



RESEARCH ARTICLE

ROLE OF SPIRITUALITY IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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ABSTRACT

Unethical business practices are gaining wide attention in the business circles, academia and government. Various measures are adopted to control these unethical business practices. However despite of the known fact that spiritual values have positive effect in controlling this menace and the fact that spiritually oriented people act in Godly ways, Spirituality as a control measure for unethical behavior and business have not been sufficiently explored. This paper argues that socially responsible organizations cannot align their activities with social expectation without creating a compassionate organizational culture based on spiritual values. This is seen to be accomplished through the development of unspoken assumptions embedded in organization culture which recognize that accomplishing what is good for the long term sustainability and success of organization can be obtained by striving for the larger social good.

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INTRODUCTION

The prior responsibility of business is towards the society. In spite of this priority it has been found that the business has failed to wield their economic power for public purpose. Unethical business practices are far too common in the business circles. Various punitive measures, codes of ethics, codes of conduct, codes of practice have been applied to control the menace but still the continuing gap between social expectation for the organisational conduct and the actual social conduct of large organisation has found to be increasing day by day. Because of failure of conventional corporate social responsibility (CSR) a number of problems have arisen such as: Environmentally destructive mining practices in Africa and South America, the destruction of the Brazilian rain forest, and exploitative labour practices in third- world countries (Sheppard, Porter, Faust, & Nagar, 2009).

Corporate social responsibility

According to Carroll (1983), "Corporate social responsibility involves the conduct of a business so that it is economically profitable, law abiding, ethical and socially supportive. To be socially responsible then means that profitability and obedience to the law are foremost conditions when discussing

the firm's ethics and the extent to which it supports the society in which it exists with contributions of money, time and talent." Not even the commitment to CSR stops large corporations in the industrialized world from violating price competition laws which in return affects their customers (Freyer, 2006). It is mistake of corporate leaders to ignore these issues, if these issues continue to increase then at some point the downfall of business will start which in future will be tough to control. These social issues should be dealt in an effective manner rather than by meeting the metrics of a scholarly definition of CSR. It would be miserable to live in a society of free- riders where everyone is busy to find out their own way to win their own races without being concerned how many people they are affecting on their way and yet this is exactly what has happened in larger economic arena. According to expectancy theory there should be someone who should understand the probabilities and expected outcome of actions of these free riders of business, in order to be motivated to do something. Since this is lacking hence there is no motivation to change and thereby our system is FAILED.

The question arises why this is lacking? The answer to it is that usually businesses pursue their own agenda, thus as wealth increases for 1% it decreases for the remaining 99%. Gradually the environment is becoming more toxic and the debt level of existence is growing more unbearable day by day. This is resulting in social revolution, an uninhabitable planet and

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slavery to the creditors among us. And again all this is because of the players caring nothing for the welfare of others but rather acting out of unbridled greed. The other major reason for the failure of corporations to be socially responsible is that they do not adopt positive approach to corporate social responsibility. They are only concerned towards their abstractions or objects and are rarely concern with humaneness of actions or behaviours taken and too often on specific accomplishments which can be enumerated and quantified. Corporate lack sense of compassion to be socially responsible and the reason behind this is absence of positive approach to CSR. This situation results from ignoring the need for a spiritual approach in implementing CSR or in other words ignoring corporate spiritual responsibility. What is needed to overcome this problem is a different attitude: and this change of attitude can be only brought by applying positive psychology which deviates the organisational focus from corporate profits or shareholders wealth to positive individual virtues among their decision makers (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003). A living ethical code with authentic leadership can create an organizational response that truly manifests its responsibility to society and this can be achieved by positive approach to organisational ethics (Verbos *et al.*, 2007).

Individuals of corporation without living ethical code are rational actors, acting to accomplish their materialistic goal. In reality humans are not robots they have soul, for them being materialistic is secondary concern apart from this they have higher needs and concern. Humans can desire a life with higher ideals than satisfying their own needs and a larger purpose than themselves (Robbins, 2011). When spiritual dimension is not there, then a sense of incompleteness and dissatisfaction is present among people. Being spiritual oriented or being spiritually self actualized is one of the important goal and a motivational force among people. Usually corporations are ignorant of this metaphysical dimension to corporate social policy. Being honest to one first and then to the customers, treating customers fairly and without personal gain, avoiding conflicts of interest, avoiding bigoted practices and protection of environment one of the prior responsibilities of the organisation, these are some of the common discussions when CSR policy addresses values. Love, empathy, compassion, kindness, and caring these are values which are critical to effective social responsibility but no doubt are not included in corporate dictionary. Yet these are the very values necessary to create a feasible social presence for large businesses which can be achieved by adopting the concept of spirituality in our organisations.

Corporate Spiritual Responsibility instead of corporate social responsibility this switching of words from social to spiritual arises a question in our mind that is- What is spirituality? And what is its role in business or organisation or among corporate? In order to answer this we should first of all be acquitted with this term 'spirituality.'

Spirituality

Spirituality is quite tough to define as it is purely based on subjective experiences still various attempts have been made to

describe this term. It's an emerging field in today's epoch. Spirituality is derived from the Latin word *spiritus*, spirit, ultimate or immaterial reality or inner path, the essential part of the person (Piles, 1990), which 'controls the mind and the mind controls the body' (Neuman, 1995:48). The term spirituality has its own fascinating history, but is generally used to denote "certain positive inward qualities and perceptions while avoiding implications of narrow dogmatic beliefs and obligatory religious observances" (Wulff, 1996:p.47)

Workplace spirituality

In recent era, the topic of spirituality at workplace is of great importance among academicians as well as business professions. It has great relevance in corporate social responsibility as when it comes to being good to others or when you are thinking of others benefits overruling your then you are automatically being spiritual. Workplace spirituality recognises that people have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000). Organisations following principle of spirituality aims at welfare of the society and try finding out meaning and purpose in their work.

As to its purpose, Adams & Csiernik (2002) summarise

"Workplace spirituality involves the positive valuation, acknowledgement and respect of employees' innate abilities in a context of meaningful, goal-oriented behaviour that encourages creativeness, belongingness and personal fulfilment."

Spirituality in corporate social relation

In previous sections we have discussed about corporate social relation, spirituality and workplace spirituality. We focused various issues in the organisation and came to know about workplace spirituality in brief which can be a tentative solution to these issues. Now we will try to integrate spirituality in corporate social responsibility and will find out how spirituality can be a proposed solution to the failed system problems. The concept of failed system is directly applicable to the organisations which are busy fulfilling their agendas and ignoring the society. The failed system concept applies because these problems have been created through the very laissez-faire capitalism that is operated by players caring only for their personal gain and nothing for the welfare of others. As these players have political hand on their heads so there is less and less legal restrain on them, which exploit and abuse the masses. Again the history somehow repeats, you have another French Revolution scenario where the nobility ignorantly sowed the seeds of their own downfall. These problems are created by the system themselves and they are trapped in it and cannot possibly solve it just as more heat cannot make something colder. The solutions which are provided are not developed by the major corporations and bankers but by greedy politicians trying to prevent social melt-down and their own political demise. The effect of the solution process has been to seek to drain off more resources from the average citizen. Current corporate social responsibility lacks spiritual

dimension and positive ethics teaches us to achieve common good. Maritain (1947) defines common good as “the sum of all civic concern, liberty and justice, material and spiritual riches, hereditary wisdom, moral rectitude, friendship and heroism in individual lives of all community members.” Thus positive ethical approach is needed in order to stand up to the needs of the society. Lloyd (2010) argued that the wisdom required for good decision making in powerful corporation may require spiritual base. According to Lawler (2003), there are firms which either follow spiritual path or just business one. However there are some sensible organisations which have chosen to follow another path by implementing both spiritual and business goals. Nonetheless, wiser organizations have chosen to follow another path by embracing both spiritual and business goals. The task of setting goals has somehow become easier by focusing on spiritual tenets. Firms prefer adopting this topic as it work like a publicity stunt to motivate and retain talented employees. Keeping this in mind, Garcia-Zamor (2003b, p. 361) ponders that ‘firms also need to establish themselves as worthy ones, that is, organizations with a higher sense of business purpose.’

Paunchant (2002) talks about a sensitive matter that is, need for reconciling both economic value and ethical or spiritual value. In this sense, scholars have argued that it is our responsibility “to build organizations that help build people’s spirit, not destroy them” (Pfeffer, 2003, p. 31). Similarly, Shipka (1997) suggested that ‘we need to feed ourselves through spiritual food (i.e., spirituality at work in this case) because it is vital to our survival. At this juncture, one may infer that organizations that are inspired by spiritual concerns are those interested in more than just profit and financial returns. Actually, they seem to be a sort of organization willing to go a step ahead.’ Concluding it all these arguments encapsulate the notion of workplace spirituality at the organizational level or to be specific in corporate social responsibility. Direct link between spirituality and CSR is rarely addressed in publications. But some scholars like Bubna-Litic (2009) has talked much about CSR and spirituality. In his views both are ‘interpenetrating worlds’ that share a rejection of a rationalistic, modernistic, technology based ideology to embrace a more sensitive, sensible and relational-based worldview in Bubna words “CSR approaches markets and business as a web of human relationships which relies on our trust in the integrity of other players.” Bubna-Litic further argues that both concepts extend the horizons beyond what is good for the organization. Spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2003) is builds on Fry work from spiritual, religion, and ethics-based leadership theory. It is based on the definition and generic process of leadership as motivation to change developed by Kouzes and Pozner (1987, p. 30)—“Leadership is the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations.” Fry model even tries to postulate a connection between spirituality and CSR. It is a threefold model: firstly – leaders create a vision the leads to the development of sense of meaning and purpose among organisational members. Secondly – he or she creates the organisational culture in such a way that value of altruistic love prevails. Leaders genuinely care for others and individuals are appreciated and understood. In last this inculcates the feeling of hope and faith which is the source of absolute belief among the individuals. Fry intrinsic motivational causal model of

spiritual leadership articulate a compelling vision that further compels the followers to make a life that has meaning beyond the ego- self. Hope/ faith helps in achieving this vision. Love/ care/ affection given by the organisation, creates a culture which entails a sense of communal membership. In 2005 article Fry advanced his notion of spiritual leadership and said it can also be a predictor of CSR. Spiritual leadership follows a value based approach which should ultimately foster CSR. As stated by Fry “This shift is facilitated by developing a vision whereby leaders and/or followers can initiate actions that serve key stakeholders, all of whom have a legitimate strategic and moral stake in the organisation’s performance. This is opposed to a shareholder value approach that measure outcomes based on share price alone.” If there is no interconnectedness between individuals, business and society then any attempt to standardise CSR has doomed to fail. Not only this even if any organisation overrule the concept of moral view and course of action internally amongst its employees while imposing CSR then it will fall short soon. Workplace spirituality bridges this divide as it aims at focusing on interconnectedness and self transcendence. Instead of starting from the premise of deregulation and standardisation, it starts with the socially embedded individual. Spiritual awakening is an individual experience which connects the individual to the whole but no doubt it can take place in group as well. In agreement with the SAW literature, spiritual development can occur only when there is rise in self-consciousness which leads to a disconnection from the tight control of the ego. In other words, the individual starts learning that he or she is more than what he believes himself to be, uncovering hidden potential and slowly surrendering to the idea that one is an inherent part of a whole that one’s mind will never control. Spirituality thus helps in the development of self as opposed to the limited ego-consciousness. In order to practice spiritual awakening at work one should first practice spiritual awakening at home. From an organisational viewpoint, changes should be expected from more holistic value. Organisational culture should adopt strategic thinking by integrating the concept of, appreciation of self and others which further values integrity, authenticity and community. Takala and Pallab (2000) calls this ‘spirited CSR’ and argues that primarily CSR is concerned with raising moral consciousness of individual agents by fostering a culture embracing self-other connectedness. Spirited CSR thus defined can more reasonably claim to contribute to an ultimate good for society, transcending the pettiness of short-term profitability imperatives to demonstrate actual care for society.

Corporate acts and practices inspired on spiritual orientation

We have talked much about integrating spirituality into CSR. CSR is not the only aspect of organisation where spirituality can be beneficial by integrating spirituality we can solve number of issues of the organisations. We usually think that this is not a common practice, no doubt not so common but still a large number of corporate act and practices are inspired by spirituality. Table 1 presents a synthesis of how Companies are following this path. At first sight, those organizations have carried out an applied spirituality in a coherent manner. Rather, they are apparently going beyond the profit-pursuing purpose and materialistic interests.

Some examples of applied spirituality in the organization

Table 1.

Organisation	Corporate action	Source
AES	It is committed to act with integrity, be fair, have fun, and be socially responsible.	Gull & Doh (2004)
Bank of Montreal	It integrates issues of spirituality such as employees' personal values and visions into human resources and organizational development functions.	Brandt (1996, as cited in Caccioppe 2000, p. 50)
Ben & Jerry's	It has been acknowledged by its social and environmental activism. Surprisingly, each 10 cents of dollar of revenue made by this company is donated for a better world	Gibbons (2000); Mitroff (2002, p. 40)
Boatman's First National Bank	It also integrates issues of spirituality such as employees' personal values and visions into human resources and organizational development functions	Brandt (1996, as cited in Caccioppe 2000, p. 50)
Body Shop	It has been admired for practicing social and environmental activism, as well as by combining profit motive, and meaningful work.	Gibbons (2000) Caccioppe (2000)
Harley Davidson	It has successfully combined the profit motive with the values of social responsibility and meaningful work. In addition, its shared vision and philosophy of continuous learning and participative decision-making process have helped the firm to be profitable once again.	Caccioppe (2000, p. 50)
Herman Miller	During Max DePree's tenure this firm was regularly listed on Fortune list of "the best managed" and "the most innovative". In addition, his humane and religious-based philosophy of management has prevailed.	DePree (1989, as cited in Korac-Kakabde <i>et al.</i> , 2002, p. 179)
Living Nature	This organization shows a strong sense of purpose by creating safe and authentic products in such a way that it is reflected in its corporate culture, which encourages active participation in decision-making from research and development to sales and marketing.	Pavlovich & Comer (2009)
Ouimet-Tomasso	It has demonstrated that human happiness and organizational efficiency are both intertwined and achievable aims.	Ouimet (2002)
ServiceMaster	In this organization, both people and profit are part of its mission. It commonly hosts regular Bible study classes for employees.	Pfeffer (2003, p. 43) Lawler (2003, p. 164)
Southwest Airlines	This company has exhibited excellent human resource policies, sound values (such as empowerment, humor, enthusiasm, sense of community), and positive outcomes.	Milliman <i>et al.</i> (1999)
Starbucks	This company shows outstanding features such as interconnectedness, authenticity, reciprocity and personal goodwill, a deep sense of meaning, greater motivation, and organizational excellence.	Marques (2007, pp. 254-255)
Tom's of Maine	Tom has successfully used an advertisement style that covers both products and corporate philosophy. Besides, this organization was pioneer on corporate social responsibility concerns. It is a clear example of positive deviance to Spreitzer and Sonenshein, and a spiritual organization for us.	Wagner-Marsh & Conley (1999) Spreitzer & Sonenshein (2003, p. 212)
Toro Company's	This company has an internal program (credo) of employee empowerment that is aimed at creating a culture based on mutual respect, valuing each employee or owner (as coined by its CEO).	Wagner-Marsh & Conley (1999)
Wayne Schmidt of Schmidt Associates Architects, Inc	It is a kind of firm that believes in putting service before profit	Wagner-Marsh & Conley (1999)
Wetherill Associates	This company has the commitment to be completely honest with its customers and employees.	Wagner-Marsh & Conley (1999)

Source: Adapted from Vasconcelos (2008a).

More importantly, they are supportive of the practice of doing well, behaving ethically, and providing substantial benefits to society. In a nutshell, their feats and acts speak for themselves. Taken together, those firms are embracing a truly spiritual organizational frame.

Conclusion

While concluding it I would say that corporate spiritual orientation must be validated in terms of tangible contributions to the society as a whole. For this purpose it requires plenty of benign organizational practices and acts toward the well-being of customers, employees, environment, and the planet likewise. In fact, I think after accomplishing societal duties we achieve the genuine view of workplace spirituality at the organisational level. In effect, companies have the opportunity to do good by employing their capabilities and knowledge in order to serve the humankind instead of being served by the

human beings. We proposed the model of Fry hat pose workplace spirituality as preceding and expanding CSR outcome towards society. We saw how Fry framework give priority to the organisational level by relying on good-willing leaders who first bring change in the hearts of individual and then these individual in turn care for the welfare of the society.

The difficult task is that there is no authentic model specifically to measure spirituality in the organisations. Exposure life stories and wise tales influenced by spirituality is always a good thing but reproduction is neither possible nor desirable. We expect this process of implementing spirituality to workplace or CSR to take time, but we believe that if individual agents are given a voice they will aspire to do something more than material wealth and are capable of more than caring for the egotistic self. No doubt leaders have a role to play, but the task falls on each one of us and we should not run from these responsibility.

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