



Workplace Spirituality–The Essence of Modern Business Organizations

¹Moitreyee Paul, ²Purnachandra Saha

¹Phd Scholar, School of Human Resource Management, Xavier University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

²Senior Associate Professor, KIIT University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

Abstract— Previously, workplace was depicted as a place where the goals of task accomplishment were paramount. Over the time, the concept of workplace has expanded to encompass various geographical and psychological boundaries. Nowadays, organizations suffer from business losses, strained relationships with customers, delayed contracts and employee exits. Spirituality has now become an effective tool to handle stress related issues and for overcoming business problems. “Spirituality” has become more oriented on subjective experience and psychological growth. It does not compel people to follow religions and stringent methods but is in fact used as an effective tool to make employees feel that they are an integral part of the organization. The objective of this study is to discuss about the effect of spirituality on workplace, various spiritual approaches shaping the modern organizations that will help employees with personal disorders and other work-related problems. Spirituality draws on the ethics, values, motivation, work/life balance, and leadership elements of an organization. The unique characteristics that differentiate a spiritual organization from others are: strong sense of purpose, focus on individual development, trust and openness, employee empowerment and toleration of employee expression. Spiritual approaches shaping the modern workplace are: God-centred, Ethical, Existential and Buddhist approach. Some recommendations for incorporating spirituality at workplace are: Employee assistance program (EAP), Meditation breaks, listening to spiritual music, honing spiritual skills for better job performance, setting up of a spiritual fund, Taking risks to open one’s spiritual self, Bereavement programs and Leadership practices. ‘Mood chart’ is a new evolving concept as a part of Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) to enhance workplace spirituality. It is a chart that shows the deviations of mood levels over time and has information on our mood, hours of sleep, and medications. Thus, organizations that encourage workplace spirituality experiences improved organizational performance and profitability.

Index Terms— Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Mood chart, organizational performance, spiritual approaches workplace spirituality.

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally ‘spirituality’ has been defined as a process of personal transformation in accordance with religious ideals. Since the 19th century spirituality is often

separated from religion, and has become more oriented on subjective experience and psychological growth. The term "spiritual" is now frequently used in contexts in which the term "religious" was formerly employed. Contemporary Spirituality develops inner peace and forms a foundation for happiness. Meditation and similar practices may help any practitioner cultivate his or her inner life and character. According to Swami Vivekananda, “The greatest help to spiritual life is meditation. In meditation we divest ourselves of all material condition and feel our divine nature”. Nowadays, organizations suffer business losses, strained relationships with certain customers, distressed tempers, employee exits, delayed contracts, the list of woes are threatening to become overwhelming. These factors are leaving the employees demoralized and isolated. So, spirituality at work has become a tool for overcoming business problems. Over the past few years, spirituality has been recognized as a fundamental area of research in the academic world to add more meaning to one’s workplace [1-6]. The concept of spirituality draws on the ethics, values, motivation, work/life balance, and leadership elements of an organization [7]. Corinne McLaughlin, co-founder, The Centre of Visionary Leadership, has said that Spirituality has both vertical and horizontal aspects. Vertically it is connected to the universe and horizontally it relates to family, co-workers and humanity as a whole. Spirituality at workplace is about how spiritual practices help the employees of an organization to concentrate on their job and perform well. Hence, spiritual practices are currently being introduced in many companies around the world, such as Google and Twitter. In India, organizations like Reckit and Coleman, Wipro, Dabur or Tata Tea are among a few organizations that have embraced workplace spirituality. Spiritual organizations are concerned with helping employees develop and reach their potentials. Pethe [8] describes Workplace Spirituality (WS) as the expression of talent, brilliance and genius. talent which is god gifted; brilliance in terms of our intellect and we all are genius in some way.

Several research on influence of spirituality in the workplace have observed that organization with highly influenced workplace spirituality is able to outperform

other organizations with either little or no workplace spirituality up-to 86 percent by developing a humanistic environment in which workers can achieve their full capacity [9-10]. Humanistic work environment can create a win-win situation for employees and their co-workers, which is good for the organization [3][11]. Reave [12] has proposed that workplace spirituality programs result in positive individual level outcomes for employees such as increased joy, serenity, job satisfaction and commitment. Mitroff and Denton [13] indicates that employees of spiritual organizations have basic beliefs and values in the workplace; significantly contribute to their work, using their creativity and intelligence which make their organizations more profitable. If we are not prepared we may experience trauma and chaos. According to Swami Vivekananda, "It is fear that is the cause of our woes, and it is fearlessness that brings heaven in a moment". Workplace spirituality help individuals understand the meaning and purpose of their job by being able to realize their full potential as a person. Thus, if the employees are given the freedom to bring their physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual attributes to their workplace, they will become more productive, innovative and dedicated. On the other hand, if the employees work in a dispirited workplace, they will indulge themselves in various work stress, low morale, rising absenteeism, high turnover, burnout, frequent stress-related illness and the adoption of non-committed attitude to the organization [14].

The main objective of this study is to give an idea about what workplace spirituality is and how modern spiritual practices and tools help employees with personal disorders and other work-related problems to cope up with the situation and embrace spirituality in organizations thereby enhancing their organizational performance.

II. DEFINING SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality can be approached from various perspectives. It is a term used in various contexts that means different for different people at different times in different cultures. Spirituality is that which comes from within [10]. For some, it has a religious connotation and for others it does not [15]. According to Moxley [16], being spiritual is about being fully human, and about integrating all the energies that are part of us. Mitroff and Denton [13] say that within spirituality there is a supreme power that rules the entire universe. Spirituality is reaching beyond or having a sense that things could be better. It is also about being holistic and being interconnected with everything else [17].

Freke [18] considers self- knowledge, selflessness, love, personal growth, morality, humility, acceptance, positivity, and forgiveness as part of spirituality. According to Taylor [19] Spirituality is creativity, communication, respect, vision, partnership, energy, flexibility, fun, and finding oneself. Thibault et al. [20] defined the term 'spiritual' as: 1) Pertaining to one's

inner resources, especially 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. Howard [21] defined Spirituality from the faith perspective saying its about the four sets of connections - connection with self, with others, with nature and environment, and with the higher power. The terms spirituality and religiosity differ are different. According to Peterson and Nelson [22], religion is an organized body of beliefs and practices, whereas spirituality goes beyond religion and religious practices and includes inspiration, meaning, and purpose of life. Spirituality also includes forgiveness, and relatedness. Mitroff and Denton [23] found support to the view that religion and spirituality differ. The participants of the study defined "spirituality" as "the basic feeling of being connected with one's complete self, with others, and the entire universe". Turner [10] says that one thing that spirituality is not organized religion. According to Thompson [24], spirituality is not formal, structured, or organized. It is non-denominational, broadly inclusive and embraces everyone. It is the sacredness of everything, the ordinariness of everyday life. Dhiman [25] said Spirituality is the awareness of the Divine Principle of our being, as characterized by our effort to live in harmony with that Divine Principle. According to Bruce [26] spirituality is "the way we orient ourselves towards the Divine".

The numerous definitions of spirituality indicate that it is more a personal concept than a common or generalized variable. The definition of spirituality may thus differ in the cultural context too. "Spirituality means beginning to become aware of consciousness higher than that of body-mind centered ego, and the ability to live more and more in it or under its guidance. It is this consciousness, non-contingent, self-existent, pure ego, which is spirit or self. Spirituality is recognition of something greater than mind and life... a surge and rising of the soul in man out of the littleness and bondage of our lower parts towards a greater thing secret within him" [27]. Marques et al. [28] concluded that spirituality in workplace is driven by internal (human), external (organizational), and integrated (human/organizational) factors and once these factors are interconnected, one can arrive at multi-applicable definition. Now we look at how spirituality at work has been conceptualized to understand the interconnections.

III. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY

Krishna Kumar and Neck [29] mentioned three main viewpoints of the workplace spirituality perspective which are intrinsic-origin view, religious view and the existentialist view. The intrinsic-origin view put forward by them is a concept or a principle that originates from the inside of an individual. Supporting this view, Graber [30] said that "spirituality avoids the formal and

ceremonial connotations of religion; It implies an inner search for meaning or fulfillment that may be undertaken by anyone regardless of religion"; and by Mitroff & Denton[13], who believe that spirituality is not in actuality, associated with religion, God or higher powers. In other words, the concept of spirituality is not associated with religion and belief. Mahoney & Graci[31] proposed that spirituality involves a sense of giving and service, a sense of connection (community), compassion and forgiveness, meaning and morality. Ashmos and Duchon[1] have defined workplace spirituality as "a recognition that employees have an inner life which nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work, taking place in the context of a community". Giacalone and Jurkiewicz [2] have brought to us the definition of workplace spirituality as "a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy". Kinjerski & Skrypnik[32] define the workplace spirituality as "the experience of employees who are passionate about and energized by their own work, find meaning and purpose in their work, feel they can express their complete selves at work, and feel connected to those with whom they work".

IV. IMPORTANCE OF WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY IN ORGANIZATIONS

The emergence of Spirituality at the workplace points to the desire that there be more to work than just survival. Previously, historical models of management did not consider spirituality at workplace. These models typically focused on organizations that were efficiently run without feelings toward others. Similarly, concern about an employee's inner life had no role in managing organizations. Now, an awareness of spirituality can help one to better understand employee work behavior in the current scenario. The Indian employees have now found a significant component of spirituality that manifests implications about their workplace performances and logical decision making capabilities and work attitudes towards ethical issues. We yearn to work for a place in which we both experience and express our deep soul and spirit. Swami Vivekananda has rightly said "You have to grow from inside out. None can teach you, none can make you spiritual. There is no other teacher but your own soul". Spirituality is a relatively new budding concept at the workplace. However there is a realization of the benefits of spirituality at work. Organizations have begun to learn that encouraging spirituality boosts loyalty and enhances morale[1]. White 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[33]. Vaill[34] 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. Thompson [24] similarly observes that many people who are looking for jobs today put the compensation, and benefits secondary to working in a spiritually oriented workplace - a place where they are treated with respect, not only for what they know and can do, but also as human beings. According to White [33], there are two basic reasons to cultivate an environment for the human spirit: to dispel fears and to harness the internal energy of the employees. Until now, corporations have outbid each other to bring in the highly intelligent and self-motivated performers[35]. However, with higher costs associated with hiring and retaining intelligence, managers bring in fewer employees to accomplish more with less. Therefore, the presence of spirited individuals with high internal energy is critical for today's work environment. Swami Vivekananda once said, "Do not spend your energy in talking, but meditate in silence and become a dynamo of spirituality." Spirituality brings in happiness and fulfillment in the employees. Personal fulfillment and high morale are closely linked to outstanding performance and therefore to organizational success [10]. Schoonover and Weiler [36] say that for career purposes our soul is the center of our being. It is that part of us that knows our deepest needs and aspirations and that is the source of our energy. If we leave our soul at home and have no time for it later, our job will not be very fulfilling. Davidson[37], emphasizes that since the underlying unity of existence is reflected at work in the dynamic process of interdependence, the web of relationships at work manifests the workings of the whole. Therefore, when spiritual individuals recognize that the survival, success, and well-being at work depend on their mutual reliance in a collaborative system, they move towards greater harmony and effectiveness. 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[33]. According to Rutte [38], spiritual individuals are in touch with the source of creativity. As business people, they realize the value of creativity and innovation. Creativity is the cornerstone of business. It allows them to come out with new products and services that are unique. It allows them to do more with less. Spirituality can positively affect employee and organizational performance[15]. It can lead individuals to experience consciousness at a deeper level, thereby enhancing their intuitive abilities. This can help individuals develop a more purposeful and compelling organizational vision, which can increase innovation. Spiritual values can enhance teamwork and employee commitment to the organization. The importance of having spiritually oriented or spiritually competent persons at work cannot be negated. It has therefore become very important to understand what we mean by spiritual orientation and how it can be measured and developed in the employees.

V. CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRITUAL ORGANIZATIONS

Now, the question comes to our mind how can we distinguish a spiritual organization from a non-spiritual organization? What are the distinct characteristics that differentiates a spiritual organization from others? Abiding by the wisdom of "Sanatan Dharma" and the findings of modern research, Pethe[8] has mentioned the following hallmarks of a spiritual organization:

- **Strong sense of purpose:** Organizational members know the purpose of existence of the organization they are working for and what it values.
- **Focus on individual development:** Employees are the part and parcel of an organization therefore need to be nurtured to help them grow. These characteristics also include a sense of job security.
- **Trust and openness:** The relationships among the organizational members are characterized by mutual trust, honesty and openness.
- **Employee empowerment:** Employees are allowed to make work related decisions that affect them, highlighting a strong sense of delegation of authority.
- **Toleration of employee expression:** The organization culture encourages employees to be themselves and to express their moods and feelings without guilt or fear of reprimand.

VI. SPIRITUAL APPROACHES SHAPING THE WORKPLACE

Nowadays, more people are finding inspiration and fulfillment in their jobs by bringing their spirituality into the workplace. Spiritual approaches are shaping the modern workplace today, and Michael Carroll in his article "Fearless at work"[39] has proposed four categories:

A. God-centered approach

Hundreds of organizations dedicate their time and resources to bringing God-centered spirituality into the workplace. Mostly Christian organizations seek to strengthen employee faith in God. Members work to help the underprivileged, build religious schools, support missionary work and promote Catholic values in business. Other God-centered organizations sponsor charity drives, employee prayer meetings and Bible study. This approach mainly focuses on spreading the faith and extending a helping hand to those in need.

B. Ethical approach

The ethical approach to workplace spirituality focuses on cultivating values that inspire us to be decent in our jobs and professions. It concentrates on values that drive current business practices, like efficiency, material wealth and competition, and cultivating those that at

times may be overlooked, like honesty, fairness, respect and compassion.

C. Existential approach

This approach to workplace spirituality centers on finding and preserving meaning in our jobs and careers. It focuses on social activism; preserving the valuable human aspect of work and preventing dehumanizing business practices by helping workers protect what is meaningful and valuable to themselves and their families.

D. Buddhist approach

The Buddhist approach is unique in its own way that "before committing to charity or ethics or activism, Buddhists are first committed to being authentic". Such authenticity for Buddhists is based on practicing mindfulness awareness meditation where practitioners discover that in order to help others we, as human beings, must first learn to trust ourselves -- to have the confidence that we can live an inspired life without resentment and fear. And it is from this wakefulness that Buddhists engage work on an utterly human level. Thus, Buddhists work with those who promote charity, ethics and social activism. Having control over their hearts and minds through meditation Buddhists are open and willing to address work wakefully, courageously and authentically

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCORPORATING WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY

Introducing spirituality into the organizations is nothing new for Human Resource (HR). For instance, matters such as work-life balances, proper selection of employees, setting performance goals and rewarding people for their work are all components of making the organization more spiritual. HRM is the vehicle by which the organization helps employees understand their responsibilities and offers the requisite training to make things happen. In the end, it's HRM that will make the workplace a supportive work environment, where there is no barrier to communication and employees feel free to express themselves. For those people who work full-time in mainstream business environment, dealing with challenges of the working day actually offers a great playground and outlet for developing their spiritual selves and for sharing their light with others. Some suggestions for incorporating spirituality at workplace are as follows:

A. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

If an employee is struggling with emotional problems, family or job-related problems, an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can be of immense help. An EAP provides free counseling services to employees. Professional counselors provide short-term counseling to employees and family members who want help dealing with life changes or work, family or personal problems. Many larger companies provide an EAP for its employees. The HR Department is usually bestowed

with handling the EAP services. If the difficulties are beyond the scope of their services, such as severe depression, the counselor will refer to other professional services for further assistance. EAP counselors do not provide prescriptions or medication. Companies benefit from EAPs because the services they provide help to improve job performance, reduce absenteeism and turnover and keep health care costs down. EAP at the right time will help employees to improve performance thereby promoting spirituality at workplace. Services may include help with: Family or marital relationships, Communication issues, Alcohol or drug problems, Depression, Stress, and Anxiety. EAP Counselors can help employees living with psychiatric disorders deal with workplace misunderstandings and stigma. Information about the services one receives is kept strictly confidential. The only exceptions are those situations which are required by law to be reported, such as suspected child abuse or when a client commits, or threatens to commit, a crime that would harm someone else. An employee may choose to sign a release of information. An employee facing a potential disciplinary situation may decide to release information to their employer to demonstrate that he/she is seeking assistance with the problem. EAPs can help employees who help themselves.

1) **Mood chart:** a new evolving concept as a part of Employee Assistance Programs(EAP) to enhance workplace spirituality

a) 'Mood Chart' is a new emerging concept that helps employees adapt to change when new projects are at hand. There is always a phase when an innovation team feel demoralized and a mood chart will help gauge just that.

b) Definition of a Mood Chart

A graph that shows the rise and fall of mood levels over time. They are very useful in predicting the onset of mood episodes and documenting the response to medications. It is a chart that has information on our mood, hours of sleep, and medications. Most people use mood charts to investigate any problems that they may be going through. This is the best way to detect mood swings early and will give us a tool to use with our doctor to fight bipolar disorder.

c) How mood chart works?

Mood has a direct impact on productivity, and negativity can severely undermine the productivity of our workplace. Researchers upon conducting a thorough survey on adult employees regarding their observations of negative emotions in the workplace, and their impact on their own moods and performances have found that, a majority of respondents felt that the negative emotions they observed impacted their mood and productivity. The impact tended to vary per respondent with some saying it would have a "significant impact" on mood and rest indicating a "significant impact" on productivity. There are many other significant findings and

explanations such as "group mood," perceived responsibility for negative emotions, and the role of management in influencing emotion in the workplace. So, if mood and productivity are inextricably linked, and management can have a significant impact on employee's emotions, then companies can implement some solution for enhancing mood and thereby enjoying increased productivity. One such company have come up with a unique solution: mood tracking. Mood tracking helps to establish a baseline to see in what general mood our team or organization is right now, to see which activities generate what types of moods in our team members, assess individual team member moods on a regular basis to identify individuals who may be struggling and take appropriate action, including providing support and counseling as needed, propose and implement solutions and see how these solutions impact the incoming mood data; then, obtain additional feedback to adjust these solutions as needed[40]. Knowing where your organization stands and being able to evaluate your improvements on an ongoing basis can be valuable, whether you are facing a significant problem with morale or simply want to fine-tune your work environment to increase employee satisfaction and facilitate productivity.

B. Listening to spiritual music in background

Employees can put their headphones on and run mantras or spiritual music in the background when they are writing reports, drafting emails etc or repeat little prayers or intentions throughout the day. Also by completing their daily tasks quickly and efficiently they can return home and have time to focus on other spiritual practices.

C. Taking mini meditation breaks during the day

Employees can just download a meditation track from the internet or any other source and listening to it makes him refreshed.

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E. Honing spiritual skills for better job performance

Employees could even try learning how to dowse for new business opportunities and gauge which potential clients have a good positive vibration that resonates with their own.

F. Using our salaries to help fund spiritual learning

Employees can set budget aside from the monthly paycheck to seek out the best teachers and practitioners to enhance spiritual learning. One can put money into good deeds and charitable causes

G. Encouraging bereavement programs

Bereavement programs are undertaken by assisting survivor employees to adapt to an environment without

the deceased while experiencing a continued (transformed) relationship with the deceased. It also helps the family members understand and move forward in the grief process by facilitating their expression of thoughts and feelings and helping them identify or develop and utilize healthy coping strategies.

H. Taking risks to open one's spiritual self

Employees can overstep the mark by looking for opportunities to expose one spiritual self and give opinions that help to retain sustainability in business.

I. Implementing Leadership practices that support the growth and development of all employees

Leaders are encouraged to apply spiritual values such as humility, trust, courage, integrity, and faith in their work with teams. Some organizations are offering lunchtime Spirit at Work Discussion Groups. Others are offering team building courses that incorporate spiritual values or practices.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Spirituality is a relationship with self, which cannot be dictated by any organized religion. Employing Spirituality within the workplace is an opportunity to recognize our power and to understand the process involved in exchanging our energy with others. Organizations that encourage spirituality experiences improved organizational performance and profitability. Employees and managers increasingly need to reflect on the ways of incorporating spirituality in workplace as a factor to promote job performance. Workplace Spirituality does not compel people to follow religions and stringent methods but is in fact used as an effective tool to make employees feel that they are an integral part of the organization. Spirituality-driven activities have not only benefited employees, but also saved companies millions of dollars that are spent on high turnover rates, legal suits, recruitment activities and many more. In this era of globalization where activities are widespread across the globe. Indian gurus are inculcating this knowledge through programs such as Swami Vivekananda's books, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's Art of Living, Yogi Ashwini's Dhyana and many more have been trending in recent times. Henceforth, the focus should be shifted from only profit-making to the creation of the 'whole person' and 'fostering spirituality' can help us to achieve just that.

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