

The Role of Yoga in Enhancing Individual Congruence For Optimal Organizational Efficiency

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Abstract

Over the last two decades research in Organizational Behaviour to optimize potential in employees has led to understanding various new concepts and theories that lie behind this. In this ongoing endeavor, constant inputs from various interdisciplinary fields has lead to understanding the nuances of organizational behavior. Unfortunately very little work has been done to explain this behaviour from an indigenous angle. The philosophy of Yoga, which emphasizes union, can be utilized and adapted to an organizational setting. This term union means various things but for our purposes we can take the concept of "individual congruence" that helps an employee in his attitude and relationship with himself, in groups and the organization. Yoga is a holistic term which accommodates many of the concepts already mentioned and helps in the merging of the subject with the object.

Introduction

In August 2004 Steven C Rockefeller, Chairman of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund gave a speech at the University of the Philippines, calling for a UN initiative to produce The Earth Charter for establishing "a sound ethical

foundation for the emerging global society and to help build a sustainable world based on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice and a culture of peace." He also gave a unique perspective about globalization. "A new planetary civilization is beginning to emerge and it is inter connecting all cultures. The communications, transportation and economic systems that are creating this global society are expressions of an industrial-technological society. In order for this new planetary civilization to fully realize its potential, it must generate a spiritual & ethical consciousness consistent with its geographical, ecological, intellectual, social and economic situation. We are globalizing the outer world, and I doubt we can stop the process even if we wanted to. We can, however, work to guide and shape the process by giving it a soul – i.e. by creating an ethical vision of where we want the process to go and committing ourselves to it in a spirit of solidarity and hope. This is the inner globalization that must occur to build global cooperation and community and reverse negative trends that threaten the future."

All Organizations are attempting to meet the challenge of the emerging trend by optimizing efficiency and also getting its employees to move

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beyond the materialistic and transcend to connect with their spiritual self. Spirituality in the work place is not a new phenomenon. It has been in practice in various forms since the time formal organizations came into existence (Kumar 2005).

To experience this one has to love and be able to relate to one's job, one has to seek and find meaning in what one is doing. This can be done only when one tries to explore beyond the world of day-to-day senses and thinking. This involves attitude, behaviour and sense of belonging and connectedness. This sense of belonging where a person identifies himself with the organization so much so that all his actions are from an intrinsic need for betterment which does not differentiate self from the organization. This way all behavior is spontaneous and not prescriptive.

Understanding Previous Literature

Organizational Behavior has tried to explain and highlight this through various studies and have evolved various concepts such as Organizational Citizenship Behaviour, Organizational Social Responsibility, Organizational Cohesiveness etc. Strong motivational and psychological involvement is not possible without emotional connection to work and the work context (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995). Contemporary management, therefore, is about managing the knowledge, values and sentiments of the workforce in order to make them work for, rather than against, the interests of the firm.

Again in this endeavor Human Resource Management has been speaking of the 'Four Cs':

commitment, competence, congruence and cost-effectiveness (Beer et al., 1984). The underlying thesis is that identification and, its concomitant, affiliation, give rise to motivation in pursuit of organizational goals, even to the extent of 'going beyond contract'. Self managing individuals are not only more cost effective in that internalization of values means that individuals will self-regulate without the need for significant managerial interventions but are also less likely to resist the goals of efficiency and production (Rose, 1990). Part of the 'New Agenda' (Gratton, 2000) for the organizations is to understand and manage its emotional capital. One of the principles upon which the New Agenda is premised appears to be that when a person identifies him or herself with an organization, personal goals become consistent with organizational goals. Consequently, a rapprochement of the self-actualization of the worker and the competitive advantage of the company is sought (Rose, 1990).

'Identification with a group helps to shape people's willingness to use a given social category to define themselves, so when people identify strongly with a given organization they more readily interpret the world and their own place within it in a manner consistent with that organization's values, ideology and culture' (Haslam et al., 2000). The more a person wants to wrap his or her identity in a job the more he/she will embrace any necessary emotional labour (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993, Kunda, 1992 Fineman 1996). Emotional labour is the term applied to the work involved in displaying the 'appropriate' feelings in organisations.

Organizational Citizenship Behaviours are discretionary behaviours not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system and which promote the effective functioning of the organization (Kats and Kahn, 1986 ; Rosenfeld et al., 1995). A number of taxonomies of Organization Citizenship behaviours are to be found, for example Bolino (1999) reports a five dimensional scale incorporating Altruism, Generalized Compliance, Sportsmanship, Courtesy and Civic Virtue and a four dimensional profile encompassing, Interpersonal helping, Personal Industry, Individual Initiative and Loyalty.

Work behavior that is in some way beyond the reach of traditional measures of job performance but hold promise for long-term organizational success is receiving increasing theoretical attention as the challenge of global competition highlights the importance of organizational innovation, flexibility, productivity, and responsiveness to changing external conditions (Dyne, Graham & Dienesch, 1994). Organ and Konovsky believe that incentives, such as merit pay, for excellence of in-role performance do not offer an obvious explanation for the rendering of OCB (Organ & Konovsky, 1989).

Organizations essentially comprise of human and therefore face all the challenges of human relationships. Besides having to deal with human relations, organizations have to deal with power and competition (within and outside) both of which have the potential to corrupt. Therefore the onus on organizations which in turn places the onus on the employees to act responsibly is

that much greater. Organizations have to come to understand that organizational transformation begins with personal transformation (social, attitude, lifestyle, work life balance etc.). Engaging in these relations in a fair and (cooperative) and yet detached and attached way is the essence of spirituality.

Concept of Spirituality at the Workplace

To make this happen transformation should start from the people who comprise the organization. For quite a long time Organizations had been focusing more on the outside i.e. the environment rather than the person. There was a time when it was believed that capital and technology were the critical factors . Now organizations increasingly approach the importance of people in creating value and wealth. To experience this one has to learn to love & relate to one's job. It means learning to explore beyond the world of our day-to-day senses and thinking. In this endeavor we've come a long way where we draw from our past and are talking about spirituality at the work place.

Modern Business management draws ideas not only from empirical studies but also from Various Philosophies. We have moved much beyond Maslow's Hierarchical Need theory which had greatly influenced the management world. Drawing from the Indian Philosophies, the Karma Yoga concept propounded in the Bhagawad Gita has received a lot of attention from the western world.

Simply put, spirituality in the workplace involves employees moving beyond the material level and transcending to connect with his/her spiritual self, by way of identifying oneself with the organization. This way if one learns to totally connect and merge with the organization, actions that stem from the individual would be for the welfare of both the self and the Organization. There would be no contradiction or discrepancy in this.

Merging or Identifying with the Organization

In this context, the state of merging with the organization or moving beyond the self seems to be very much like the state of Samadhi expounded in the philosophy of yoga as mentioned in the Yoga Sutra. Samadhi is a state where one identifies and merges with the object totally that boundaries dissolve so much so that there is no distinction between the self and the object.

This state has been stated in different words and different concepts namely organizational citizenship, social responsibility etc. There have been a lot of studies on this state but not clear steps on how to reach that. Similarly there has been work done on individual factors but not on the holistic congruence.

In this aspect the philosophy of Yoga as mentioned in Patanjali's Yoga Sutra gives the methodology of how to reach this stage. This stage of union can be at the highest level of the

merging of the soul with the divine or understanding at the gross level of being united with one's inner self or rather an inner congruence or even more specifically merging with everything one does including one's job. This would bring about harmonious behavior that is in synchrony with the self and the organizational needs.

Understanding Astanga Yoga

In his work Yoga Sutra compiled some 3000 years back, Patanjali has described Yoga as "liberation from suffering and union with the Universal energy"(Desigachar 1995). This union is the highest state and can be understood at different levels – a union of the mind, body and soul; mind and body etc. He further says how this state can't be reached effortlessly but needs certain disciplines and attitudes to progress in this endeavor. In fact he propounds eight steps that would augment a person to be in congruence with self, which in turn would enhance congruence with the environment.

These eight steps or limbs which is known as Astanga Yoga is eternal and universal that has relevance even today. In fact it is more apt today than ever before due to today's life style and work culture. It talks about relationships, communications, attitudes, Personal discipline etc. all those factors pertaining to individual optimization.

The eight limbs are Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratiyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi.

Yama

Yama literally means discipline or relationships and interactions with others. Patanjali talks about five important Yamas namely *Ahimsa*, *Satya*, *Asteya*, *Brahmacharya* & *Aparigraha*. *Ahimsa* refers to non-violence not only in thought, word and deed but also to kindness, consideration for other people and things. *Satya* or the philosophy of Truth refers to saying things without hurting or harming another being. *Asteya* means not taking things that does not belong to the individual. It also emphasizes trust and non exploitation. *Bhramacharya* literally means movement towards the essential truth. It also suggests abstinence and relationships that foster understanding of the highest truth. In this endeavor it advises responsibilities with respect to one's goals. *Aparigraha* in other words is described as non-seizing or non-exploitation. It refers to taking only based on one's worth and not based on the external situation.

Niyama

The **Niyamas** propounded in the Yoga Sutra refers to attitude and deals with relationship with one's own self. As compared to Yamas, Niyamas are more intimate and personal. The five important Niyamas are *Sauca*, *Samtosa*, *Tapas*, *Svadhyaya* and *Ishwarapranidhana*. *Sauca* or cleanliness refers to a clear body and mind which is essential for clarifying the thought process. *Samtosa* or contentment refers to an attitude of being contented in the present state even while pursuing one's goal. *Tapas* refers to the activity

of keeping one's body and mind fit. It is a cleansing process of removing the unwanted. *Svadhyaya* refers to self-enquiry or examination. To explain further it implies an attitude and discipline of trying to perceive things objectively and seeing from another's point of view. *Ishwarapranidhana* literally means surrender to the higher force. It implies a positive attitude and the karma yoga philosophy of doing one's duty sincerely and focusing on the doing and not the consequence.

Asana and Pranayama

The next two aspects namely **Asana** and **Pranayama** refer to the most popular concepts of yoga namely postures and breathing.

Asana is the most well known and universally acknowledged of all the limbs. It is so popular that it has become the synonym for the word Yoga. Asana means **to be** or stay in a posture with comfort and steadiness. The postures are facilitated with controlled breathing. One starts from where he/she is and slowly moves towards his/ her goal. The sequence of asanas to be followed is individualized. Asanas help the mind and the body to be flexible as well as firm. The correct metaphor would be like the body of a snake, flexible and at the same time very strong.

Pranayama literally means stretching one's life force. In order to connect to this life force breathing is used as a tool. Our state of mind is closely linked to the life force. One can influence the life force through our breath which in turn influences our state of mind and vice versa.

Pranayama is the technique of systematically controlling one's breathing. It focuses on deep breathing, the importance of which has been established through many studies done on Stress Management and relaxation techniques.

Pratyahara

Pratyahara refers to sense control. Normally external objects stimulate one's senses which is processed in the mind and makes a person react accordingly. Hence the control lies outside. Actions are controlled from the external objects. Pranayama refers to controlling the mind and giving orders with full awareness, even in the presence of the stimulation. Now the control is from within.

Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi

Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi The essential idea of the concept of dharana is holding attention to the exclusion of all other things. Dhyana is meditation where one gets involved with the object to such an extent there is a communication or relationship between the object and the person. Samadhi is the state of getting involved in the object to the extent of being totally immersed and merging with it such that boundaries dissolve and one is unable to distinguish the subject from the object. In this state a person loses his personal identity and blends with the object totally and wholly.

These three states together is called **Samyama** wherein one state leads to another spontaneously and gradually without any

boundaries nor clear distinction when passing from one to the other.

As Applicable in Organizational Situation

Translating all this in Organizational terms, **Yama** clearly defines how one's relationship with others should be and what is the attitude one has to develop in this pursuit. The concept of Satya and Asteya emphasizes ethics and positive communication. It even explores Organizational ethics with stress laid on trust in building relationships. Brahmacharya as applicable in Organizational setup refers to the pursuit of understanding the whole truth about the organization very objectively. Aparigraha talks about individual values and self worth. It emphasizes how one's self worth or self esteem should not depend on one's achievements or other's opinions but rather based on one's inner self. This aspect propounds self-esteem which forms an important basis for one's attitude, perceptions and behavior in life.

The **Niyamas** are even more personal and intricate where it explains the attitude one has to develop as well as the aspect of being comfortable with one's self. Besides talking about the aspects Niyama also proscribes steps on how this can be achieved. Personal hygiene and clarity of mind which would help in perceiving objectively are emphasized in Niyamas. Tapas refers to dispensing with unwanted things, including unpleasant thoughts and experiences which hampers one's interpersonal relationships,

perceptions and behaviour. It is also the first step to be taken for managing Stress or positive thought process. Contentment refers to attitude, of being in a state of happiness even while striving to achieve one's goal. It is not an antonym of ambition, rather it is a state of enjoying the present instead of focusing only on the future and missing out the now. Svadhyaya which refers to self-enquiry advocates objective perception and evaluation of self and one's relationship with others, situations, feeling, attitude etc. In organizations adherence to this introspection will improve interpersonal relationships allowing one to learn from one's own mistakes and also helping one to develop an attitude of accepting another for what he is. Ishwarapranidhana or surrendering to a higher force advocates positive attitude of doing whatever one has to do sincerely without focusing only on the fruits of the action. Simply put, one can't play a game of tennis with the eyes only on the scoreboard.

From the organizational point of view and also health and spiritual, the next two aspects namely **Asana** and **Pranayama** have been studied in great detail. It is a well-researched fact that a healthy body is the foundation for a sound mind and vice versa. Both asana practice and deep breathing have been greatly researched and its significance is being realized in both organizational fields and the medical world. It is also important to mention at this point that for meditation, another aspect which is gaining universal sanction, pranayama and asanas are the first foundation step steps.

Pratyahara or sense control in organizational terms means self control or rather an intrinsic locus of control. Simply explained, in any organization, an employee should not be a product of his environment and react, but should act with self-awareness and control. Typically the methods emphasized in all Stress management and Anger management programs. Pratyahara emphasizes just that, well meditated actions rather than reactions.

Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi refer to being able to focus on one's job to the exclusion of all other things. This focus would help a person to understand the job thoroughly from the gross level to its subtlest detail. This kind of thoroughness with one's mind and heart would automatically lead a person to a state, wherein he/she would be identifying totally with one's job and one's organization. This identification is so wholesome that one is unable to separate oneself from the organization. If this state can be realized, there is no question of problems in interpersonal relationships nor in performance excellence. What seems the best for self will transform for the organization and also the other way around.

Hence it is apparent that Yoga or union is not only the goal but also the process of attaining that goal. Astanga Yoga advocates and also delineates methods to be adopted for total personality development. It encompasses all the aspects mentioned above for this union to take place. If all this is to be realized there needs to be an inner congruence acts that contributes to a person's perception, relationships attitudes and

behaviour. This congruence helps the person right from the gross level to the subtle state of realizing his/her potential or spirituality.

This inner congruence or the eight aspects mentioned in the Yoga Sutra is not something new to the organizational world. It has been researched extensively and various new concepts and terms have been evolved. This is an attempt from an ingenious angle and also a system that tries to explain from a holistic angle.

This paper is a concept paper and hopes to evoke interest in the academic and management community to study this Great system which has been with us for more than 3000 years. The sheer aspect that it has survived this long shows that it needs to be explored extensively. What is known is only the tip of the iceberg and we have a long way to go to uncover the treasure underneath.

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