

# BRIDGING EAST AND WEST: TRANSFORMING MANAGEMENT FOR THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

Karthyeni Purushothaman  
Amrik S Sohal

## ABSTRACT

Typically, creative intelligence underlies the wealth of organisations and nations operating in knowledge economies. A knowledge economy is driven and sustained by knowledge workers. The increased awareness of human capital as central to the strategic success of organisations in the digital age presents new challenges to management. Managing highly developed mental faculties of skilled, highly-educated, talented, innovative and creative individuals require significant change to traditional models of management. The control and compliance-based management systems dominating businesses and management has to give way to more commitment-based models. Performance systems ought to reward collaboration ahead of competition. This requires an understanding of people who make up the new system and looking for ways to motivate workers using extrinsic and intrinsic rewards that would appeal and are relevant to members of this knowledge era.

This paper attempts to highlight the spiritual dimensions which underlie many Western management practices. It seeks to emphasise that in the era of knowledge economy and beyond, these spiritual and emotional value systems appears to have a renewed role and significance in organisations. It will seek to explore some of the challenges of managing knowledge workers. It speculates that there are parallels, as well as differences between Eastern and Western management traditions and that it is timely in the digital age to bridge the two.

## INTRODUCTION

Renowned management gurus or thinkers influence the theory and practice of management. Their writings socialise managers, academics and management educators, influencing their unconscious and conscious minds and also their emotional life. If one was to observe management texts and writings, the dominance of Western scholars, ideology and models reign supreme. The obscure absence of Eastern thought in mainstream management discourse is quite a curious mystery. To assume that the East has little to contribute to management thought is a shallow judgement. Arguably, it is an arduous task comprehending Eastern philosophies which are steeped in mythological, mystical and metaphysical planes. But beyond the profane surface, there is a depth of knowledge and skills that can be acquired if one was to seriously explore layers of symbolism to arrive at a storehouse of ancient eastern wisdom. Eastern traditions and value-systems have historically fascinated the Western world. For Western thinkers, shifting to an alternative paradigm of management thought, involves making integrated efforts to understand and to synthesise Eastern value systems into mainstream management education.

---

Karthyeni Purushothaman (e-mail: [karthyeni.purushothaman@busit.monash.edu.my](mailto:karthyeni.purushothaman@busit.monash.edu.my)) is from the Department of Management, School of Business & Information Technology; Monash University Malaysia; Amrik S. Sohal ([Amrik.Sohal@BusEco.monash.edu.au](mailto:Amrik.Sohal@BusEco.monash.edu.au)) is from Department of Management, Monash University, Australia.

---

The business and management fraternity continues to be interested in an array of ancient Eastern traditions. For example, the Japanese concepts and practices of Zen and Kaizen; the Chinese belief in Feng Shui and the positive and negative forces of Yin and Yang and Sun Tzu's art of war in management; the Indian philosophy of karma and reincarnation and their practice of meditation and yoga; and various other eastern traditions originating from the Taoist, Buddhist and Muslim belief-systems. This paper attempts to broach the idea that organisations established and entrenched with Western-based value systems may benefit further by infusing Eastern ideologies into management theory and practice. It explores the idea that the digital age is an appropriate evolutionary phase in human history, to holistically synthesise modern management principles with the inspired perennial wisdom of the ages. The convergence of value systems of East and West may be the way forward.

## **THE DIGITAL ECONOMY AND BEYOND**

Drucker (1992) affirmed that the world would change rapidly with a new and very different form of society. He predicted that the real and controlling resource or factor of production was neither going to be capital, land nor labour, but knowledge. As Drucker and other management gurus had envisaged, within just two decades we have witnessed the dawn of the computing and communications revolution and watched as it transformed businesses and society in no less radical and dramatic a way as did the industrial revolution. The digital age has altered the world of business and work in fundamental ways, shifting the wealth of organisations and nations to knowledge intensive industries. Evans and Wurster (1999) make a haughty suggestion that every business in this era is an information business. They explain that information and mechanisms for delivering it are the glue that holds together the structure of businesses in all cross-sections of industries, as diverse as health to manufacturing.

Whilst the current economic order poses complex challenges to people and organisations, some management thinkers on the other hand are already suggesting that the knowledge economy may not even remain new or relevant for long. Jensen (1999) warns that the 'next economy' is already emerging—the post-knowledge economy. Pine and Gilmore (1999) suggest that there is a shift from products to services to emotional markets, labelling the next economy 'The Experience Economy'. Boyett and Boyett (2001) summarise the evolutionary course of these ideas from past, present and to the future as they chronicle human progress from the agrarian society, industrial society, information society, and moving towards catering to every emotion in the dream/experience economy. These writers also predict that the future is about bringing transformation at the individual and personal levels of people. It is interesting to note that this prophecy may suggest the beginning of the imminent bridging of management philosophy between East and West. Individual and personal transformation has long been the tenet of ancient traditional Eastern philosophy. This has diminished in practice with the dominance and influence of Western secularism, eclipsing much of the traditional value systems of ancient Eastern cultures.

The new challenge in the digital age is in changing the culture of our business, educational institutions and governments. The digital economy is not merely an age of sophisticated enabling technologies, but also an era for cultural transformation at organisational and individual levels writes Tiwana (2000). It takes cultural change and a change in the reward structures that drive work in most companies. He writes that you have to gain the hearts and the minds of the workers, as knowledge workers are not like troops but rather like volunteers. Other writers (Leonard 1998; Horibe 1999) focus on practical ways to manage the intellectual

human capital in the knowledge economy. Pfeffer and Sutton (1999) make a more profound analysis. They concur that a harsh knowledge management reality is the existence of a knowing-doing gap. Simply said, just because people have knowledge does not mean they will use it. They offer some guidelines for action. Among them, they insist that firms that are able to consistently turn knowledge into action put people first and demonstrate that they care about their employees. They also emphasise the need to promote internal cooperation and not competition and a culture that values creating, transferring and, most important, people acting on knowledge. An interesting and significant impact of the knowledge economy is that it has shifted the focus of power from the collective back to the individual. Generally the Eastern value systems recognise that individual transformation is central to organisational or societal changes.

## **EVOLVING IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY**

Secretan (1996) describes evolution as an unfolding, opening out, and process of development from a simple to a complex form or of gradual progressive change. This can be readily observed in our present era. People of the digital age are the most educated and affluent people in human history. The digital age has brought on growth-fostering changes at many levels, enabling women and underprivileged groups to move on to the higher echelon of society. With improved accessibility of knowledge, more and more people evolve towards higher order psychological and social needs. However, the digital age has been a double-edged sword. We may have become the most literate and technologically proficient human race with capacities to do almost anything in the physical world, but our advanced developments have come with a cost. Despite raised standards of living and having most of our physical comforts and security needs satisfied, generally our modern materialistic view has failed to please the emotional, psychological and intellectual man. Surrounded by conveniences of modern living we still generally find our world a stressful and demanding place to live in. While external economic and social yardsticks may measure success, human well-being or simply our happiness is elusive to measurement. Herein lies much of our woes as individuals in a progressive society.

Evidence of the declining human spirit is observable everywhere. The mass media bombards us daily with the chronic social and economic ills of modern civilisation. Our world experience is largely dominated by issues of social negativity and decay such as international terrorism, potential biological warfare, inhumane crime, rape of our natural resources, human-rights abuse, environmental pollution, breakdown of family and value-systems, etc. It appears, while we have tremendously improved our standards of living, our standard of life has been on the downward slide. People live in such fear, anger and distrust, and organisations are pre-occupied with managing individuals in control systems that are misconceived or misguided. The demarcation for social degeneration is unclear. Worldwide, rich and poor, advanced and third world nations face a similar crisis—only at various degrees of intensity. In this digital age, the divide in the economic and social spheres especially the unequal distribution of wealth in the global economy is a macro dimension of the problem. A local newspaper reports that the combined sales of the world's top 200 corporations exceed the Gross Domestic Products (GDPs) of 182 of the world's nation states. Yet they employ a total of only 18.8 million people, less than three-fourths of 1% of the world's workers (*Sunday Star* 2001, Oct 21, p. 2).

At the individual level, people experience the disconnection they feel as workers and as

humans. Knowledge workers are people who generally have most of their lower-order needs satisfied. The higher need satisfaction of belongingness, of love and friendship and affection, of self-respect and self-actualisation—in essence fall outside the purview of money-economics. Maslow (1998, p. 239) defines these higher needs as the policy of ‘enlightened management’—an attempt to satisfy the higher needs in the work situation in a non-monetary way. He suggests achieving this involves re-arranging the work situation to give intrinsically higher need satisfaction, rather than to give money and expect the money to buy these satisfactions outside the work situation.

The problem for the individual coping in a progressive environment is to adapt to new economic and social standards set by a multitude of technology and information driven factors. This has been a traditional model of human development. Generally, man changes his personal circumstances by changing his environment. Secretan (1996) deliberates that we attempt to reinforce our self-esteem, which is an inner dimension, by changing our outer dimension—changing the organisation. He thinks this is a backward approach, suggesting that personal evolution should precede corporate evolution. Personal evolution he explains is the path to personal transformation, which is a result of emotional and spiritual reinvention.

For managers and workers coping in the digital age this is the key to evolving holistically to changes in the digital environment. An ‘evolved person’ is seen as a pioneer, a seeker on a path to regeneration, challenging traditional logic, beliefs and searching for his connection of his inner-self to his environment. The new pioneers of corporate life will need to examine existing paradigms that have led to declining morale and spirit at the work-place. The new leaders of organisations will have to appreciate that a rational theory or practice of management based on traditionally constructed, intellectual logic that has driven past management fads has generally failed to consider the deeper needs for human well-being. Secretan (1996) suggests that work is a game of the heart, as well as the mind, which has a beneficial effect on the bottom line. He calls it the union of ‘The Heart, Mind and Bottom Line’, espousing that the purpose of the evolved organisation is to inspire the soul. This, he says, can be easily achieved if employees are given ownership in their enterprise through stock options explaining that the purpose of equity ownership is not a material goal, but an emotional one.

Management has to now face-up to a superior strain of humanity. Prominent management writers have already warned us much earlier of a new social order that can no longer rely on old-style control based, authoritarian management systems. Charles Handy (1978) levied the criticism of contemporary society as being ‘over-managed’ and ‘under-led’. He saw the erosion of management, observing that the new professionals, the knowledge workers, do not like to be ‘managed’ with all that the word today implies—control, manipulation and direction. In his book the *Gods of Management*, Handy metaphorically defines four culture patterns in organisations, characterising the four Greek Gods—Zeus (power), Apollo (role), Athena (task) and Dionysus (individual). The first three metaphors can be easily identified with traditional organisations. The fourth, Handy’s Dionysian vision is a concept of organisations dominated by individuals who are members only because they choose to be. He argues in his foresight that in the Dionysian culture the organisation exist to help the individual achieve his purpose, not, as in the usual dispensation, the other way around. In a knowledge economy, as brains conquer brawn organisations, there is need to reorganise and make room for the talented individuals to ‘do their own thing’.

Holdsworth (2000) in her research looked at a new genre of business leaders—the transformational leaders who appreciate and respect the human spirit of their staff in the workplace. These are leaders who recognise that the lifeforce of their organisations is with the human capital. It is the talent, goodwill and spirit of the people that bring meaning to the life and bottom line of the organisation. This requires leadership that allows human spirit to soar by nurturing the self-esteem of their workers, allowing expression of values, eliminating communication barriers, encouraging creativity and respecting diversity. This soul-enriching leadership is the key to developing sustainable enterprises in knowledge-driven economies.

The depression and disillusionment arising from social and organisational realities that have remained in the traditionally modelled workplace drives the renewed search for integration and meaning. It appears that globally gurus of the business and education sectors are on a search for a new paradigm. The *Australian Financial Review* carried a recent article entitled ‘Guru who guides corporate-soul searching’. The article relates the case of Debashis Chatterjee, a new-age management guru, who is in demand internationally for his thoughts on leadership and management. This is an evidence of the soul-searching taking place in the corporate world, as well as the growing popularity of Eastern approaches to the business realm (*Australian Financial Review* 2002, Jan 22, p. 43). There is plenty of evidence that old paradigms are being challenged and worldwide there seems to be a rising awareness that we are a human race in search of ourselves. The rise of new-age literature with unfamiliar language is in vogue. Underlying this trend is really an anxious humanity in search of a better world.

## **BRIDGING OF EAST AND WEST IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY**

This forum has a theme for convergence in the digital economy. What is the ingredient for convergence in the digital economy? The striking need of business and humanity as a whole is to find a new path for economic and social wellbeing. As the global outlook seems grim on many fronts, a new global consciousness for a better future is rooted in the heightening of individual consciousness. The world will not change until our thought processes change. It is time Western-driven management philosophies place some faith and courage in less understood and often obscured Eastern philosophies.

In observing the differences of Western and Eastern traditions, it becomes evident that one of the core differences is in the education process of the Western and Eastern minds. In the era of globalisation, we need to understand that boundaries of what is East and what is West have become significantly blurred. Many Eastern scholars and businesses are Western-trained and more Western in practice than they would admit or are even aware of. Bearing this irony in mind, for the purpose of discussion and leaving the merging world economies and cultures aside, a historical perspective would suggest a distinct difference between Western and Eastern education.

Modern Western education is very much entrenched in the conventional knowledge tradition. Human curiosity and sense-making of the outer physical world of objects and people primarily drive the focus of the knowledge tradition. The progress and development of Western society has been unquestionably remarkable. This is due to a keen learning drive through acquisition and application of information and knowledge in the external world of science, technology, facts, events and history.

---

On the other hand, Eastern education historically is securely established in value systems within a wisdom tradition. The difference here is that the Eastern approach is more personal and transformational for the individual in that he first learns to be concerned about issues of his own inner-self. Every ancient traditional Eastern education involves a strong foundation of spiritual and moral education that teaches one to deal with deep psychological and social issues with an aim to attain self-mastery. They begin with lessons of inner wisdom, which prepares the self for dealing with the mysteries of the external world. In observing this difference between Eastern and Western learning systems it becomes clear that the Western approach takes us through the entire elementary, high school, college and university system of education with so much focus on the external world and with almost nothing in the discovery and learning of our individual self. On the other hand, spiritual and moral education is very much part and parcel of the traditional Eastern educational system. However, this tradition has been weakened and eroded by the influence and dominance of Western secularism.

In observing these fundamental differences between East and West, some poignant questions arise. Does it not make perfect sense to begin early in life to ask the most fundamental question of the self? ‘Who am I?’; ‘Why am I here?’; ‘What is the purpose of my life?’ Here the focus is clearly in understanding your own internal being, rather than being concerned with the world of externals. This obvious neglect and flaw of Western education to fulfil our basic knowledge—wellbeing of the inner self—is the root-cause of the many ills of society. The digital era and beyond is an opportunity to advance human civilisation into a higher plane of existence. Despite sprawling symbols of our success we remain vulnerable and insecure in our core. The attachments in the material world providing only momentary fulfilment, and we continue the search for a deeper meaning of life and work. There appears to be re-awakening of global consciousness, addressing fundamental questions about the basic values of life. Work being an integral part of life, there would be increasing expectation that personal meaning and purpose in life will be supported and enhanced by daily experiences at work (Fisher & Sellers 2000).

## **HUMANISING MANAGEMENT**

Western thinkers addressing the study of the psychosocial nature of humans have been on the increase. Scientific investigations in this area began in the 20th century and have traditionally been the province of philosophy and psychology. Its cross application into other disciplines began only in the 1800s to 1900s. Among the key contributors was Auguste Comte (1798-1857) founder of sociology, the scientific study of man; Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), the Austrian physician & psychiatrist who founded the theory of psychoanalysis and theory of the unconscious; and Erich Fromm (1900-1980) who challenged Freudian theory and proposed an existentialist view that humans occupy a unique problematic position in the world, being part of nature and subject to its laws, but also transcending it by virtue of self-awareness and reason (Rohmann 1999).

In organisational management it was only in the late 20th century that human relations pioneers such as Abraham Maslow (1908-1970), proponent of the hierarchy of needs theory and Douglas McGregor, father of Theory X and Theory Y, began to make an impact. In 1960 McGregor wrote *The Human Side of Enterprise* which observed two basic assumptions we hold about people. Theory X portrays managers as authoritarian and distrustful of people, while on its polar opposite theory Y managers are collaborative and trustful of people. It is not unusual to find Theory X management still dominating most organisations. Many managers

and entrepreneurs still hold hidden assumptions that people cannot fully be trusted, need to be 'checked up on', need motivation or don't really like to work all that hard. Fear, distrust, coercion, carrot-and-stick management and authoritarianism are alive not just in traditional organisations but many entrepreneurial and modern day businesses operate with the theory X iron fist too (Robbins, Berman, Stag & Coulter 2000). The 'heart-related' writings from the Western paradigms of behavioural science served to improve working conditions in the last century.

Both Maslow and McGregor began looking at the human potential as vastly underestimated and unexplored territory, in search of the best within the nature of man. Management literature, observes Maslow (1998), has already in its most advanced forms taken an enlightened, as well as synergic, direction. His challenge had been to wed science with humanistic and ethical goals to improve individual people and society as a whole. His pioneering and seminal work in the hierarchy of needs and the concept of self-actualisation remains a legacy for business and management in translating the science of the mind into the art of management. His forward-thinking influence and contribution perhaps only posthumously becoming respectfully acclaimed as it becomes more and more relevant to the digital age and beyond. Maslow (1998, p. 230) describes self-actualizing individuals as people who are attracted to mystery, to novelty, to change, and flux, thus to nurture the creative energy of people, mechanical, authoritarian organisations with old-fashioned treatment of the worker, would fail to support the innovative creative minds.

This concept of self-actualisation and Theory Y management is perhaps more relevant today than it was in the past. The businesses of the digital age thrive on this attribute of creativity and innovation with a high tolerance for ambiguity and lack of structure and control. The white-water rapids metaphor, which is used to describe the degree of environmental uncertainty, complexity and constant chaotic change, seems to have become the standard environmental norm for most organisations in the digital age. On this backdrop, it is not surprising to see the subject of spirituality being increasingly addressed in management literature. It becomes relevant because the uncertain conditions require strong balanced individuals with a firm sense of self to manage effectively under these circumstances (Drucker 1992; Bennis & Townsend 1995; Bolman & Deal 1995; Mitroff & Denton 1999).

Rational trajectory on single dimensions of reality proposed by most modern scientific inquiry remain dogmatically entrenched in scientific logic, despite failing to solve deepening problems in the workplace. Although modern civilisation improved our physical existence, the deeper understanding of spirit, purpose and meaning of human experience continue to baffle us. Although historically the world of business and management have denounced and relegated spiritual dimensions of society as equivalent to mythical liturgy and rituals, we nevertheless need to admit that all through historical evolution, humans have found meaning in work, family, community, and shared faith. Since reason, logic, science and technology has not provided adequate answers to human needs, it is time perhaps to return to ancient spiritual basics and reinfuse the workplace with spirituality and a higher meaning to life. This is where the West can learn from their Eastern counterparts.

Over on the Eastern side of the globe things are no better as the Eastern society suffer from similar problems and issues of their Western counterparts. There is no doubt that the East too has endured the same disillusionment at the workplace, maybe just expressed in different cultural context. The cultural dimensions as discussed by Hofstede (1980) sheds some light on

the behavioural differences of Eastern and Western managers on the four dimensions of individualism-collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity-femininity. Much of these cultural dimensions have spiritual under-tones. Despite serious erosion of spiritual work ethics in business and management in the East, a closer scrutiny would reveal social and ethical systems of Eastern traditions remain in practice in a lot of Eastern organisations and businesses, even though their significance may not be fully appreciated by their practitioners. What may appear to be superstitious belief systems on the surface more often than not have very strong and meaningful underlying value in management and social wisdom. Ideas on human consciousness prevail mainly from a range of spiritual and metaphysical sources. Herein lies the difficulty in authenticating and validating their dimensions to the rational world of business and management.

### **TRANSFORMING MANAGEMENT FOR THE DIGITAL AGE AND BEYOND**

A distinct feature of the digital age and the global economy is that it has connected us via information and communication technologies at a speed and depth never experienced before in human history. Although we are divided by our respective national and geographic boundaries, and have become fragmented by this reality, the recent terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York, USA, had an almost immediate worldwide impact and implication. It is a stark reminder that in this knowledge economy we are more interdependent and interconnected than we would readily like to admit. As we observe the disorder of our world today, we also become aware of our failure in many areas and levels of life. Since managerial action has such powerful consequences, correcting the ills of our world begins with the awareness that transforming management education and practice is our prime hope for the future.

It is common knowledge that economic and social development is the consequence of good management. In the late 20th century management was humanised. In this 21st century it needs to acknowledge another dimension—to integrate mind, body and spirit of the modern man. It requires a great leap of faith and courage for Western-trained minds to appreciate that we may need to redesign our organisations and leadership styles to appeal to the spirit and souls of workers. It is my view that management, compared to any other discipline, is in its core an intrinsically spiritual subject, dealing with the heart of human nature, and of ensuring that universal good prevails over evil forces of the world. Management thinkers continuously attempt to make better sense of the external world of business dominated by secularist, capitalistic and materialistic principles. As we move from humanising management into spiritualising it, it is expected that we will encounter cynicism and resistance amongst management practitioners and educators who cannot imagine alternative possibilities that may contradict their current belief systems.

Management has to play a crucial role in synthesising between materialist and spiritual values of life. Where early education has failed to unite people in their diversity, management as a subject of adult-education must take on this role. Management is a field that can drive socio-psychological transformation for business and social progress. The two agendas, business and social, can and must work together. Management can ensure that profit (financial) growth of business does not have to alienate humanity and destroy planet Earth in the process. The issue of ethics and social responsibility should become a prime area of concern and interest for people in the business sphere. The process of social and economic transformation is rooted in the quality of our management education and practices. It begins with an awareness of our

true nature, that we are all interconnected, belonging to one world, one humanity.

Technical and operational rulebooks on management are less relevant when managing in uncertain times characterised by crisis, turbulence and chaos of the modern world. A vital quality in these times of change is not operational efficiency, but inspiring leadership. Chin (2000) writes that the CEO of the times requires a combination of IQ, EQ and SQ qualities. He affirms that IQ is held in high regard in Asian societies where a person with credentials earns respect for his thoughts and ideas. EQ (emotional intelligence) is more relevant to the leader rather than manager and SQ (spiritual intelligence) is noted to be the strongest requirement in leadership (Chin 2000, p. 24). Warren Bennis and Robert Townsend (1995) further propound this idea. In their book *Reinventing Leadership*, they created a 21-day plan to become an effective, inspiring leader. The four questions they outlined for Day One are (1) Who are you?; (2) What are you doing here?; (3) Who do you want to be?; (4) What do you want your purpose to be? They elaborate that these four important questions are central to being both a well-defined individual and an effective leader. They suggest that in answering these questions, to do a little digging into your heart and mind (Bennis & Warren 1995). There is an obvious tone to return to internal basics in their line of questioning. The idea is to become aware of the internal dialogues within ourselves, our thought processes that taint our perceptions and lace our actions—as a result of past human conditioning and learning which are not necessarily relevant or beneficial to us in this modern day and age.

## **SPIRITUALITY IN MANAGEMENT**

The increasing use of the term ‘spirit’ in management literature may be an uncomfortable expression for many Western-trained managers and leaders. A common anxiety is the religious connotations of the term. In a study of 100 senior managers over two years by Mitroff and Denton which focussed on spirituality in the workplace, it was observed that participants differentiated strongly between religion and spirituality and that there were fears, reservations and ambivalence with regard to the potential abuse of spirituality (Jackson 2000). Hawley (1993, p. 3) says that it is pointless in trying to ignore the connection as spirituality is the goal, and religion is the path. Indeed, the great religions of the world have been a shared belief system of institutions, rituals and artifacts, giving people meaning through divine expressions. Yet the words spirit and soul are being increasingly bandied in management seminars and conferences. Is management of spirituality in the workplace the latest management fad? As educators and corporate practitioners we have been influenced and inspired by a constant diet of management fads over the ages. So is spirituality in management the latest addition to seize our fancy?

Western culture takes a reductionist view of things that are not empirically quantifiable. Thus dealing with non-rational concepts such as ‘spirit’ has either been scorned upon or over-simplified. The relegation of topics concerning the grey areas is an easy escape for those inept and fearful of unknown territories. But even for the hard-core task oriented manager, his toughest challenge in the workplace has been to deal with intrinsic psychosocial human issues, rather than with the extrinsic factors of his trade. It is our view that gross misconduct of members of society, bringing sorrow-breeding actions of destruction, can only be curtailed by introducing the science of self-development—a highly spiritual vocation that must be embraced in the teaching and practice of management. We assert that spirituality in management is hardly a fad. In fact we propose that it has been the missing link in the chain of fads that have failed to fulfil management problems in the past. It is the essence of our

search over the ages. Many Western writers have written about spirituality except without calling it by its real name. For example, author of *The Fifth Discipline*, Peter Senge (1990) who dazzled the management fraternity in 1990, was regarded as a modern equivalent of a medieval crusader. His ideas, criticised by many as idealistic and utopian, are in fact just spiritual. Authors Lee Bolman & Terry Deal (1995) in their book *Leading with Soul* combine teaching and story-telling to suggest that quite literally the heart of true leadership can only be found in the heart of a leader.

In observing spiritual value systems in management literature we have drawn a preliminary list of parallels between value systems from spiritual realms which can be observed and are in practice in the general management field. The following list is by no way exhaustive.

### **Parallel Value Systems in Domains of Spirituality and Modern Management**

#### **Spiritual Domain/Management Domain**

Self Awareness

SWOT, Self Mastery (Senge)

Human Connectedness

Systems Thinking

Morality

Ethics, Social Responsibility

Enlightenment

Maslow's Self Actualisation

Search for Meaning

Vision, Mission, Goals & Objectives

Absence of judgement

Supports innovation & creativity

Trust

Self-directed teams/individuals

Grace

Efficiency & Effectiveness

Being in the Present/Freedom

Fosters Confidence in Learning

Courage

Problem-solving

Self-respect/trust

Decision-making

Unity in diversity

Division of labour

Brotherhood

Teams

Managing the new workforce requires transformational change at many levels of society. This requires congruence by human wisdom and intelligence in the digital age. Human wisdom can only be achieved by combining our intelligence with universal spiritual value systems. An integrated change effort must begin at the nucleus of society beginning with the individual members of society, especially the leaders and managers who act as change agents by the virtue of power vested in them. No other sector of society could do as much to bring positive changes that would uplift the human spirit. The digital age brings promising hope for the betterment of society because for the first time individuals in society have the opportunity to become authentically empowered. Members of the digital economy comprise people who have access to information and knowledge and therefore equipped with the tools and skills to acquire the wisdom needed to bring general social betterment. Their new found belief and trust in their own knowledge-driven judgements will allow societal transformation to occur, beginning with the individual himself. This type of change may be slow, but more enduring in quality. It will be unlike changes imposed by law or legislation or by revolutions or war. Social changes that occur when individuals in society discover their own highest potential, and then use their unique talent and capacities in service of humanity, is our only hope of a better future. Transforming management is key to this goal.

## CONCLUSION

Spirituality in management is at its infancy in terms of rigorous academic research. This paper highlights the need to explore the convergence of Western thought with ancient Eastern traditions to improve and inspire individuals and organisations of the future. Management as a discipline of business needs to redefine measurement of success. Traditionally based on financial profits and purely on economic terms, corporate success in the future must include the growth of the human spirit, community and care for both environment and social standards. Scope for scholarly research in this area includes the role of spirituality in the workplace and how it benefits the individual, organisation and society as a whole.

## REFERENCES

*Australian Financial Review*, 2002, January 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Bennis, W & Townsend, R 1995, *Reinventing Leadership: Strategies to Achieve New Style of Leadership and Empower Your Organisation*, Piatkuis, London.

Bolman, L & Deal, T 1995, *Leading with Soul: An Uncommon Journey of Spirit*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

Boyett, HT & Boyett, JT 2001, *The Guru Guide to the Knowledge Economy: The Best Ideas for Operating Profitably in a Hyper-Competitive World*, John Wiley & Sons, New York.

Chin, T 2000, 'Leadership for Uncertain Times', *Voice of Management, The Malaysian Challenge*, Malaysian Institute of Management, Kuala Lumpur

Drucker, PF 1992, *Managing for the Future: The 1990s and Beyond*, Truman-Talley, New York.

---

- 
- Evans, P & Wurster, ST 1999, *Blown to Bits: How the New Economics of Information Transforms Strategy*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston.
- Fisher, WJ & Sellers, TE 2000, 'Quality of Life in the Workplace: Spirituality, Meaning and Purpose', Spirituality, Leadership & Management Conference, 1st-4th December, Victoria, Australia.
- Handy, C 1978, *Gods of Management: The Changing Work of Organisations*, Arrow Books, London.
- Hawley, J 1993, *Reawakening the Spirit in Work: The Power of Dharmic Management*, Berret-Koehler, San Francisco.
- Holdsworth, L 2000, 'The New Generation of Business Leaders', Leadership & Management Conference, 1st-4th December, Victoria, Australia.
- Hofstede, G 1980, 'Motivation, Leadership and Organisation: Do American Theories Apply Abroad?', *Organisational Dynamics*, vol.10, pp. 42-63.
- Horibe, DF 1999, *Managing Knowledge Workers: New Skills and Attitudes to Unlock the Intellectual Capital In Your Organisation*, Wiley, New York.
- Jackson, J 2000, 'Some Practical Implications of Mitroff and Denton's "Spirituality in Workplace" Study', Leadership & Management Conference, 1st-4th December, Victoria, Australia.
- Jensen, R 1999, *The Dream Society: How the Coming Shift from Information to Imagination Will Transform Your Business*, McGraw-Hill, New York.
- Leonard, D 1998, *Wellsprings of Knowledge: Building and Sustaining the Sources of Information*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston.
- Maslow, A 1962, *Towards a Psychology of Being*, D.Van Nostrand Co, Princeton, New Jersey.
- Maslow, A 1998, *Maslow on Management*, John Wily & Sons, New York.
- McGregor, D 1960, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, McGraw Hill, New York
- Mitroff, II & Denton EA 1999, *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America: A Hard Look at Spirituality, Religion and Values in the Workplace*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Pfeffer, J & Sutton, IR 1999, *The Knowing-Doing Gap How Smart Companies Turn Knowledge Into Action*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston.
- Pine, BJ & Gilmore, JH 1999, *The Experience Economy: Work is Theater and Every Business a Stage*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston.
- Robbins, SP, Bergman, R, Stagg, I & Coulter, M 2000, *Management*, Prentice-Hall, Sydney.
-

Rohmann, C 1999, *A World of Ideas, A Dictionary of Important Theories , Concepts and Thinkers*, Ballantine Books, New York.

Secretan, LHK 1996, *Reclaiming Higher Ground: Creating Organizations that Inspire the Soul*, Response Books, New Delhi.

Senge, P 1990, *The Fifth Discipline*, Doubleday-Currency, New York.

*Sunday Star* 2001, October 21st.

Tiwanam A 2000, *The Knowledge Management Toolkit: Practical Techniques for Building a Knowledge Management System*, Prentice Hall PTR, New Jersey.