Managing the Challenges at Workplace:

The Economic Spirituality of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Abstract

'Love all and Serve all' is the essence of spirituality as enunciated by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba which is equivalent to cooperative principle of 'All for One and One for all'. In the context of workplace spirituality, many researchers proved the positive association between spirituality at workplace and employee job outcomes with their empirical studies. But there seems to be multiple views of workplace spirituality due to the differences among different cultures and religions of the world. Here, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Economic spirituality combines and develops universally applicable principles to be followed at workplace. This paper explores various dimensions and a framework of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Bab's Economic Spirituality models, which integrates the spirituality and workplace that enhances personal well-being of employees and organizational harmony through long-term success of the business.

Keywords: Economic Spirituality, Challenges at workplace, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Economic well being of employees, Organizational harmony

1. Introduction

In the globalized economic environment, firms are concerned about their ability to create increased corporate value. As Tom Peters puts it, it is the 'performance' that matters today. Now the paramount question is how we achieve it. What factors generate and sustain high performance? (Murthy, 2004). A number of scholars mention a paradigm shift in organizational sciences, management theories and practices in the past two decades. These changes in business management include a shift from an economic focus to quality of work life, spirituality and social responsibility concerns, a shift from self-centeredness to interconnectedness, a shift from self-interest to service and stewardship, and a change from materialistic to a spiritual orientation (Karakas, 2006). This new paradigm that is emerging in organizations has also been called as "the spirituality movement".

With this backdrop, a humble attempt is being made to explore the teachings of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and relate relevant principles of Baba to workplace

spirituality.

2. Spirituality:

The word "spirituality" comes from the Latin word "spiritus" or "spiritulis" that means breathing, air or breath of life. Identifying oneself with the spirit is spirituality (Chawla & Sridhar, 2010). Spiritus is defined as "an animating or vital principle held to give life to physical organisms" (Merriam-Webster). This implies spirit is the life force that inhabits us when we are alive and breathing (Garcia-Zamor, 2003). A parallel definition for spirit is "the vital principle or animating force within living beings; that which constitutes one's unseen intangible being; the real sense or significance of something" (Scott, 1994).

Karakas (2006) defined spirituality as the journey to find a sustainable, authentic, meaningful, holistic and profound understanding of the existential self and its relationship/interconnectedness with the sacred and the transcendent. Spirituality is distinguished from institutionalized religion by being characterized as a private, inclusive, non-denominational, universal human feeling; ratherthan an adherence to the beliefs, rituals, or practices of a specific organized religious institution or tradition. This distinction is important in the spirituality at work literature, as manifested by Mitroff and Denton's (1999) study where 60 percent of the respondents had positive views of spirituality while negative views of religion.

Spirituality is to rise above religions marked by purely ceremonial aspects of the church, mosque or temple. It is to understand and then experience that the creator and His creation are one (Chibber, 1999). The most prominent feature of spirituality is oneness with all beings in the universe, and therefore, Krishnan (2008) concepetulized spirituality as oneness with all other things.

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba defined spirituality with very simple words saying it is not merely singing bhajans, performing worship and going to temples or on pilgrimage or undertaking any good activity. Spirituality is recognizing oneness of all beings. To recognize unity in diversity is spirituality and it is also discovering who you really are. For example you say, "This is my handkerchief, this is my hand, this is my body." Then who are you? There must be some one to say that he owns handkerchief, hand and the body. When we enquire into this truth we will realise that we are separate from all these and in fact, we are the master of all these. That master is the Atma, the spirit (Sathya Sai, 2001). He exhorted that a Hindu to be a better Hindu, a Muslim to be a better Muslim and a Christian to be a better Christian. Thus spirituality appreciates the principle of "The brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of god". The undercurrent of all of Bhagawan's teachings is the principle of love. He has often stated that the essence of all His teachings is contained in the simple yet powerful canons - "Love All, Serve All and Help Ever, Hurt Never".

3. Spirituality at Workplace:

Defining workplace spirituality is a herculean task, as the integration of both the terms is bewildering in nature. Due to the independent nature of workplace spirituality, there are more than seventy definitions, and still there is no widely accepted definition of workplace spirituality. Mitroff and Denton (1999), in their

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study on workplace spirituality find that the participants understand spirituality as 'the basic feeling of being connected with one's complete self, others and the entire universe'.

While workplace spirituality is considered a highly personal and philosophical construct, nearly all of the academic definitions acknowledge that spirituality involves a sense of wholenessl connectedness at work, and deeper values (Gibbons, 2000).Marqes, Dhiman and Kinf (2005) mention the aspects of inner power, interconnectedness with those involved in work process and sense of purpose in work environment in their definition.

Workplaces have become the central pieces in our lives and the source of values in society (Fairholm, 1996, p.11). Workplaces are the places where people spend most of their lives, develop friendships, create value and make their most contributions to society (Fairholm, 1996). Conger (1994) observes workplace has become the fountainhead of community for many people.

Beyer (1999) mentions that meaning in work and belongingness to community nourishes the inner life of individuals and provides their work a spiritual dimension. Spirituality at workplace is about expressing one's inner self through meaningful work and belongingness to the community at work. Spirituality in the workplace relates to the bottom line of the business and the benefits of workplace spirituality are many (Chawla and Sridhar, 2010). Delbeecq defined workplace spirituality as the unique inner search for the fullest personal development through participation into transcendent mystery (1999).

Milliman, Czaplewski and Ferguson (2003) include the aspects of the sense of community and meaningful work in workplace spirituality. Fry (2003) includes the notions of calling and membership which is similar to meaning and sense of community. Giacalone and jurkiewicz'z (2003) definition includes the aspects similar to the meaningful work and connection to others.

There is a growing interest among entrepreneurs towards introducing spirituality, yoga and meditation to manage the challenges at workplace and to enhance the morale of the employees by their active participation, which is proved to be the holistic approach adopted as a last resort.

4. Spirituality and Organizational Performance:

In the context of workplace spirituality, many researchers proved the positive association between spirituality at workplace and employee job outcomes with their empirical studies.

Chawla and Sridhar (2010) proved by their exploratory study that the sales professionals' spirituality at work is positively related to job satisfaction and job commitment and negatively related to propensity to leave. The results provide the relevance of spirituality at work to sales people. Konz and Ryan (1999) by their research proved that organizations that provide their employees with the opportunities for spiritual development are better in performance than others. Komal and Ganesh

(2007) found in the case of health care professionals that at an individual level, spirituality at work provides job satisfaction and reduces employee burnout. Cohen (1997) through interviews finds that sales professionals who have a spiritual mindset show greater performance and are satisfied with their jobs.

In the last decade, several research projects have been conducted that reported positive relationships between spirituality at work and organizational productivity and (Bierly, performance Kessler and Christensen, 2000; Kelbecq, 1999; Korac-Kakabadse, 1997; Mitroff and Denton, 1999). Additional research reveals that organizations that have voluntary spirituality programs have had higher profits and success (Dehler and Welshh, 1994, Metroff and Denton, 1999, Konz and Ryan, 1999; Turner, 1999).

Trott (1996) proposed that spiritual well being, which includes a sense of community, will be positively related to cooperation and negatively related to employee turnover and absenteeism. He also states that those who are open to meaningful and purposeful relationships, which are key aspects of community, are more likely to grow, learn, and achieve at work and less likely to experience job burnout. It has also been proposed that organizations which create an environment that is responsive to their employees' sense of purpose and values will have people who are motivated in their work (Catlett and Hadden, 1998; Hawley, 1993).

Research suggests that the development and expression of the spirit at work may indeed solve these problems of stress and burnout, as well as have beneficial consequences for the well-being of employees (Karakas, 2006).

Reave (2005) mentions the review of Emmons (1999, p.876) that summarizes seven studies that have reported "a significant correlation between spirituality and mental health indices of life satisfaction, happiness, self esteem, hope and optimism and meaning in life. There is growing evidence in spirituality research that workplace spirituality programs result in positive individual level outcomes for employees such as increased job, serenity, job satisfaction and commitment (Paloutzian, Emmons and Keortge, 2003; Kouzes and Posner, 1995; Reave, 2005; Giacalone and Jurkiweicz, 2003a, Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002, Fry, 2003, 2005).

Milliman, Czaplewski and Ferguson (2003) found positive correlation between workplace spirituality and employee attitudes such as commitment to the organization, intrinsic work satisfaction and job involvement. Neck and Milliman (1994) claim spiritual values have positive effects on both personal well-being and job performance.

More employers today are encouraging spirituality in the workplace a way to enhance employee morale, commitment and productivity. Research suggests fostering spirituality and allowing free expression of spirituality at work enables employees to feel complete and authentic at work (Burack, 1999); which leads to a high degree of personal fulfillment ad morale; and in turn results in increased organizational performance (Turner, 1999).

Table 1

Author Name with Year of Publication	Common Findings
Dehler and Welshh, 1994	Leads to highr profits and success
Neck and Milliman (1994)	Positive effect on personal well-being and job performance
Trott (1996)	Positively related to cooperation and negatively related to employee turnover and absenteeism
Cohen (1997)	Provides greater performance and
Konz and Ryan (1999)	Leads to better performance
Milliman, Czaplewski and Ferguson (2003)	Positively related to commitment, job satisfaction and job involvement
Reave (2005)	Significant correlation to mental health indices and enhances morale, optimism, happiness etc
Karakas, 2006	Provides solution to problems of stress and burnout
Komal and Ganesh (2007)	Improves job satisfaction and reduces employee burnout
Chawla and Sridhar (2010)	Positively related to job satisfaction, commitment and negatively related to propensity to leave

Common Research Findings on Workplace Spirituality

Source: Developed by the authors on the basis of published literature.

5. Value Criticisms of Three Perspectives on Benefits of Spirituality:

Dr. Fahri Karakas proposed three perspectives on benefits of spirituality based on the extant literature: They are

- a. Spirituality enhances employee well-being and quality of life
- b. Spirituality provides employees a sense of purpose and meaning at work
- c. Spirituality provides employees a sense of interconnectedness and community

These three perspectives were linked with their importance to Human resources, Philosophical and Interpersonal perspectives. Apart from theoretical insufficiency, these three perspectives do not satisfy basic emotions of human beings. These criticisms include:

- Basically we not need not assume every workplace as emotionally barren workplace, the situations of stress and targets make them emotionally barren
- The arrangement of order of preference of three perspectives is lacking logical sequence. It is better to change the order into Human resources, Interpersonal and then last will be the Philosophical perspective
- Under the perspective of human resources only one individual employee emotions were considered, but the word human resources sometimes used to denote all the employees
- In interpersonal perspective, workplace considered as socially barren workplace, but in real world every workplace is said to be highly correlated with social activities

These criticisms show that the three perspectives model is inadequate and a revision

of current thinking is needed to make it more useful in serving the workplaces. This is discussed in the subsequent parts of this paper.

6. The Economic Spirituality of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

"Economics is the study of human behavior which uses god created resources in a humble manner to promote the spiritual growth of all beings" (Sivakumar, 2007). As the definition given more importance to spiritual growth of all beings through using god created resources in a humble manner is practically possible only when we follow certain economic principles coupled with spirituality exhorted by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, worshipped by millions as the avatar of this age.

Bhavawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's economic spirituality is based on pure love and universal oneness. Love all and Serve all principle of Bhagawan promotes human welfare and the cooperative thinking of all for one and one for all by sharing and caring. Bhagawan's economic spirituality is an answer to the wrongs caused by relentless pursuit of human beings in exploiting and misusing scarce resources.

Bhagawan Baba suggested a program called "Ceiling on Desires"¹ (19.01.1983, www.srisathyasai.org.in) to help us to trim down our desires to progress on the spiritual path. He beautifully explains in the following lines the importance and the measures that can be taken by an individual towards implementing 'ceiling on desires' program at home, or at workplace, which promotes economic well being of all.

6.1 Ceiling on Desires:

Man is deluded by his unlimited desires. He is living in a dream world. He is forgetting the supreme consciousness (spirit). That is why it is important to keep our desires under control, to place a ceiling on them. We are spending too much money. Instead of spending for our own pleasure, we should be spending for the relief of the poor and needy. This is real meaning of 'Ceiling

on desires'. However, do not make the mistake of thinking that giving money is all that needed while allowing our own desires to continue to multiply. Curtail your desires, as materialistic desires lead to a restless and disastrous life. Desires are a prison. Man can free only by limiting his wants. We should have desire only for life's bare necessaries. According to Bhagawan Baba "the man who has many desires is the poorest man in the world and the man who has much satisfaction is the richest man in the world". There are four components in the ceiling on desires program. They are outlined in the following paragraphs a propounded by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

6.1.1 Food is God - Do not waste food:

"Firstly, consider the food we consume. Eat only what you need to eat. Do not be gluttonous. Do not take more than you can eat and waste the rest, because wasting food is a great sin. The surplus food can feed another mouth. Eat only what you need, and be sure that what you eat is *Sathwic*. Do not waste food, because food is God, life is God, and man is born from food."

"Food is the main source of man's life, body, mind and character. The gross part of the food, which is the major portion of the food consumed by the body, is thrown out as waste matter. A minute amount of the food, which is the subtle part, is assimilated by the body and flows as blood. And a minuscule amount, which is the subtlest part of the food, makes up the mind. Therefore, the mind is the reflection of the food consumed. The reason for the present beastly and demonic tendencies in our minds is the food we consume. Only by controlling the quality of our food and water we ingest can we attain Divinity."

6.1.2 Misuse of money is Evil:

"Secondly, consider the ways in which money is spent. Indians consider money or wealth as Goddess Lakshmi. Do not misuse money; misuse of money is evil. By doing so, you will only become a slave to bad qualities, bad ideas and bad habits. Use your money wisely for good deeds."

"A man should own only as much wealth as is essential. It is like the size of his shoes. If the shoes are too loose, he cannot walk; if they are too tight, he cannot wear them. Money is like manure. Piled up in one place, it fouls the air. Spread it wide, scatter it over fields, it rewards you with a bumper harvest. So too, when money is spent for promoting good works, it yields contentment and happiness in plenty. Like blood, money too should circulate to ensure health", said Baba.

6.1.3 Time wasted is Life wasted:

"Thirdly, examine the usage of time. One should not waste time. Time should be spent in a useful manner. Time should be sanctified because everything in this creation is dependent on time. Even our scriptures extol God as 'Kaalaya namaha. Kaalaatheethaya namaha (Salutations to the One who is the embodiment of Time and who transcends Time).

"Time is an essential part of our life. Do not defile time by gossiping and unnecessary talk. The truth behind the saying "Don't waste time" is that no time should be wasted in evil thoughts and acts. Instead, make use of time in an efficient way."

6.1.4 Do no Evil, do what is good:

"Fourthly, conservation of energy is very important. Our physical, mental and spiritual energies should never be wasted. Excessive talks, Seeing bad things, hearing bad things, speaking evil, thinking evil thoughts, and doing evil deeds all waste your energy. Conserve your energy in all these five areas, and make your life more meaningful.

7. Application of Ceiling on Desires Progam at Workplace:

As we discussed earlier, workplaces have become the central pieces in our lives and the source of values in society. Workplaces are the places where people spend most of their lives, develop friendships, create value and make their most contributions to society. As such ceiling on desires program is to be analysed and applied with reference to workplace, so that value of the all stakeholders of the organization will be maximized. The four components of ceiling on desires program were related to workplace as Save Food, Save Money, Save Time and Save Energy.



Source: Framework Developed by the authors based on Ceiling on Desires Program enunciated by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

The above frame work is based on the idealogy of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, who categorically introduced four components of Ceiling on Desires Program. In this framework Spirituality has been regarded as an input to production process, which is a combination of Men, Material, Money and minute. According to Baba effective utilization of these four inputs leads one into spiritual path, then he/she does not waste food-instead they save it, they do not waste money-instead they save it, they do not waste energy-they save it. These four spiritual Components at work place optimize the production process. Then optimal use of all inputs in the production process leads to increased productivity, and enhanced profits in turn pays good economic returns to employees. The food, money, time and energy which is saved in the society, which leads to economic wellbeing of all. Different ways and means of saving all these four components given in the following pars.

7.1 Save Food:

Food in the broad sense means anything taken into a person from outside (Krystal, 1999). As Bhagawan Baba expresses it, "The calories that one takes in through the mouth are but a small part of the intake of man. The intake by the senses is part of the food that builds the individual. The sounds heard, the sights seen, the tactile impressions sought or suffered, the air breathed, the environment that presses for attention, appreciation, and adoption, all these are food. They are considerable impact on character and career of the individual. Eat to live and do not believe that you live in order to eat".

From this we can understand the need to be considered when attempting to eliminate waste from our lives to determine whether they are necessary, or even desirable. As such at workplace environment we have to avoid not only wastage of food but also avoid sensory pleasures.

Apart from this we have to consider the increasing numbers of people all over the world are suffering from malnutrition. And at the same time consuming excessive junk food became fashion of the day and causing so many health problems is the another dimension of the world. As such it is required to control our desires relevant to food intake and the surplus of saving of food can be used to share with have-nots is the spiritual value to be followed at workplace, which we call it as the best way of food management. Planning in advance by controlling our desires, results in effective utilization of food.

7.2 Save Money:

Money in itself is neither positive nor negative. It is neutral, so its effect depends how it is used (Krystal, 1999). Bhagawan Baba says, "In the day-to-day life, every one requires money. But it is something like wearing shoe. The shoe must be of the correct size. It it is too tight, we will feel uncomfortable. If it is too loose, we will not be able to walk comfortably. It is a problem if we have excess money. If we have shortage, that also is a difficult situation. Man often becomes a slave to money while trying to earn more than he needs". The amount of money which is used efficiently and effectively leads to surplus of money. The surplus amount of money after paying all our required needs should be shared with poorer sections of the society.

7.3 Save Time:

Bhagawan Baba reiterated that everyone in the entire world has exactly the same amount of time at his or her disposal. Regarding time management Bhagawan Baba proposed a plan for the benefit of entire mankind, "Time is God and time should not be wasted. One should divide time into four parts to make the best use of it: six hours for sleep; six hours for daily routine and body care-take; six hours of office work; and the remaining six hoursfor service to the general public. If you are wasting time, you are wasting Divinity. Whatever you do, offer it to God" (Man Management by Sathya Sai Baba, p.36-37). We have to avoid day dreaming, too much worry and talking ill of others. Managing time effectively at workplace and offering a better product to God at the end of that time period is the best of time management.

7.4 Save / Conserve Energy:

Unlike time, everyone does not have an equal amount of energy. It varies a great deal in different individuals, even from birth. Energy is love if it is expressed positively. Send this love energy through us all day to flow through our thoughts, feelings, and deeds to conserve the greatest amount of energy for use in more profitable pursuits at workplaces (Krystal, 1999). Those who give and continue to give find eternal joy, peace and love. One can always find more positive energy to share with fellow beings. For goodness multiplies.

Apart from this we should also avoid wasting other types energy such as water, electricity, gasoline and so forth to ensure that we have enough available for our use. We can also help the current world problem by conserving the planet's natural resources. We should avoid using plastic bottles, avoid watching TV excessively.

8. Future Research:

As this paper proposed by the authors is only limited to explore the teachings of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, relavant to workplace spirituality, but it needs to be proved by empirical analysis with dynamic workplace environment.

9. Conclusion:

According to Bhagawan Baba, Man is the most valuable object in the entire creation of God. However, modern man is somehow tormented by excessive desires. Man himself creates value for rupee, dollor and land etc. But he worries very much about their devaluation. However, man is unable to realize, that actual thing that has declined in value is 'value of man'. One must remember that men are more valuable than all the wealth of the world (www.sathyasaiwithstudents.blogspot.in). To retain that value, he must tred the path of spirituality, by practicing human values-Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-violence propounded by Bhagawan Baba in his entire tenure of life, which ensures economic well being of all.

> Be happy, be happy *Make others happy Then all will be happy* God will be happy - Baba

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Notes

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