality has on morale.

• **The Happiness Quotient:** An understated but important fact is that the freedom to practice spirituality at workplace increases the levels of endorphins in employees. The stay calm, relaxed and happy. Work pressure slowly starts taking a backseat in their minds and they start concentrating on the present.

• **Acceptance of Change :** Change is never accepted whether it comes at the workplace or in personal lives. Change is just a way of life. So look forward to change rather than looking it as another name for chaos.

In nutshell spirituality at workplace is a prerequisite for reducing stress. If any organization truly wants to achieve a work related outcome from the employees, meditation training must be introduced. Meditation should be practiced over a period of time more than one month before they produce observable benefits. The training should include conversant and practice of meditation benefits at the workplace.

16. Additional Activities to Develop spiritual Workplaces :
Today organizations should work towards developing spiritual workplaces. Following are the few activities that can be developed to foster a spiritual workplace:

- ❖ Employee Assistance Programs.
- ❖ Programs that integrate work/family.
- ❖ Management systems that encourage personal and spiritual transformation.
- ❖ Bereavement programs for the families of employees.
- ❖ Wellness information displayed and distributed.
- ❖ Servant leadership – the desire to serve others first in preference to self.
- ❖ Stewardship –leadership practices that support the growth and well-being of others.
- ❖ Diversity programs that create inclusive cultures.
- ❖ Integration of core values and core business decisions and practices.
- ❖ Leadership practices that support the growth and development of all employees.

17. CONCLUSION

It is an absolutely false assumption to think that spirituality only exists in religious context. Spirituality essence lies in the interaction of people. This interaction allows human beings to view each other with dignity and respect. This dignity and respect remains whether the person is materially present or absent at the workplace. When we view our fellow human being with the eyes of dignity and respect, putting our minds together to work for the well-being of everyone then we automatically celebrate our presence as a community of people at work place.

Workplace spirituality is one way to deal with stressful overload conditions, Amal (2011). In fact spirituality at work addresses human activities such as personal development, learning, compassion and searching for meaning or higher purpose Findings of Pawinee and Duchon (2012) did not reveal a direct effect for the meditation, however spirituality does relate to work performance. Moreover, the practice of meditation is also found to partially mediate the relationship between workplace spirituality and work performance.

It is basically a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees' experiences of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy. In fact spirituality is the domain of inner consciousness that expresses itself as a sense of "harmony, interconnectedness, and oneness. There is one movement which began primarily as U.S. Centric and has achieved laurels in the International level in recent years. Some of the Key organizations which are focusing on the spirituality at work and its related issue include-International Centre for Spirit at Work (ICSW), European Baha Business Forum (EBBF), World Business Academy (WBA), Spiritual Business Network (SBN)and Foundation For Workplace Spirituality.

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