

## Spirituality in Management

SWAMI NIKHILESWARANANDA

Some of my brother monks asked me about the topic I was going to speak on. I said, 'Spirituality in Management.' It sounded like an oxymoron to them. Spirituality and Management? It is like hot ice! Where is spirituality and where is management! Spirituality deals with the spirit and management deals with matter. These are apart like the North Pole and the South Pole.

This is presumably a normal reaction because one is usually considered sacred and another secular. This is due to our incorrect notion about these two words.

Popularly, spirituality means meditating somewhere in the forests or caves, or performing *ārātrikam* in the temples or worshipping in the mosque or a church—in short, taking part in some rituals. This is our view about spirituality. But spirituality is nothing but the development of our inner being for achieving happiness, peace and fulfilment. This has nothing to do with rituals. This spirituality can be practised in everyday life. This is what Swami Vivekananda came to declare in this age. That is why Sister Nivedita in her Introduction to *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* says: 'If the many and the One be indeed the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realization. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is it-

self religion. . . . This is the realization which makes Vivekananda the great preacher of Karma, not as divorced from, but as expressing Jnāna and Bhakti. To him, the workshop, the study, the farmyard, and the field are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man as the cell of the monk or the door of the temple.'

By the same token, a factory or an industry is as much a fit place for the worship of God in man as a temple, or a church, or a mosque.

Secondly, we also do not have a proper understanding of the word 'management'. Management is nothing but organized common sense. It is not only business management. But as soon as we utter the word 'management', we equate it with business management.

Peter Drucker, one of the most acclaimed management experts of the United States, in his latest book points out that we do not know how this mistake has been occurring since 1930. Before 1930, management did not only mean business management. It covered all topics, all fields, all subjects. But somehow we have made this mistake and now we must rectify it because management covers all aspects of our lives and society. So business management is one such field. Just as paediatrics is not medicine, business management is not management. It is only a part of management. So there can be management of business enterprise, NGOs, hospitals, government agencies, banks and various other

organizations. Again, management is not restricted to these institutions only. It may be management of yourself and your mind, of time, of every day life as well. It is after all an organized common sense. The science and art of performing a thing productively with maximum utilization of resources is management. It has to be applied to every walk of life, just as Swami Vivekananda said that Vedanta has to be applied to all situations and fields of life. So if we understand the proper meaning of the two words—spirituality and management—they will not seem like oxymoron when we talk about spirituality in management.

In the field of management, the fourth wave is now coming slowly. The first wave was the British style of management when work-study, work-measurement, method study were in vogue, ie—Taylor’s Measurement of work-study was in vogue. The second wave was the American style of management when Peter Drucker became the Guru of all. The third wave was the Japanese style of management when TQM (Total Quality Management), Zero-Defect Management and other things became popular. Now slowly but surely, the fourth wave is coming, not only in India, but all over the world. And it is the spirituality-based management with a holistic approach to life. This kind of management is based on Indian ethos, based on spiritual culture. Spirituality is now an in-subject. For example, *The Business Week*, that is, the magazine published from New York, in one of its recent issues says that many companies in America are now adopting the Vedantic style of management based on spirituality. They have named it ‘*Karma-capitalism*’.

I read a news item published in *The Times of India*. The news says that

corporate America is embracing Indian philosophy in a big way, the same thing that the *Business Week* magazine in its latest issue admitted. Phrases from the ancient Hindu texts such as the *Bhagavad-Gitā* are popping up in management circles and in websites. Top business schools have introduced self-mastery classes that are using Indian methods to help managers boost their leadership skills and find inner peace amidst hectic life schedules. The magazines call it ‘Karma Capitalism’—a gentler and more empathic ethos that surfaces in the post-tech bubble. The trendy Eastern text today is the more introspective *Bhagavad-Gitā*.

Similarly, *The Times of India* reports that many companies in America are now adopting the Vedic style of management. It is the new age mantra for some of the countries’ leading CEOs. In the United States, Ford had used it for understanding joint ventures and Boeing for designing executive programmes. Nearer home, Godrej, Crompton Greaves, MTNL and some other companies have more or less adopted these concepts of Vedic management. It is not a mass movement as yet, but business leaders who had tried it have reported an improvement in results.

Inversely, spirituality is also getting into management. On 8 September 2008, a news item in *The Times of India* said—‘Management Enters Divine Domain: Courses in Temple-Management offer managers instead of priests.’ Spiritual leaders, the report adds, are spouting cool management jargon in their discourses. With temples mushrooming across the country and coffers overflowing with donations, is there a need for temple management? Surely. Look at the popularity of a diploma course offered by the Somnath Sanskrit University. The first batch of students are

just awaiting results. The unique course on 'Mandir Vyavasthāpan', (Temple Management) has four papers on aspects of religion as well as practical management of temples. Subjects they study include Temple Architecture, Rituals, Event Management, Crowd Management, Sanskrit, English, Accounts and Law. Many NRIs have already come with requests to export these newly-bred priests-cum-managers to their temples.

The *Week* magazine brought out an issue on 20 April 2008 with the cover page showing an interesting headline 'CEOs and Spirituality'. The story quoted a number of CEOs to reveal how they are trying to adopt spirituality in their personal lives and also in their companies for improving the productivity as well as the quality of their own lives and the lives of their staff members. Subhas Chandra Goyal, the Chairman of Zee TV, Anu Agha, the ex-chairman of Thermax, Adi Godrej, the Chairman of Godrej Industries, Indu Jain, the Chairman of Bennett and Coleman Ltd, R. P. Nandy, the creative-director of Prithvi Nandy Communications, V. L. Dhoot, the Chairman of Videocon and others are now having regular spiritual practices.

I know personally, in Belgaum, one of our devotees has started a 'Business-Ashrama'. It has an ashramalike atmosphere with beautiful auditorium, a meditation hall and so on. All the staff members first come and meditate there, chant *mantras* and then begin their work. They work, pray and eat together in this 'Business Ashrama.' The enterprise started with a very small turnover and now its MD does not know how to spend the money.

*Liberating the Corporate Soul* is a book by Richard Barnet who has become a full-time adviser of spiritualized management. His clientele consists of the World

Bank and Swiss Government. Deepak Chopra's book, *Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*, you all know. There is another book, *The Power of Ethical Management* by Kenneth Blanchard. Then Norman Vincent Peale, the author of another famous book, *The Power of Positive Thinking*, is also there. They have pointed out in their books that *you need not cheat to win*. Previously we thought that the more one can cheat others, the more one can earn. But there is a paradigm shift. In one of the books the author has stated that work for profit only is like playing tennis with your eyes on the scoreboard rather than on the ball.

There is another book—*God is My CEO*—by Larry Julien which is very popular. *What Would Buddha Do at Work* is a book by Franz Metcalf and B. J. Gallagher Hately. Gallagher has also written a book on the relation between spirituality and management. And there are many many such books on this topic.

There is a management-based institution in USA. It trains the CEOs all over the world. It organized a seminar some time back in which the CEOs present were made to watch the film 'Gandhi' by Richard Attenborough. They found that there were forty qualities which make one leader and which turned Gandhi into a 'Mahatma'.

The World Economic Forum at Davos devoted a lot of time to explore the theme—'Spirituality in Business'. As is evident, there are so many companies now adopting the concepts of spirituality in management and they are getting benefit out of it. But the question arises: why this paradigm shift? There are obviously so many reasons. One reason being globalization. It has come, whether it is to our liking or not. At least on the economic front

globalization has come and the globe has become a village now. Advancement in communication technology has annihilated the geographical distances among the nations. Hence, advancement of rapidly changing communication technology can be said to be the first reason for this paradigm shift.

The second reason is liberalization. This has changed the approach of the nations towards economy and other related factors. Consequently, interdependence of one nation on another has come. Competition has to give way to interdependence. Productivity is now a must which previously was an option. Now if there is no productivity you will be written off from the market. You can understand it from the meltdown that has come now. So the *Bhagavad-Gītā* says, ‘*yoga karmasu kaushalam*’—‘Yoga is dexterity in action, efficiency in action.’ That is an essential lesson taken up by most of the companies.

Again, ‘servant leadership’ concept is becoming popular. Robert Greenleaf launched this concept in 1970. For America, it is a very new concept and is very popular now. But in India it is not a new concept because 3000 years ago Sri Krishna demonstrated His servant leadership. What is servant leadership? Leading by example. Acting with an attitude that ‘I am the servant of all’. Swami Vivekananda also said long ago that if you really want to become an effective leader, you must be ready to serve others. It is your unselfish service that will really make an impact on the people with whom you are working. Swami Vivekananda himself was the greatest example of this attitude. He used to quote Guru Govind Singh and say—‘*Shirdaar to Sardaar*’, which means one who can sacrifice his head, ego and selfishness can become a true leader. Truly, one

who can sacrifice his head, ego, selfishness and can become humble, he alone can lead by his example and become an effective leader in the long run. Previously it was thought that you are a good leader if you can impress upon others by your outward show or if you could exercise your power given by your position. But those days are gone. Why servant leadership is important? Peter Drucker explains that in his book. This age is the age of knowledge workers. You cannot control them in a way that you used to do while dealing with the fourth class staff. Previously, blue-collar jobs were ninety per cent and the rest were white-collar. Now with the advent of automation in some of the countries, the reverse is true. Only ten per cent jobs are being done by blue-collar workers. So Peter Drucker says: managers and executives from now onwards are going to be more and more effectual with no authority whatsoever over their subordinates.

That exactly is what is happening. That is why it is becoming necessary to lead by servant example and the servant leadership is becoming very popular. Azim Premji was interviewed by *India Today*, that sought to explore the secret of his success and Premji said: I feel Mahatma Gandhi’s ‘trusteeship’ management is very relevant.

The seeds of these concepts were already embedded in our scriptures. For example, the *Ishopanishad* said—*Ishā vāsyamidam sarvam yatkinca jagatyām jagat: Tena tyaktena bhunjithāh mā gridhah kasya svid dhanam*. That is, the whole world is permeated by One Universal Consciousness. *Tena tyaktena bhunjithāh*—enjoy the world through renunciation. How can one enjoy through renunciation? The answer is, one does not have to renounce one’s cars, houses, motorbikes and mobiles. What one has to

renounce is his or her selfishness. *Mā gridhah kasya svid dhanam*—do not covet others' wealth. By ethical means you earn money and utilize it for greater purpose. That is trusteeship management.

Swami Vivekananda first spelt out this principle of trusteeship management to John D. Rockefeller, when he went to America to participate in the Parliament of Religions that took place in 1893. Rockefeller was the emperor of the petroleum industry. He had been then passing through an agonizing phase of frustration and he was contemplating suicide. One of his friends at that point suggested to him that if he wanted to get back his peace of mind, he should meet an Indian yogi who was staying at his friend's place. Rockefeller perhaps thought: I have to go to a beggar to get advice! No. But it so happened that one fine morning he came to that place where Swamiji was staying. He entered the house without being announced. He entered the study where Swamiji was reading some book. He was so engrossed that he did not notice Rockefeller. Swamiji looked up when Rockefeller tapped on his table and said: I am Rockefeller. Swamiji said: What do you want? Rockefeller was not prepared for this type of treatment. Naturally! He was such a great tycoon that even the President of America would get up in his presence. Obviously he was very much annoyed. Rockefeller said: 'I do not want anything'. 'Why then have you come?' asked Swamiji. Rockefeller had no answer to offer because he had come uninvited. Then Swamiji said: My dear Rockefeller, I know why you have come. You have come here because you have no peace of mind. Then Swamiji started narrating many incidents of the latter's life which no one else knew except Rockefeller. So Rockefeller became very

much excited and asked: 'Who has told you all this?' Swamiji said: Do you think it is necessary? I can see through your mind as I can see through a glass almirah. Rockefeller became very much alarmed. Swamiji said: I will give you a piece of advice—If you want peace of mind, remember that you are not the owner of your wealth. You are only a custodian of that wealth. God has given you so much of wealth. Utilize it for removing the sufferings of so many millions of people. By doing that you will find peace of mind. There is no other way.

Rockefeller was not prepared for this kind of advice. So he left the room as abruptly as he had come. After a few days, however, he came and entered in the same manner into the study where Swamiji was reading something with rapt attention. Rockefeller tapped the table and Swamiji looked up. Rockefeller then put down on Swamiji's table a piece of paper in which he had announced a huge sum being donated to a public cause. A proud Rockefeller said: Now you must thank me that I have followed your advice. Swamiji said: Well, it is for you to thank me.

This was the inception of the Rockefeller Foundation. At the fag end of life, Rockefeller wrote his autobiography where he said, 'There is more to life than the accumulation of money. Money is only a trust in one's hand. To use it improperly is a great sin. The best way to prepare for the end of life is to live for others. This is what I am trying to do. . . .'

From David Rockefeller, Bill Gates got the inspiration. He came to Calcutta. When Press reporters asked why he had come to Calcutta, he replied that *he was very much impressed by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda*. 'Have you really read his books?' Bill Gates replied: *I don't go to*

*bed without reading a few pages from the books of Swami Vivekananda.*

When I came across this news I could not believe because my concept of Bill Gates was that he was someone who believed only in cut-throat policy of competition. After a few days I again read in the newspaper that he had made a huge donation to a public cause. At that time Bill Gates was the richest man on earth with 52 billion dollars and out of it he had put 30 billion dollars in a trust named Blinda and Bill Gates Foundation. For the last three consecutive years he was the greatest donor. So, you see, the concept of trusteeship management or holistic management is being increasingly appreciated.

#### **Stress management**

Another concept which is becoming popular is 'stress management'. In America, many companies are having regular courses in stress management. A Chicago-based research corporation says that 40 per cent of companies are having regular such courses. But the Western models of stress management are not working, Western psychologists say that unexpressed or suppressed feelings in the subconscious mind lead to stress problems. So they advise their clients to give vent to their feelings. But the problem is that venting will make one lose his or her job. So what is the Western remedy? Punching pins. These are available in the market. Blue pins for injury, black pins for serious injury and red pins for murder! If one is upset about the unjustified thrashings of the boss, then the cruel boss can be playfully murdered with the help of red pins! Of course, these offer temporary help. But next morning you face your boss again and you encounter the same problem. That is why they are now leaning towards spirituality and

holistic management.

The *Time* magazine in its issue of 4 August 2003 displayed on cover a Hollywood actress in meditation. The cover story was—'Just Say Om'. It was reported in the story that ten billion Americans were regularly meditating. One cannot avoid meditation in America now. In the corporate houses, industries, boardrooms, classrooms, prisons, airports, railway platforms—everywhere there are meditation chambers. In 2004 I went to Europe and at Zurich airport I saw a sign indicating the way to the meditation chamber and, I must admit, it was beautiful. So they are now going for spiritual management to cope with stress problems.

Modern science has proved that for success IQ or intelligence quotient is not enough. In 1991 Daniel Wallman made a research and said EQ or emotional quotient is more important than IQ. They say, empathy, sympathy, understanding of others and the right-brain education, all these are important if you really want to be a successful person in the long run. The latest discovery of modern science is SQ or spiritual quotient. Dona Zoha, a Professor in the Oxford University, has written a book where she writes about spiritual intelligence or SQ. She says, neurologically, physiologically, biologically and psychologically, from every point of view there is conclusive evidence that there is something called SQ which is the basis of both IQ and EQ.

What is IQ? IQ will tell you how to play the game of life. What is EQ? EQ will tell you how to play the game of life in changed circumstances with changed strategies. What is SQ? Spiritual intelligence. It will tell you whether to play the game of life at all or not. What is the meaning of life? What is the goal of life? What is the basic purpose of life? SQ will give you an-

swers to all these questions.

Another discovery is that IQ is found in all the species, including computer chips! EQ is found only in a few species. But SQ is found only in the human species.

Now the main question is, how to develop SQ. A number of books are being written to show how this spiritual intelligence can be awakened. But the most comprehensive definition, I think, is one given by Swami Vivekananda in his book *Rāja-Yoga*. There he says: 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details'. Any of the four yogas—*Rāja-Yoga*, *Bhakti-Yoga*, *Jnāna-Yoga* and *Karma-Yoga*—can independently lead you to the ultimate realization of God, or help in the manifestation of divinity, leading you to infinite happiness, infinite peace. But the question is—which path will you choose? That depends upon your mental aptitude or level of mental development. Swamiji was also asked this question: What do you do, Swamiji? He said that he combined all the four. Romain Rolland said that Swami Vivekananda rode on all the four horses simultaneously. Why? Swamiji gives the solution. He says that all the yogas have certain limitations. But these limitations are overcome when you combine all the four and reap their advantages.

In the field of management we want

maximum utilization of resources available. In the same way, we have got resources. We have hands. Why should we not work with our hands for the Lord? If we do, it is *Karma-Yoga*. We also have mind. Why not meditate with the help of the mind? When we do, it is *Rāja-Yoga*, ie meditation. Then we have a heart to feel, to feel for others, to give love, to receive love. So love the Lord, love the Infinite, love the Ultimate. That is *Bhakti-Yoga*. We also have intellect by which we can know what the reality is. When you think about the ultimate Reality, that is *Jnāna-Yoga*. Hence, Swami Vivekananda asks us to combine all four yogas for the maximum utilization of all our faculties. So practise all the four yogas simultaneously. The combination of course depends on one's attitude. For example, some would like to give more weightage to *Rāja-Yoga*, or to *Karma-Yoga*, and likewise. The combination of four integral yogas would thus lead us to the ultimate Reality. Now so many management experts are preaching this.

Swami Vivekananda's message for the new age is that there should henceforth be no difference between 'sacred' and 'secular'. The workplace, the factories, business houses, market places, will all become places of worship. Work will thus be converted into worship. You need not necessarily go to temple, church or a mosque. You need not go to the Himalayas or the forest. Wherever you are, whatever work has been given to you by the Lord, doing that work in the spirit of worship you can reach the ultimate Reality and attain ultimate happiness, peace, infinite joy, infinite bliss here and now. ■

\* Swami Nikhileswarananda is Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Memorial, Vadodara, Gujarat. This article is based on the lecture he delivered at the Institute on 12 December 2008.