

## WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY

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### Abstract

ॐसहनाववतु  
सहनौभुनक्तु  
सहविरयैकरवावहै  
तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु  
माविदविषावहै  
ॐशांतिशांतिशांति।<sup>1</sup>

*Together may we two move,  
Together may we two relish,  
Together may we two perform,  
May what has been studied by us be (filled with the) brilliance (of understanding) leading to knowledge, (and)  
May it not give rise to hostility (due to lack of understanding)  
Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!*

ॐअसतोमासदगमय  
तमसोमाज्योतिर्गमय  
मृत्योर्माअमृतमगमय  
ॐशांतिशांतिशांति।<sup>2</sup>

*Om! O lord keep me not in (the phenomenon world of) unreality but make me go towards the reality (of eternal self).*

*Keep me not in the ignorant state of darkness, but make me go towards the light (of spiritual knowledge).*

*Keep me not in (the world of) mortality but make me go towards the world of immortality (of self-realization).*

*Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!*

*Prayer is an integral part of human life. Prayers are for unity, prosperity and success. Prayers are not to seek any undue support from the omnipotent but for a guiding force that can lead one to the path of self-realization. Prayers are not based on the condition of "give and take" or result of "action and reaction". Prayers are to create a positive ambience around, an aura where negativity cannot exist. What is reflected through the karma theory (Sakaam Karma and Nishkaam Karma) is clearly manifested in Bhagvad Gita as "कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्तेमाफलेषुकदाचन (ch 2:47) (it is the duty and not the result (of the duty) that you rightfully observe).*

*Thus our prayers are not for any material fruitfulness but for spiritual contiguity that opens a gate of mental prosperity. In the exhaustive urban life style, human beings work as machines. With the passing of the time, people have changed their wardrobes, home decors, culinary tastes, daily routines, comfort levels, regular habits and so on and so forth. Moreover, a shift is easily noticed in manners, interests, hobbies, likings and skills. The tiring work and competitiveness at workplaces almost drain the positive energy from us. In such situation, prayers can help us keep harmony between our work and spiritual lives. Faith is the fulcrum to build spiritual proximity that safeguards our honest emotions and surrounds us with positive spiral. This paper studies how spiritual proximity can be helpful to establish workplace spirituality and removes negativity, the byproduct of competitiveness.*

**Key words:** Prayer, Spiritual Proximity, Faith, Competitiveness, Workplace Spirituality

Gone are the days to argue or debate over the living style that is fast and furious. We are a way away from the most loved slow motion of the ethnic life that we could manage to keep alive, roughly, upto the middle of the nineteenth century. The ethnic flavor and fervor is still not completely lost but it would not be wrong to say that its sparse presence is felt either in memories or in museums. Today, the world works around the clock and aptly understands the general wisdom of the adage, “time and tide waits for none”.

The over absorbing rapidity of life is reluctant to give any break. Time and again we excuse ourselves from duties and responsibilities by using the all-pertinent common dictum, “I don’t have time”. Somewhere in our minds, we mistake this excuse for panacea. We forget about the concept of time-management; things get accumulated and we fail to complete the daily circle of duty and responsibility. Nevertheless, it is surprising to notice that even in the recurrent hullabaloo of the heavily loaded life, the reverence for prayer is unconditionally unaffected. Yes of course, the modes of prayer offering and recitation are somewhat changed. One recites prayers while taking bath, getting ready for office, driving or riding car or two-wheeler; or while cooking, dusting, cleaning or travelling. The focal point here is to see how a regular order of prayer recitation can help create a warm and decent work culture. Unfortunately, such recitation is, sometimes a habitual affair or an unconscious and duty-bound chanting. What one needs is to understand the words of the prayers and see whether the meaning of the prayer is protected by the behaviour. The vedic sutras – aphorisms from Vedas like Satyam vad, Dharmam char, swadhyayan ma pramaditavyam. speak truth, be dutiful, do not be lethargic in observing your regular learning-lessons – should be used as touchstones to check the vulnerability of the individual and collective behaviour. The understanding of such sutras creates positivity in the ambiance.

Social behaviour is more about a behavior expected by the society than by an individual. Let us put these two into a tabular form and see where is a scope to fill in the gap, if there is any.

| <b>A</b>                               | <b>B</b>                                |
|--|---|
| <b>Behaviour Expected on Workplace</b> | <b>Personal -Choice Based Behaviour</b> |
| Vocality                               | Silent                                  |
| Society centric                        | Self centric                            |
| Collective concern                     | Individual concern                      |
| Sharing                                | Hiding                                  |
| Team work                              | Working as individual                   |
| Open ended behavior                    | Close ended behaviour                   |
| Inclusivity                            | Exclusivity                             |

Behavior is the result of the nature of a person. Some prefer to work from silos, with their self-designed work ambiance and team. But it is quite opposite to the workplace expectation where collectivity and inclusivity is the central force. When personal behavior goes against the expected behavior, the positive energy goes missing.

This gap can be filled in by proper understanding followed by active implementation of prayers in our day to day life. For the Service Class, a day is broadly divided into two halves: 9:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. and 6:00 P.M. to 9:00 A.M.: the first time-unit is completely dedicated to the workplace whereas the second is for family, friends and extended relations. Furthermore this time unit has a non-active zone of 6 to 8 hours sleep. This time division shows that our longer period of active engagement is with the workplace where productive consistency results into growth of the individual and also the company/organization that one is associated with.

As workplace takes the major part of our concentration, time and contribution; a small psychological disturbance may affect one’s productive performance. The workplace culture and structure need friendliness horizontally (among employees) and vertically (hierarchically). In short, a faithful, reliable, considerate ambiance would raise the productivity graph of an individual’s career as well as the company’s overall growth and repute.

The only remedy to fend off any stress and create a positive spiral around is to routinely recite prayers and understand the associated meaning. The Vedic prayer selected here is familiar to us since our pre-primary school days. The prayer words are: Om sahna vavatu (together we two may move). The cluster of two may comprise of the other and the self. In the organizational culture it can be an employee and an employer. The prayer teaches us to perform and prosper together. Our studies lead us to respect each other that further may lead to the spiritual knowledge and finally sets us free from all kinds of hostilities. What we need and should pray for is PEACE, within and without. The central idea of this prayer is togetherness. It reminds the proverb, “together we stand divided we fall”. Good relations at workplace make work more enjoyable that can provide sufficient scope for accommodating innovative ideas as well as creative zeal. Faith in the individual talent, respect for the other’s potential, mindful behavior, readiness for change, open ended communication and smooth interactions help build good relations at workplaces.

The second Vedic prayer selected out of the ocean of wisdom sentences from our Vedas is asto ma sad gamay (O lord keep me not in unreality but make me go towards the reality). This prayer is to seek the guiding light that can repel the darkness of greed, selfishness, jealousy, anger and arrogance. These five dots that surround the circle of darkness restrict the ray of knowledge-light. The darkness of ignorance pervades the personality

and eventually one forgets the moral value of righteousness, honesty, faithfulness and morality. The selected prayers teach us the value of commitment, honesty, dedication and respect for others. They create a spiral of positivity, ethicality and morality. Thus, prayers teach us to develop “workplace spirituality” – the concept that respects value system and an over-all growth of an individual and the company/organization.

Dr. Radhakrishnan has said, if we exclude spiritual training from our institution we would be untrue to our whole civilization. Indian civilization has always advocated work ethics. We have ethical scriptures like Chanakya Neeti, Vidur Neeti and also Shukra Neeti. Our Vedas, Smritis, Samhitas, Upanishads, Aranyakas, Purans and the Epics have always taught the lawful –neetiuyukt behaviour at every stage of our life. The ancient Indian literature of wisdom has framed a rule book for kings, ministers, advisors, pundits and also the workers. Ancient wisdom literature gives many examples that work as touchstones to the present day work culture.

The twenty first shloka of Chapter 16th from Bhagvad Geeta reads:

TrividhamNarkasyedamdwarannaashanmaatmanah  
Kamahkrodhasthathalobhastasmaadetattrayam tyajet .

(Lust, anger and greed are the three doors of Hell. So, shun them (for your spiritual growth).

This shloka bears testimony to the general wisdom for righteous behaviour. Lord Krishna, the charioteer of Arjuna from the Epic-song of Bhagvad Geeta, is the lawful political advisor who lists out how humans can learn the eternal law of righteousness and how they can live a peaceful and fruitful life by being honest in their lives. The same advice is applicable for a better, higher and satisfying work-life. The present time workplace environment comprises four major components. It is 1. Multicultural, 2. Competitive, 3. Hierarchical and 3. Unpredictable.

### MULTICULTURAL:

It is an accepted truth that the world is a global village. The credit for the same goes to the incessant flow of migration, across the national and international borders. The ongoing process of migration has made the world culturally, religiously and linguistically inclusive and also absorbing. The present time corporate world is highly multicultural and thus creates a space for mutual relations among the employees. This provides a pretty good space to exchange the interpersonal skills to communicate, socialize, connect and co-operate. With the help of these acquired skills, the employees can develop good rapport among each other which is eventually beneficial to the growth of the company.

### COMPETITIVE:

The corporate world today is competitive where every employee aims higher for a brighter prospect. The term ‘competition’ needs a sincere attention as it may result into either creative or destructive situation. If competition is interpreted with a touch of honesty and dignity for work, the progress of a colleague becomes the matter of inspiration and not of jealousy. One has to keep a check on his/her ability and dedication to the work assigned.

### HIERARCHICAL:

The work structure of every corporate house is hierarchical. Simply put, it is a game of giving and taking orders. Here, Freudian idea of tripartite triggers of personality as reflected through Id, Ego and Superego has all the possible chances to pop up and affect/damage the work as well as the relations. These three components of the personality carry a relative impression to the work, worker and the workplace.

### UNPREDICTABLE:

The workplace environment is non-linear and dynamic. There are possibilities for the unpronounced changes and shifts in the functional pattern of a workplace. Rather than taking it personally, one may stay tied to value system that the life-goal has set. This will be the most motivational channel to grow professionally and also spiritually. A balanced mind works with consistent positivity even in an adverse situation.

Workplace Spirituality is nothing but understanding the core value of the adage “work is worship”. A German proverb speaks, “A clean conscience is the best pillow”. Workplace life would be more zealous, productive and inspiring if spirituality is expressed through our work behaviour and maintained in the work culture.

One axiom we need to accept that the society that we live in is made up by us. The society’s beliefs, justice, evils, ill practices etc., are the byproducts of our own mismanagement and misconduct with the divine order. Finn Collin says,

The notion of *homo faber*, man the toolmaker, has iconic significance in our culture: human beings devise tools and, in using them to create and transform their environment, they make of the natural realm in which they evolved as a species a new order, one brought into being and sustained by themselves.

The rudimentary tools that we made to protect us or the machines that we invented to facilitate us have taken away many inherent skills and crafts from us. The human proximity and warmth is also shrinking and receding. But this is the beauty of modern world. We cannot survive without the facilities around us. The only need is to understand the knowledge of the self that respects the other human being with zeal and positivity that can be attained through Five Cs. Clarity, cooperation, compassion, coherence and cordiality. These quality assets would build a harmonious work culture. If the root of a workplace culture is nourished with these five Cs, the workers would be successful and progressive.

In an opening verse of the *Astavakra Samhita*, the sage Astavakra sums up all the prerequisites to spiritual liberation as follows: –If you aspire after liberation, shun the objects of the senses as poison and seek forbearance, sincerity, kindness, contentment, and truthfulness as nectar. || Like all proper systems of self-inquiry, Advaita Vedanta lays down four prerequisites or qualities for a seeker after Self-knowledge, as follows:

1. Discrimination—*viveka*—between the real and the unreal
2. Renunciation—*vairagya*—of the unreal
3. Six Virtues/Treasures—*shatsampatti*—of self-control
4. Longing for liberation—*mumukshuta*

Though these are the prerequisite qualities of a seeker, they would surely help constructing a convivial office ambience if developed as a form of workplace culture. Life at workplace is mostly spent under a threat, threat to employee's competency, efficiency, longevity and remittance. The dynamic work life needs integration of the individual's ambitions, aspirations, the driving force and the availability of the resources and the surroundings. It is not about compromising with the situation or signing a low profit deal but it is about thoroughly examining the facilitator points and determining points. Workplace career is by and large a sum total of innumerable examinations like this. In this game of "wish to win", the result is unpredictable. An employee is thus advised to draw a line of distinction between private-life and public-life to strike a balance between home and office and thus to create a peaceful personality that can self-evaluate the performance without any preference or prejudice. Such personality can clearly identify the right path to follow. One needs to be free of the acronym FEAR that stands for Fight, Ego, Anxiety and Retain and one needs to develop the same acronym for Forgive, Embrace, Agility and Relieve.

- Fight or Forgive
- Ego or Embrace
- Anxiety or Agility
- Retain or Relieve

We can clearly distinguish the gravity of the first from the other. Forgiving a friend, embracing his follies or weakness, being agile towards commitments and relieving the unnecessarily incurred stress would be far better and profitable than fighting over a petty issue, being egoist and creating a glass ceiling around, being anxious and retain the burden over the mind and heart. AAdi Guru Shankaracharyaji writes in Vivekchudamani, Ahmkarh s vigneih karta bhoktabhimanyayam Satvadigunyogen chavasthatray mashnute ,

Know that it is the ego which, identifying with the body, becomes the doer or the experience and in conjunction with the Gunas such as Sattava etc., this ego assumes the three different states (of waking, dreaming and deep sleep). Vivekchudamani 104

Ego affects three stages of our life; waking, dreaming and deep sleep. It possesses us in the web of self surroundedness. This web blindfolds us from the virtues like empathy and sympathy. Sunirmalananda writes about six virtues/treasures of self-control. These virtues form the ethical foundation of spiritual life. Their practice prepares the inner faculties for the cultivation of higher knowledge. These virtues are: (a) *Sama*: control of the mind; (b) *Dama*: control of the senses; (c) *Uparati*: equanimity of mind; (d) *Titiksha*: forbearance; (e) *Samadhana*, concentrating the mind on Truth; and (f) *Sraddha*: active faith in the teacher and scriptures (Sunirmalananda, 2005).

With these virtues, one can detach the self from all the futile engagements; one can develop the highest code of conduct. Such a person is loyal, kind and calm. These virtues work as the guiding force that establishes serenity around him/her. For such an enlightened person, decision taking ability, core competency value and also courageous aptitude is *sahaj*, natural. Such a person has the *abhamandal* aura around him/her that results into the source of inspiration to others. Such an individual maintains standards which provide guidance and courage to understand and respect the subtle connections of the world in relation to his or her life. An honest person appreciates the interconnectedness of the natural world and does not misuse, abuse, or waste the

wealth of resources provided for the well-being of humanity. An honest person does not take for granted his or her own resources such as mind, body, wealth, time, talents, or knowledge. Honesty means never to misuse that which is given in trust. Imagine a workplace where virtues like honesty, sincerity, respect, faith and generosity are powerfully established and a positive spiral is created that evades every kind of negative energy.

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