Leadership and Spirituality

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Love, joy, and compassion are marks of being awake.
Hatred, greed, and anger are marks of being asleep.
May the leaders awaken the spirituality within—
Through self-knowledge flowering into selfless service!

A story is told of a rabbi who was trying to get to the synagogue for morning sermon during the pre-revolution Russia. He was stopped by a soldier at gunpoint, who asked the rabbi: "Who are you and what are you doing here?" The rabbi inquired the soldier: "How much the government pays you for asking these questions?" "Nineteen kopecks a week," replied the soldier. Said the rabbi, "I will pay you 20 kopecks a week if you stop me here every day and ask me the same two questions!"

(Kevin Cashman, *Leadership from the Inside Out*
(Provo, UT: Executive Excellence Publishing, 2001), 31).

Abstract

This chapter underscores the importance of spirituality in the workplace and its role in leading organizations. It focuses specifically on contributing to readers' awareness about the vital difference between religion and spirituality. The chapter builds on the premise that fundamental problems facing our organizations and the society today can only be solved at the level of human spirit. The material paradigm is not suited to deal with germane problems that shape our today's world (Vasconcelos A.F.. Cadernos EBAPE.BR 13.1, pp. 183–205). The chapter further postulates that the real spirituality is not indifference to the world but love and compassion born out of identifying oneself with all beings. It presents Gandhi as an exemplary spiritual leader who stirred the conscience of humanity by demonstrating the power of spirit over material things and extended the gospel of love and peace from personal level to the social arena. It also draws upon the vision of the Vedānta philosophy of unity of all existence as unfolded in the Bhagavad Gītā.

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Introduction

Workplace spirituality has now come to be recognized as an acceptable research field. Special issues on this subject have been devoted in peer-reviewed journals and, in 2001, Academy of Management set up a special interest group for Management Spirituality and Religion. (Poole, 2009)

Interest in workplace spirituality has been growing by leaps and bounds over the last two decades (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Benefiel, 2003, 2007; Cavanagh & Bandsuch, 2002; Driver, 2007; Duchon & Ashmos Plowman, 2005; Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008; Marques, Dhiman, and King 2007, 2009; McCormick, 1994; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Neal, 1997; Poole, 2009). A *Business Week* cover story quoted Laura Nash, a business ethicist at Harvard Divinity School and author of *Believers in Business*, as follows: "Spirituality in the workplace is exploding…. One recent poll found that American managers want a deeper sense of meaning and fulfillment on the job—even more than they want money and time off" (Conlin, 1999, p. 2).

An issue of the *U.S. News & World Report* (May 3, 1999) reported: "In the past decade, more than 300 titles on workplace spirituality—from *Jesus CEO* to *The Tao of Leadership*—have flooded the bookstores…. Indeed, 30 MBA programs now offer courses on this issue. It is also the focus of the current issue *of Harvard School Bulletin*." Signs of this sudden concern for corporate soul have been showing up everywhere: from boardrooms to company lunchrooms, from business conferences to management newsletters, from management consulting firms to business schools. Echoing Andre Malraux—who said that the twenty-first century's task will be to rediscover its Gods—some management thinkers are prophesying that the effective leaders of the twenty-first century will be spiritual leaders (Bolman & Deal, 2001; Pruzan and Mikkelsen, 2007).

Organizations are increasingly realizing the futility of achieving financial success at the cost of humanistic values. Employees are expecting to get something more than just employment from the workplace (Bragues, 2006; Carroll, 2007; Richmond, 2001). During the early decades of the third millennium, organizations have been reflecting upon discovering ways to help employees balance work and family and to create conditions wherein each person can realize his/her potential while fulfilling the requirements of the job. One writer (Autry, 1994) has called such enlightened organizations "incubators of the spirit."

Work has ceased to be just the "nine-to-five thing" but is increasingly seen as an important element in fulfilling one's destiny and as a spiritual practice (Field, 2007; McDonald, 1999; Richmond, 2001; Schuyler, 2007; Wheatley, 2006). As James Autry (1994, p. 117) has observed, "Work can provide the opportunity for spiritual and personal, as well as financial, growth. If it doesn't, we are wasting far too much of our lives on it." In his writings, Autry (1994) insists on achieving the "the exquisite balance" between the professional and personal life. "Leading others" is increasingly seen as an extension of "managing ourselves" skillfully (Bolman & Deal, 2001; Boyatzis and McKee, 2005).

The implications of these changes are clear. On the one hand, it is about how to work collectively, reflectively, and spiritually smarter. On the other hand, it implies

how to do work in organizations that is mind enriching, heart fulfilling, soul satisfy-ing, and financially rewarding.

Social scientists and management scholars (Conlin, 1999; Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008; McCormick, 1994; Neal, 1997; Vasconcelos 2015) cite the following reasons for this resurgence of interest in spirituality in the workplace:

• Baby-boomers' mid-life soul searching
• Arrival of the new millennium
• Anxiety caused by corporate downsizing and restructuring
• Search for meaning through work
• Quest for stability in an unstable world
• Movement toward more holistic living
• Greater influx of women in the workplace
• Developed countries' progression from belly needs to brain needs

Meaning and Definition of Spirituality

Spirituality is that surgery of the soul in which the patient and the surgeon happen to be the same person! The time and the cost of operation depend upon the pathol-ogy of the patient. Webster's Dictionary defines spirituality as: of, relating to, con-sisting of or affecting the spirit; of relating to sacred matters; concerned with religious values; of, related to, or joint in spirit. The term "spirituality" comes from the Latin word "spiritus" that means vapor, breath, air, or wind. The term spiritual-ity means different things to different people. Cavanagh (1999, p. 186) illustrates the diversity of opinions regarding the definition of spirituality as follows:

> Ian Mitroff, Professor of Management, defined spirituality as "the desire to find ultimate purpose in life and to live accordingly." Others define spirituality loosely as energy, meaning, knowing, etc. Some authors rely heavily on Taoist, Buddhist, Hindu, Zen and Native American spiritualities. These authors correctly claim that these non-western societies are better in inte-grating personal life, work, leisure, prayer, religion, and other aspects of one's life.

Mitroff and Denton (1999) explain their view on spirituality as informal and personal, that is, pertaining mainly to individuals. Spirituality is also viewed as "universal, non-denominational, broadly inclusive, and tolerant, and as the basic feeling of being connected with one's complete self, others, and the entire universe" (p. xvi). Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003a) define workplace spirituality as: "A framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employ-ees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected in a way that provides feelings of compassion and joy" (p. 13). Marques et al. (2007) explain workplace spirituality as: "…an experience of inter-connectedness among those involved in a work process, initiated by authenticity, reciprocity, and personal goodwill; engendered by a deep sense of meaning that is inherent in the organization's work; and resulting in greater motivation and organi-zational excellence" (p. 12).

Although the interest in workplace spirituality has been growing over the past two decades, still "the field is full of obscurity and imprecision for the researcher, the practitioner, the organizational analyst and whoever attempts to systematically approach this relatively new inquiry field" (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008, p. 575). Although no commonly agreed upon definition of spirituality yet exists (Ashforth & Pratt, 2003), a review of most frequently cited definitions of workplace spirituality reveals the following key components: *meaning and purpose in life, sense of interconnectedness and belonging, keener moral sense, and personal joy and fulfillment* (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Adams & Csernick, 2002; deKlerk, 2005; Dent et al., 2005; Dhiman, 2012/2014; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003a, 2003b; Marques, Dhiman, and King, 2005, 2007, 2009; Neal, 1997).

Spirituality is the inmost core of our existence without which our life has no meaning beyond the passing façade of fleeting phenomenon. It is what defines us at the deepest level and gives our lives an abiding meaning. The goal of all spiritual life is to discover the truth of our existence and to cultivate a sense of harmony with all that exists. Most religious and spiritual traditions postulate a state of inner freedom from limitations and variously denote it by such words as *mukti*, *mokṣā*, *nirvāna*, liberation, salvation, enlightenment, or self-realization. This is the summum bonum, the desideratum of all spirituality.

Spirituality vs. Religion

Spirituality is distinct from institutionalized religion. While religion often looks outward depending on rites and rituals; spirituality looks inward—the kingdom within. Spirituality is non-dogmatic, non-exclusive, gender neutral, and non-patriarchal approach to connect with this one source of all existence. It signifies that regardless of our surface differences, there is an underlying sacred commonality, the Ground of Being, to borrow a phrase from Paul Tillich. One writer (Adler, 1992) aptly captures the essence of this difference through the title of a book: *Truth in Religion: Plurality of Religions and Unity of Truth*.

Despite the fact that a review of eighty-seven scholarly articles found that most researchers couple spirituality and religion together (Dent, Higgins, & Wharff, 2005), according to a recent *Pew Report*, nearly one in five Americans identify themselves as "spiritual but not religious."[1] Many people these days like to self-identify as "spiritual but not religious," not because they are antagonistic to any religious institution, but simply because there's no one institution that fits their spiritual ideology. Frequently, they like to combine elements of various religious traditions and spiritual philosophies such as Buddhism, Vedānta, Sufism, and Judeo-Christianity into something that uniquely resonates with them. They long

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[1] *Religion and the Unaffiliated*: A Report by Pew Research Center. Retrieved on June 22, 2015: http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise-religion/

for an ideology which is congruent with a reliable knowledge of higher reality, while simultaneously honoring the innate human quest for the Eternal and connection with the Divine. We believe that this longing could serve as a good model for workplace spirituality. If there is respect for everyone's belief system and there is no persecution or conversion involved, workplace spirituality can contribute significantly to fulfill our spirit's longing for something greater, fuller, and transcendental.

There is a natural tendency to confuse spirituality with religion. Spirituality, however, is distinct from institutionalized religion. A person can therefore be spiritual without being a member of any religious denomination. While religion often looks outward depending on rites and rituals; spirituality looks inward—the self *within*. Spirituality recognizes that there is something sacred at the core of all existence. Whatever its source, this sacred element dwells within each and every living being. We call it 'self,' as distinct from body–mind–sense complex. In his book *Ethics for the New Millennium,* the Dalai Lama (1999) makes a clear distinction between spirituality and religion and situates spirituality within the larger societal context, as follows:

> Religion I take to be concerned with faith in the claims of one faith tradition or another, an aspect of which is the acceptance of some form of heaven or nirvana. Connected with this are religious teachings or dogma, ritual prayer, and so on. Spirituality I take to be concerned with those qualities of the human spirit—such as love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of harmony—which bring happiness to both self and others. (p. 22)

Although it is widely acknowledged that workplaces that nourish their employees' spirits gain increased commitment and that attention paid to holistic human flourishing in the workplace creates increased engagement and potential for greater performance (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003a, 2003b; Gracia-Zamor, 2003), "the jury remains out about the bottom-line relevance of organizational spirituality" (Poole, 2009, p. 577). Poole cites several studies such as by Gallup, NOP, the Work Foundation, and Roffey Park that show that the general level of engagement in most workplaces borders at a shockingly low 20%. According to him, "any company able to lift these levels by even a percentage point will release additional resource and capacity from their human assets" (p. 587).

Some critics believe that spirituality in the workplace is a passing fad just like its predecessors such as TQM and Reengineering. After providing a critical review of the literature on workplace spirituality, Gotsis and Kortezi (2008, p. 575) observe that "there are good reasons to believe that workplace spirituality is more than an impermanent trend; on the contrary, the concept carries a much more substantial meaning and its potential contribution to a more rounded understanding of human work, of the workplace and of the organizational reality worthy of examination." Given the tenor of modern corporations, the need for spirituality in the workplace can hardly be overemphasized.

Morality and Spirituality

A high sense of moral responsibility is the very foundation of all leadership. It has been said that there is no spirituality without morality and that the scriptures do not cleanse ethically impure. According to Vedānta, a philosophy that underscores the unity of all existence, to live a life of ethics, *dharma,* is to live in tune with the universal moral order. In the teachings of the *Vedas*, the value of harmlessness, or noninjury (*ahiṁsā*), is accepted as the most fundamental human value (*ahiṁsā parmo dharma*). *Ahiṁsā* means not causing harm by any means, neither by thoughts, *manasā,* words, *vāca*, deeds, *kāyena*.[2]

The entire order of *dharma* and the values that arise from that order are rooted in this basic human desire for not being hurt or harmed in any way. According to Vedānta, in order to figure out whether a given action is in alignment with ethics (*dharma*), one need not go any further than to ask oneself the question, if someone were to do it to me, would it cause me any harm? The answer to this question reveals the universal moral order.[3] There is no higher morality (*dharma*) than adhering to the golden rule: Do as you would be done by.

What is the spiritual basis of this understanding? We believe that it is the essential unity and oneness of all existence. Based on the Vedāntic vision of nondual reality, to go against *dharma* is like sticking your hand in fire. It directly hurts oneself (Satprakashananda, 1977). If the Self is an undivided and limitless reality that is the essential nature of all beings, then it naturally follows that doing an action that hurts another person is no different than hurting oneself. As one progresses on the spiritual path one spontaneously starts following *dharma*, not only because it brings about peace of mind, but because to follow *dharma* is to live in harmony with the truth of oneself and the whole existence:

> Basically, morality is the attunement of the individual self to the Self of the universe. While a spiritual person practices this knowingly, a moral man practices the same unknowingly. Moral life is the closest to the spiritual life. Unselfishness is the prime moral virtue. It is the attunement of the individual self to the Self of the universe, the Soul of all souls.[4]

A life based on morality and spirituality is rooted in truthfulness, noninjury, compassion, and service (Dhiman, 2012/2014). One who knows oneself to be the Self of all cannot harm anyone. No higher raison d'être need to be sought for compassion for all.

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[2] Swami Dayananda (1993). *The value of values*. Saylorsburg, PA: Arsha Vidya Gurukulum, 41.

[3] Viswam, T. R. (2000). *Sanatana dharma: Eternal religion*. Mumbai, India: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

[4] Satprakashananda, S. (1977). *The goal and the way*. St. Louis, MO: Vedanta Society of St. Louis, p. 42.

Spirituality in Personal Life

Spirituality deals with the ultimate ends of life, with questions such as who I am and what is my purpose. The two questions in the opening story crystallize the essence of spirituality at the personal level: Who are you and what are you doing here?

Spirituality in personal life is anchored in the belief that 'we are not human beings on a spiritual journey; we are spiritual beings on a human journey.' It begins with the premise that, in the grand cosmic scheme of things, everything and everyone has a purpose. And to realize this purpose is to live a life of purpose. Essentially, it is addressing the fundamental dilemma of our times—the difference between making a *living* and making a *life*. Warren (2002) calls living such life a "purpose-driven life." According to Frankl (1959/1999, p. 95) "*There is nothing* in the world […] that would *so effectively help one* to *survive even the worst conditions, as the knowledge that there* is a *meaning in one's life*." Frankl approvingly quotes Nietzsche: "He who has a *why* to live can bear with almost any *how*."

Such spirituality has deeply rooted in psychology because "unless psychology is properly oriented, there is no spirituality" (Shah, 2004). Personal spirituality, therefore, builds on healthy psychology that begins with the primacy of consciousness—the font of all possibilities. Many modern writers (Chopra, 2015, 2010, 1994; Zukav, 1999; Godman, 1985; Dyer, 1972; Wei, 2000; Wheatley, 2006) recognize the creative power that lies at center of human consciousness. To quote Chopra (1994, p. 7), "The source of all creation is pure consciousness: pure potentiality seeking expression from the unmanifest to the manifest. And when we realize that our true Self is one of pure potentiality, we align with the power that manifests everything in the universe."

Another important aspect of personal spirituality is realizing one's essential kinship with all existence, a realization born of understanding that everything is connected with everything else and that *to be is to interbe* (Nhat Hanh, 2009).

In the words of Eliot (1969, pp.109–110):

> In the Heaven of Indra, there is said to be a network of pearls, so arranged that if you look at one you see all the others reflected in it. In the same way each object in the world is not merely itself but involves every other object and in fact IS everything else. In every particle of dust, there are present Buddhas without number.

This understanding helps one to make responsible choices in all aspects of life and garners a greater reverence for all life.

And finally, spirituality in the personal life recognizes that our authentic power lies in living fully in the present moment, becoming aware of the silent sense of our presence, our being. Tolle (1999) calls it being the "witnessing presence." This has also been termed as "*Awareness Watching Awareness*" (Langford, 2008). And the moment one starts "watching the thinker," says Tolle (1999, p. 14), "a higher level of consciousness becomes activated. You then begin to realize that there is a vast realm of intelligence beyond thought, that thought is only a tiny aspect of that intelligence. You also realize that all the things that truly matter—beauty, love,

creativity, joy, inner peace—arise from beyond the mind. You begin to awaken, freeing yourself from your mind." And to live with felt awareness in the present moment is to be awakened to the reality of our essential being.

Let's find out what Buddhism has to say on the topic of living a life of wakefulness.

Understanding Buddhism, Understanding Life!

Encountering Buddhism for the first time, one is rather shocked to read what is called the first noble truth—*the truth of suffering*. Is life really a suffering?

Yes, the way we normally live, says Buddhism. There is more here than what meets the eye, as is usually the case with things profound. Let's find out. Generally, there are three distinguishing marks of existence that are presented in the earliest teachings of the Buddha:

1. *anicca* (impermanence)
2. *dukkha* (suffering)
3. *anatā* (lit.: not-self)

The first mark of existence states that *everything changes*. The last one means that there is *no "separate" self*. Existence is one perfectly and inseparably interconnected web of interdependencies. You cannot pluck a flower without disturbing a star. Even when there is one less drop of water, the whole universe feels thirsty. And by the way, there are no "weeds." A weed is plant whose medicinal value we have not discovered yet.

Because, we do not really accept the truth of change, as well the fact that we do not exist as separate entities, we live a life of anxiety and anguish. This is what is really signified by the first Noble Truth of Buddhism—"life is suffering."

Now let's look at how we generally live: We wish things, relationships, events that are favorable to us to "not" change. And our whole existence is based on strengthening or reinforcing our attachment to a separate ego we believe to be our self. Our every action, every thought makes it loud and clear. We even try to "own" space! We say I need my space! We also tend to glorify our attachments! The media has its share in it too. Well, diamonds are not forever and the real estate is not really real either.

Both the first and the last marks (impermanence and no separate self) teach us to live a life of nongrasping, nonclinging, and nonattachment. In short, to live without the tag of ownership! What is there to own anyways? Did we bring anything with us? Will we be able to take anything with us? Like it or not, death is the ultimate leveler, the most democratic thing in the universe.

The idea is to neutralize our strong likes and dislikes. If we take an impartial survey of our way of living, our whole life is marked by identification and attachment. Once we understand the fact of impermanence and nonself, we develop a healthy attitude of letting go. Nonattachment is a flower that grows on the tree of understanding. It is nourished by the water of contentment born of discernment.

Equipped with this understanding, we not only eliminate suffering from our own life, we also become more loving, more generous, more compassionate, more understanding, more considerate, and more forgiving.

It has been rightly said that in the end only three things matter: how much we loved, how gently we lived, and how gracefully we let go of things that are not meant for us. This is one good summary of Buddhism.

Buddhism is an art of living based on the science of mind.

Spirituality and Positive Psychology

It must be noted that garnering a sense of kindness and compassion benefits both the practitioner as well as the recipient. Recently, positive psychology has confirmed the emotional and health benefits of altruistic love. Empirical research by Lyubomirsky and her colleagues has shown that we can maximize our well-being as much as 40% by intentionally engaging in activities such as expressing gratitude, doing random acts of kindness, and creating a sense of optimism (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2007; Kurtz & Lyubomirsky, 2008; Lyubomirsky, 2008a, 2008b; Boehm and Lyubomirsky, 2009).

Positive psychology focuses on character, flourishing, and fulfillment. It aims to explore how to live a happy and fulfilling life, how to define and develop human strengths, and how to build character and resilience (Seligman, 2002). Fostering this mind-set has added advantage in building a spiritual workplace. In a foreword to an edited volume, titled *Positive Psychology: Exploring the best in people*, Lyubomirsky (2008b) explains that positive psychology explores how to elevate people to feeling great—to living flourishing lives; to developing their strengths, gifts, and capacities to the fullest. She further states that positive psychology focuses on what is best in people as opposed to psychology's conventional focus on disease, disorder, and the dark side of life.

Positive psychology is the psychology of what makes life worth living. It represents a commitment on the part of research psychologists to focus attention on the sources of psychological wellness—on positive emotions, positive experiences, and positive environments, on human strengths and virtues. It is rooted in the principle that empowering individuals to build a positive state of mind—to live the most rewarding, fruitful, and happiest lives they can—is just as critical as psychology's conventional focus on mending their defects and healing their ailments and pathologies.

Spirituality and Leadership: A Being-Centered Approach

In recent years, scholars have come to emphasize the importance of spirituality as a critical element of leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2001; Palmer, 1996). Underscoring the vital link between spirituality and leadership, Hawley (1993, p. 5) has observed

that 'all leadership is spiritual because the leader seeks to liberate the best in the people and best is always linked to one's higher self.' All of these perspectives illustrate how leadership is grounded in one's spirituality through a growing awareness of self and others. After reviewing 150 studies on the topic, Laura Reave (2005, p. 655) found that

> …there is a clear consistency between spiritual values and practices and effective leadership. Values that have long been considered spiritual ideals, such as integrity, honesty, and humility, have been demonstrated to have an effect on leadership success. Similarly, practices traditionally associated with spirituality as demonstrated in daily life have also been shown to be connected to leadership effectiveness. All of the following practices have been emphasized in many spiritual teachings, and they have also been found to be crucial leadership skills: showing respect for others, demonstrating fair treatment, expressing caring and concern, listening responsively, recognizing the contributions of others, and engaging in reflective practice.

Fry and Kriger (2009) postulate a theory of leadership based on *being* rather than *doing* or *having*. Fry (2003, 2008), in discussing the initial theory of spiritual leadership, opines that workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership can be viewed as constructs that are in the initial concept/elaboration stage of development. He views spiritual leadership as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for organizations to be successful in today's highly unpredictable internet-driven environment. Fry agrees that people need something to believe in, someone to believe in, and someone to believe in them. "A spiritual leader is someone," notes Fry, "who walks in front of one when one needs someone to follow, behind one when someone needs encouragement, and beside one when one needs a friend." Fry, Vitucci, and Cedillo (2005) define spiritual leadership as "the values, attitudes, and behaviors that one must adopt in intrinsically motivating one's self and others so that both have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership—i.e., they experience meaning in their lives, have a sense of making a difference, and feel understood and appreciated" (p. 836).

Fry (2003, p. 712) presents a model of spiritual leadership that fosters intrinsic motivation through vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love. At the heart of this model is the practice of altruistic love which is described as unconditional, selfless, caring concern for both self and others. Altruistic love is nurtured through spiritual values such as trust/loyalty, forgiveness/acceptance/gratitude, integrity, honesty, courage, humility, kindness, empathy/compassion, patience/meekness/endurance, excellence, self-discipline, and truthfulness. Fry and Kriger (2009, pp. 1671–1672) build their model of spiritual leadership mainly upon Ken Wilber's theory based on multiple levels of being. Wilbur's theory draws upon developmental psychology, anthropology, and philosophy. Fry and Kriger remark that all six religious traditions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism) point to the same underlying five levels, although each uses different terminology and names for the levels. As the following figure shows, these levels show a progression in human consciousness from grosser to subtler levels, culminating in nondual awareness. They "argue that leadership researchers have focused mostly on questions of leadership as having certain qualities, states or doing certain actions based on the situation

Fig. 8.1 Multiple levels of being as context for effective leadership [Source: Based on Fry and Kriger's article: Towards a theory of being-centered leadership: Multiple levels of Being as context for effective leadership (2009). *Human Relations*, pp. 1670-1672]

and that the literature has not sufficiently addressed leadership as a state of being" (p. 1670) (Fig. 8.1).

Drawing upon six of the major spiritual and religious traditions, Fry and Kriger (2009, p. 1671) describe their five levels being model as a means for expanding upon and enlarging currently accepted theories of leadership as follows (in the order of ontological descent):

Level V: Leadership contingency theory: *Leadership based on leader traits and behavior appropriate to the context.*
Level IV: Leadership from vision & values: *Leadership based on social construction of reality.*
Level III: Conscious leadership: *Leadership based on being aware of the individual psyche or self in its relation to others and journey into Spirit.*
Level II: Spiritual leadership: *Leadership based on awareness of spirit expressed as love, service, and presence in the now.*
Level I: Nondual leadership: *Leadership based on Oneness and constant reconciliation of apparent opposites.*

We discuss below two approaches to leadership—authentic leadership and servant leadership—that come closest to the ideal of spiritual leadership.

Authentic Leadership

The first essay on authentic leadership was written by R. W. Terry in 1993, followed up in 2003 by Bill George, the exemplary former head of Medtronic, who popularized the concept of authentic leadership in his best seller *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value*. In the context of rampant corporate scandals and pervasive financial crises, George argues that leadership needs

to be completely reexamined and rethought. This calls for a new type of leader who embodies qualities such as integrity, transparency, humility, and a deep sense of purpose.[5]

In recent times, authentic leadership has gained increasing importance since it places high emphasis on behaving transparently, with a high moral and ethical stance. According to Avolio and Gardner, authentic leadership is somewhat of a generic term and can incorporate transformational, charismatic, servant, spiritual, or other forms of positive leadership. As one of the positive forms of leadership, authentic leadership complements work on ethical and transformational leadership.[6] Walumbwa et al. define authentic leadership as follows:

> A pattern that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development.[7]

As a practitioner of authentic leadership, Bill George has proposed a view that leaders need to follow their internal compass to reach their true purpose. Based on interviews with 125 contemporary heads of various organizations, George and Sims have identified the following five dimensions of *authentic leaders*: (1) pursuing purpose with passion, (2) practicing solid values, (3) leading with heart, (4) establishing enduring relationships, and (5) demonstrating self-discipline.[8]

Servant Leadership

The concept of servant leadership was first introduced by Robert K. Greenleaf's powerful short essay written in 1970, titled "The Servant as Leader." Describing what he called "the leadership crisis," Greenleaf notes that "colleges, universities, and seminaries have failed in their responsibility to prepare young people for leadership roles in society."[9] According to Greenleaf, "The servant-leader is servant first …. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. That person is sharply different from one who is *leader* first."[10] Greenleaf believes that

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[5] See: B. George and P. Sims, *True North: Discover Your Authentic Leadership* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007); B. George, P. Sims, A. N. McLean, and D. Mayer, "Discovering Your Authentic Leadership," *Harvard Business Review*, 85(2), (2007): 129–138.

[6] Avolio and Gardner, "Authentic Leadership Development," 329.

[7] F. O. Walumbwa, B. J. Avolio, W. L. Gardner, T. S. Wernsing, and S. J. Peterson, "Authentic Leadership: Development and Validation of a Theory-based Measure," *Journal of Management*, 34(1), (2008): 89–126.

[8] George and Sims, *True North*, xxxi.

[9] Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1977), 77.

[10] Ibid., 27.

through selfless service, servant leaders achieve trust among employees, customers, and communities. He then goes on to present the litmus test of effectiveness of leadership:

> The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived? . . . The servant-as-leader must constantly ask: How can I use myself to serve best? (Greenleaf, 1977, 5, 10)

Greenleaf informs us that he got the idea of servant leadership by reading Hermann Hesse's book entitled *Journey to the East*. Therefore, perhaps the best way to understand servant leadership is to read *Journey to the East*. The book is about a spiritual journey to the East. During the journey, a humble servant named Leo does all the chores for the travelers. He keeps the group together through his songs and high spirits. And when Leo disappears, the group falls into disarray and the journey is abandoned. They cannot continue without him. Later on in the book, the narrator finds out that, Leo, whom he had taken to be a servant, was actually the noble leader of the group.[11] This radical shift is the core of servant leadership: from followers serving leaders to leaders serving followers. Servant leadership is shared leadership in essence: it emphasizes increased service to others, a holistic approach to work, promoting a sense of community, and the sharing of power in decision-making.[12] Servant leaders hold everything in trust on behalf of those who follow.

Servant leadership is similar to transformational leadership in that both emphasize, appreciate, and empower followers. However, as Stone et al. point out, the main difference between servant leadership and transformational leadership is the focus of the leader: "Transformational leaders tend to focus more on organizational objectives, while servant leaders focus more on people who are their followers."[13] These authors further point out that servant leaders influence followers through service itself, while transformational leaders rely on their charismatic abilities.

The Essence of Spirituality, According to the Gītā

The highest spirituality is regarding every being as Divine (*Vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti*: 7.19), and the highest service is treating everyone as one treats oneself (6.32), and being naturally and spontaneously engaged in the well-being of all beings (*sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ*: 5.25; 12.4). The Gītā says that such a great-souled person is

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[11] Hermann Hesse, *The Journey to the East*, translated by H. Rosner (New York: Picador, 2003; Original work published in 1932).

[12] Larry Spears, *Practicing Servant-Leadership: Succeeding Through Trust, Bravery, and Forgiveness* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

[13] G. A. Stone, R. F. Russell, and K. Patterson, "Transformational versus Servant Leadership: A Difference in Leader Focus," *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 25(4), (2004): 349–361.

rare indeed (7.19) and attains to the Highest, the Lord of All (*labhante brahmanirvāṇ am*: 5.25; *te prāpnuvanti mām*: 12.4).

According to the Gītā, leaders should set an example for others, act for the benefit of others and for bringing the communities together. Such leaders have several key attributes, such as:

- Acting for the good of others (3.9; 5.25; 12.4).
- Leading by example (3.21).
- Developing a high sense of equanimity, *samatā* (2.38; 2.48-50). No great leadership is possible without developing evenness of mind, *samatvam* (2.57; 2.64; 2.68).
- Śrī Kṛṣṇa extols equanimity as the highest virtue in the Gītā at several places (2.48, 53, 57; 5.6, 18–20; 12.13–19; 14.24, 25; 18.10, 26). So, *samatā* is the crest-jewel of perfection (*siddhi*) in all the paths to spirituality. All virtues obtain in a mind that has cultivated equanimity. Whatever the spiritual practice, if evenness of mind (*samatā*) is not attained, the goal is still far away.
- Practicing the principle of mutual interdependence (3.11).
- Not being afraid of anyone and not generating any sense of fear in others (12.15).
- Bringing communities together by working for the universal welfare (3.20).

The following verse presents the quintessential paradigm for both ethics and spirituality, under the garb of Golden Rule:

> *ātmaupamyena sarvatra samaṃ paśyati yorjuna /*
> *sukhaṃ vā yadi vā duḥkhaṃ sa yogī paramo mataḥ //* 6.32
>
> He who looks on all as one, on the analogy of his own self, and looks on the joy and sorrow of all equally (that is, treats the joy and sorrow of all, as he treats his own joy and sorrow); such a Yogi is deemed to be the highest of all.

The Gītā states that the wise leader acts to set an example to the masses, so that the unwary do not go astray (3.26), for the unification of the world at large (*lokasaṃgraham*: 3.20, 3.25), for the welfare of all beings (*sarvabhūtahite*: 5.25), and for the purification of the self (*ātmaśuddhaye*: 5.11). These four goals together furnish a touchstone for leadership success in any setting. Leaders do their duty for duty's sake (cf. Kant's Duty Ethics), to set an example for others, to bring communities together, for the well-being of all; and above all, for the purification of the mind and the heart. No higher teaching on the sublimity of a leader's work ethic can be conceived.

In the ultimate analysis, leadership is not about changing outer conditions or others. More often than not, there is not much that we can do to change what is external to us. However, we have full control over our own conduct. "When we are no longer able to change a situation," writes psychotherapist Viktor E. Frankl, "we are challenged to change ourselves."[14] And when we are able to do that, in due course of time, we are also able to change the situation, unexpectedly. This is the alchemy of all social change.

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[14]Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy* (New York: A Touchstone Book, 1984, Third edition), 116.

Greek thinkers of yore have defined happiness as the exercise of human faculties along the lines of excellence. In the same manner, the Bhagavad Gītā defines *Yoga* as dexterity or excellence in action (*yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*: 2.50). It is common to experience a feeling of soaring spirit when we are doing excellent work. The converse is also true. It has been observed that the best way to kill human motivation is to expect and accept mediocre performance from others. Expecting less than excellent work is the greatest disservice we can do to ourselves and to others. We owe excellence to ourselves, as much as we owe it to the society.

No mere ideology, this passion for excellence has far-reaching implications for leaders and for workplace performance. Nobody comes to work to put in a shoddy performance. Everyone is looking for creative self-expression. And when we create opportunities for meaningful self-expression, we help build a workplace where people act with self-fulfillment and not merely work for it. Creating such a liberating work environment is the real job of a leader.

Case Study 8.1: Gandhi—A Case in Point of Spiritual Leadership [15]

From the pages of recent history, Gandhi emerges as a grand strategist and exemplary leader with a keen understanding of human nature. His leadership style was "follower-centric" and "contextual." Gandhi consistently embodied the perennial values of selflessness, humility, service, nonviolence, and truthfulness in and through his life and death. His leadership effectiveness proceeded from his categorical adherence to these values and his openness to learn from his own mistakes. As is well known, he never compromised on the core values of truth and nonviolence, no matter what the circumstances. Gandhi embodied the key qualities of exemplary leadership to the highest degree. As such, there is much to learn and emulate from Gandhi's approach to leadership. All great leaders lead by example. Gandhi inspired emulation not so much by his professed set of values and beliefs as by the exemplary nature of his life and conduct.

Gandhi led the greatest anticolonial movement in history peacefully, showed how to lead a consummate political life without compromising integrity, revealed a rare model of morally sensitive political leadership, and provided politics much-needed spiritual basis. Where did Gandhi get his being-power? We believe that it was his moral and spiritual strength. With his indomitable spirit, Gandhi was able to win his ideological wars in the long run, even when he seemed to be losing his battles in the short run. Through his life example, he taught that mere strong work ethic is not enough. What is needed is a work ethic guided by ethics in work.

In Gandhi's thought and life, we find the perfect expression of both values-based leadership and being-centered leadership. He led from within—from

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[15] This section is partially based on author's recent book, *Gandhi and Leadership: New Horizons in Exemplary Leadership* (Palgrave Macmillan, USA, 2015).

(continued)

the deep moral and spiritual core of his being. His life and leadership were inseparably one and all his existential experiments were a series of steps toward self-realization—the supreme goal underpinning all his strivings. Through prayer, contemplation, self-abnegation, self-purification, he cultivated his being to such an extent that it emanated a gentle soul force that endeared him even to his severest critics and detractors. "There is nothing striking about him," wrote Romain Rolland, a Nobel Laureate in literature and one of Gandhi's earliest biographers, "except his whole expression of 'infinite patience and infinite love' … he is modest and unassuming … yet you feel his indomitable spirit."[16] Rolland puts his finger right on the pulse in stating that Gandhi's strength lay in the towering spirit that resided in his frail frame.

Gandhi believed he had nothing new to teach to the world, for these values are as old as humanity itself. His innovation lay in experimenting with his core values on as vast a scale as he could, extending them from the personal to the public arena. He preached what he already practiced and strove hard to live up to his values. His was essentially a values-based, principle-centered approach to leadership. Gandhi's life and thought embodied a truth applicable to humanity as a whole. His leadership legacy became the harbinger of freedom for many countries in Southeast Asia and Africa and his life became a guiding star to leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Nelson Mandela. With his life as his legacy, Gandhi, the leader, now belongs to all humanity. Whenever a soul lifts her voice to peacefully dissent against any kind of oppression, Gandhi's legacy will continue.

The following quote captures the essence of Gandhian ethics and spirituality:

> We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him. This is the divine mystery supreme. A wonderful thing it is and the source of our happiness. We need not wait to see what others do.[17]

Gandhi strived to live all his life modeled on a shared vision of good for the broader society. Impeccable integrity, humility, credibility, trustworthiness, and selfless service were some of the hallmarks of Gandhian leadership. Gandhi's ethical world view was shaped by his religious belief in the existence of cosmic spirit—a spiritual power that informed and gently guided the universe. He believed that the universe is not amoral and that it has a structural

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[16] Romain Rolland, *Gandhi* (New York: Kessinger Publishing, 2003/1924).

[17] M. K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India, 1999), Vol. 13, 24.

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bias toward good. In his view, although good and bad existed in the world, good not only survived but triumphed in the long run. "If we take a long view," said Gandhi, "we shall see that it is not wickedness but goodness which rules the world." He believed that the universe is built on benevolence and goodness, and supports these qualities as well.

Gandhi's Seven Lessons for Life and Leadership (Dhiman, 2015)

1. Effective Leaders know that leading with authenticity first requires delving into the core of one's being and engaging in a process of deep self-exploration characterized by self-reflection, self-understanding, self-authorship, and self-mastery.
2. Means are ends in making. Nothing right can finally come from wrong means. Gandhi always placed right means above desired ends. For when you do the right thing, right things happen to you.
4. Effective leaders approach life and leadership as peaceful warriors—bereft of attachment and personal likes and dislikes. They do not do what they like to do. They do what needs to be done.
5. Leader's true inspiration comes from doing selfless work. Selfless work brings equanimity of mind which is the key to making balanced decisions.
6. The oppressor needs at least as much love and compassion as the oppressed. This is the alchemy of social change and harmony.
7. Effective leaders know that their strength resides in the richness of their being, not in the multitude of their possessions. Their goal is to *be*, not to *have*.

The life example of Gandhi shows us that we can also achieve what great leaders have achieved, if we are willing to put forth the necessary effort and to cultivate the values that such exemplary leaders embodied. Herein lies the real purpose of studying the lives of great leaders.

> *Lives of great men all remind us*
> *We can make our lives sublime,*
> *And, departing, leave behind us*
> *Footprints on the sands of time.*[18]

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[18] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "A Psalm of Life," *The Complete Poems of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, Kindle Edition, Amazon Digital Services. Retrieved, February 11, 2015: http://www.amazon.com/Complete-Poems-Henry-Wadsworth-Longfellow-ebook/dp/B0084761KO/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1410108836&sr=1-1&keywords=Poems+Of+Henry+Wadsworth+Longfellow.

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Questions for Case in Point

1. What was the mainstay of Gandhi's greatness as a leader?
2. How was Gandhi able to extend the ideals of truthfulness and nonviolence from personal to social arena?
3. What was Gandhi's most important legacy? Why?
4. How would you describe Gandhi's leadership style?

Conclusion

Learning to be an effective leader needs to be approached essentially as a vital dimension of one's personal growth and transformation. If leadership is an expression of who we are, then in essence all leadership is spiritual leadership. In the ultimate analysis, spiritual leadership is about searching within the truth of our real self. All other seeking is weariness of the soul and unsatisfying in its ultimate bidding. Only the seekers and knowers of self are self-fulfilled. They act *with* fulfillment and not *for* fulfillment. The quest for spiritual leadership starts with self-awareness and self-mastery, progresses with living authentically one's core values, and culminates in leaving a legacy by fulfilling life's purpose through selfless service for the greater good.

Summary

By way of chapter summary, we present below seven lessons pertaining to self-awareness and self-knowledge that represent the core of *Spiritual Leadership*:

1. Effective leaders know that self-awareness is the key to leading from within. They manage their awareness attentively to lead others effectively. Self-awareness is the art of being alertly aware about one's body, mind, intellect, and emotions. It ultimately depends upon self-knowledge.
2. Self-knowledge means the knowledge of one's true self at the "soul-level"—beyond senses, mind, and intellect. While all other knowledge pertains to knowing everything that can be objectified externally, self-knowledge is about knowing the Knower.

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3. Exemplary leaders recognize that the most important challenges confronting organizations and society at large are so profound and pervasive that they can only be resolved at the fundamental level of the human spirit—at the level of one's authentic self.

4. Spirituality takes it axiomatic that there is a higher principle, force, being or intelligence that sustains the universe. It believes that ours is basically a just and fair universe and we are put here to do good. There is a purpose for everyone and everything. It postulates that entire world is one family with a common identity and heritage and everything is connected with everything else.

5. Authentic leadership and servant leadership are primary expressions of spiritual leadership. Authentic leaders are altruistic, honest, and trustworthy. Servant leadership represents a shift from followers serving leaders to leaders serving followers. It denotes increased service to others, a holistic approach to work, and a greater sense of community.

6. Since leadership is an expression of who we are, in discovering, living, and sharing our deepest values lies the true fulfillment of our life and leadership.

7. To lead others one must first lead one's self. To lead one's self, one must first know oneself. To know oneself, one must first 'be' oneself. To be truly oneself is the first and last step in becoming an authentic leader. This is called self "dis-covery"—a journey within, from here to here.

Discussion Questions

1. Why organizations need to pay heed to ethics and spirituality?
2. What is the main difference between spirituality and religion? Is it necessary to be religious in order to be spiritual?
3. How spiritual leadership differs from its close cousins—authentic leadership and servant leadership?
4. Explain why it is essential to be a good human being to become a great leader?
5. Why most important challenges facing organizations today need to leverage the spiritual and moral energy of its participants?

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