Understanding Sustainability: Integrating Spirit with Matter Does Matter

Dr Vijaya Thyil
Graduate School of Management, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Victoria
v.thyil@latrobe.edu.au

Preferred Stream: Stream 15 (Sustainability and Social Issues in Management)

Profile:
Dr Vijaya Thyil B.A (Econ) (Univ of Madras), MA (Econ) (Univ of Madras), MBA (PSG Tech), PhD (Univ of Madras)

Vijaya is a lecturer and the Director of Learning and Teaching at the School. She teaches the Finance subjects and coordinates and supervises the research projects of the international exchange groups to Hanoi, Vietnam and Dijon, France. Her research interests are Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Corporate Governance, and Spirituality. Her current projects are ‘Innovating and Strengthening Regional Industry’; ‘A holistic model of Corporate Governance’, and, a 16 country project on ‘Strategic Management of Innovation’. Her work has been presented at national and international conferences. She is a member of the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute USA (CFA Institute), the Accounting & Finance Association of Australia and New Zealand (AFAANZ), the Small Enterprise Association of Australia and New Zealand (SEAANZ), and the Australia and New Zealand Academy of Management (ANZAM).
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Abstract

The central aim of this paper is to propose a framework that integrates spirituality with the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability, to increase our understanding of why decades of effort in tackling sustainability issues have failed. The proposed framework brings a unique perspective to sustainability theory and practice. Firstly, it integrates the sustainability issues to demonstrate their interrelationship, highlighting the fact that attempting to solve issues in a singular fashion will be ineffective. Secondly, it highlights consumerism and wasteful production to be the root causes of the crisis. Thirdly, it reveals that contrary to current practice which attempts to control these two major material causes, the appropriate solution lies in promoting the spiritual dimension in individuals. The article demonstrates that it is this integration of the spirit that enables one to gain a wholesome perspective of sustainability. By moving the individual from self-interest to community-interest, by limiting wants to necessities, and by expanding consciousness to increase creativity and innovation for economic advancement, spirituality not only kindles, but maintains sustainability. The promotion of the spiritual dimension is thus a positive force that works in a virtuous cycle, in contrast to the negative forces of control and regulation. [198 words]

Keywords: Sustainability, Spirituality, Work/Life balance, Corporate Governance

INTRODUCTION

"In human society there must be a proper balance between spirit and matter. We are actually spirit souls...encaged within material bodies...A civilization that simply looks after bodily necessities and does not care for the necessities of the soul is a foolish, unbalanced civilization...If one only takes care of the cage, how can the bird within it be happy" (Srila Prabhupada, 1978).

This philosophical quote can be used as an analogy to explain our current efforts in dealing with sustainability issues. The central aim of this paper is to propose a framework that integrates spirituality with the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability, to increase our understanding of why decades of effort in tackling sustainability issues have failed.

Sustainability issues are seen to revolve around humanity’s imprudent use of earth’s limited resources. That is, the activities of humans are fast overwhelming the self-regulating capacity of our planet (Reason, 2007) with humanity said to be ‘running an ecological deficit with the Earth’ since 1980s as the World Watch Institute observed:

Forests, wetlands, and other natural places are shrinking to make way for people and their homes, farms, malls, and factories. Despite the existence of alternative sources, more than 90 percent of paper still comes from trees, eating up about one fifth of the total wood harvest
worldwide. An estimated 75 percent of global fish stocks are now fished at or beyond their sustainable limit (World Watch Institute, 2004).

Thus, the current levels of production, consumption and resource use is unsustainable, and yet, the fundamental goal of economists, politicians, and ordinary people is to increase ‘material’ living standards in terms of per capita consumption as much as possible and without limit (Trainer, 1997). To ensure that the material goals can indeed be met, countries, global institutions and corporations have done much to try and arrest wasteful production and consumption. However, the results are not positive and have in fact worsened. For instance, the Earth Summit in Rio opened with high hopes and a review conducted ten years later revealed only broken promises (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2002). A further review in 2005 revealed that the Commission on Sustainable Development "has failed to make significant progress on the targets and policy options for water and sanitation as agreed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg three years ago."(Environment News Service, 2005). Corporations are also tackling the sustainability challenge, by recognising social responsibilities, trying to reduce environmental impacts, guarding against ethical compromises, to make governance more transparent, and be more accountable to stakeholders. However, these efforts have failed to turn the tide on some of the most crucial dimensions of sustainable development: ecological decline, poverty, greed and trust (Visser, 2004). This has led to disillusionment and many believe that sustainable development is misconceived, and that sustainability is a ‘dubious pipe dream’, prompting an even more rigorous application of private property rights and the rule of law (Globalization101, 2002). Thus, the cycle of controls and regulations continue.

Of recent, the crisis of sustainability is seen as a crisis of mind (Reason, 2007). People in the knowledge economy are tired of living compartmentalized, disconnected lives, and want to bring the personal, professional, social, and spiritual sides of themselves into one whole human being (Neal 1999). Walker (2000) termed this the ‘other half’ and observed that the emphasis on utilitarianism, economic efficiency, competition, and progress has given more prominence to the rational and instrumental side, and led to a materially abundant, but spiritually impoverished world without the poetry, elegance, and austerity. It is important to notice that spirituality aids austerity which is how it reduces wasteful consumption. Walker further defined the ‘other half’ as the creative, the imaginative, and the spiritual side. It is this combination of both halves that creates a balanced human being. Johnson (2007) cites Follett (1924) who believed that the divorce of spiritual life from one’s daily activities is a fatal dualism. As Pope John Paul II articulated, human beings are not one-dimensional, self-interested and self-absorbed individuals but two-dimensional persons with a separate identity and at the same time united in solidarity with family, company, nation, and all human kind (O’Boyle, 2005). Thus it is that an incorporation of the spiritual dimension allows one to gain an integrated perspective of self and community, acknowledgment of consciousness and God, importance of prayer,
other people, and more importantly, a sustainable world (Cavanagh, 1999). This has enormous implications for sustainability. As Baird Callicott, a professor of philosophy and religion studies at North Texas University observed, the potential for world religions ... as well as indigenous religions, to contribute to the mitigation of environmental abuse is tremendous (Doyle & Stoddard, 2005).

The proposed framework of sustainability in this paper brings a unique perspective to sustainability theory and practice. Firstly, it integrates the sustainability issues to demonstrate their interrelationship, highlighting the fact that attempting to solve issues in a singular fashion will be ineffective. Secondly, it highlights consumerism and wasteful production to be the root causes of the crisis. Thirdly, it reveals that contrary to current practice which attempts to control these two major material causes, the appropriate solution lies in promoting the spiritual dimension in individuals. Additionally, the framework incorporates corporate governance and corporate ethics as a related issue of sustainability and highlights the role of spirituality as being fundamental to all these issues. Implications for businesses and future research directions are presented.

**SUSTAINABILITY DISSECTED**

The Brundtland Report defined Sustainability as follows:

"meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

This definition implies the prudent use of resources. A review of the sustainability literature reveals the major causes of imprudent use to be the growth of the market economy, technological development, the imbalanced educational system, human greed, and a short-term orientation of life. Hutchinson and Burkitt (1999) argued that in market economies, economic growth that results in enormous waste of human efforts and a misuse of the earth’s resources as in dumping of ‘surplus’ food, is seen as a necessity and is generated deliberately to pay off the debt financing used for the production, and that the option to produce and consume less is impossible to consider. For instance, in commercial fishing industry, fishers routinely discard at least 20 million tons of “bycatch,” unwanted fish and marine species that are usually killed, in the process of harvesting their yearly catch of 85 million tons of fish (The World Watch Institute, 2002), a gross waste. With the growth of the advertising industry, now a $300 billion technologically advanced global industry, people are constantly goaded to greater self-gratification, and the norms of the dominant culture are trivial entertainment and fads (Trainer, 1997). Thus, industrial growth, commercialisation, and technological advancement continue to aggravate the sustainability crisis instead of providing remedies to solve the issues.
Bateson (1979) departed from the market economy view and blamed the education system for the sustainability issues and ecological peril. According to him, “there is something about the conscious rational human mind, what we in academia are proud to inculcate in our students, that is itself antipathetic to natural ecological processes” (p.432). He termed the consciousness created through this rational thinking as ‘purposive consciousness’ and argued that one needs to see beyond this purposive consciousness at the ‘whole picture’, through an active engagement with the aesthetic processes such as religion and art. Reason (2007) cites environmental educator David Orr who argued that the division by academic disciplines, the advocacy of domination over nature, and the promotion of individualism and rights over citizenship and responsibility, lead to a separation of rationality from feeling. Therefore, the education system has failed to develop the finer aspects of the consciousness and promote the knowledge, capabilities and skills for understanding and maintaining sustainability.

Others argue that it is human greed - of producers and consumers alike, and the short-term orientation of life that is causing the crisis. Consumerism is seen as resting on ‘unwanted wants’ that are artificially stimulated by the system where nobody is content, as the emphasis is on ever increasing possession and consumption of material artefacts. Satisfaction is gained not from consumption of the good but from mere legal ownership of the goods, for a short period, until the next invention comes along. Such a practice cannot go on forever and is bound to result in ecological bankruptcy (Hutchinson and Burkitt, 1999). For instance, even as very stringent indoor smoking bans came into force across Victoria, Australia, during the final week of June 2007, tobacco giant Philip Morris had secret plans to launch Australia's first hand-held electronic cigarettes which critics claim is a part of the industry's long-term strategy to portray tobacco products as fashionable and desirable to the young (The Age, 27 June 2007). Clearly, this is not directed at human necessities nor comfortable living, is wasteful consumption, and a misdirected allocation of resources by the firm. Pope John Paul II condemned this consumerism for perpetuating a false and dangerous value (O’Boyle, 2005). As Christopher Flavin, President of the World Watch Institute exclaimed, the challenge of checking the consumption juggernaut is enormous, and supporting a natural world that can sustain everyone will require that consumption be controlled, rather than allowing consumption to control us (World Watch Report, 2004).

The major religions of the world and scriptures have traditionally supported sustainable practices. Jackson (1998) observed that scriptures offer a royal road of inquiry into the worlds of self and meaning, which humans have arrived at in their adventurous wanderings on the planet. It is a guide to life and a statement of the formal position of that religion. Scriptures have been regarded as a primary source in theology and influenced reason, faith, culture and tradition (Ndungane, 2001). Thus, it is evident that traditionally and culturally sustainability was embedded in all walks of life. Walker
(2000) provides a compilation of the views of the world religions on material possessions and sustainability. He observes that many teachings posit that material goods and a mind that is preoccupied with such goods is considered as hampering one's inner development. For example, Buddhism regards possessions as a form of bondage that prevents enlightenment. In Judeo-Christian texts numerous passages declare the necessity of eschewing material possessions and personal wealth. The Islamic faith mentions, "It is difficult for a man laden with riches to climb the steep path that leadeth to bliss," and Chinese traditions say that a fixation on fine clothes, foods and possessions places one far from the inner way. Hinduism states that material resources must be exploited by humans with great caution and has to be purely need-based with minimal usage. Otherwise it will disturb the balance of nature (Agarwal, 2007). Walker concludes:

‘it becomes evident that inner development can have a direct bearing and influence on both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of material culture and, ipso facto, environmental stewardship and sustainability’.

Shiva (1991) presents a discussion of sustainable civilizations in ‘Ecology and the Politics of Survival’. The author states that the history of civilisation can be depicted in terms of two models. According to the first model, societies traverse the path of the classical trajectory where they rise and fall. This happens when they do not limit their resource utilisation within the constraints imposed by the cycles and processes of nature. According to the second model, societies move in a stationary state or in an orbit, like an electron around the atom or the satellite around the earth, with and not against the cycles of life. To be in a stationary state does not mean to be stationary, it involves movement and progression within an orbit. Thus, the ecological consciousness of ancient civilisations had allowed them to progress and at the same time promote ecological stability without damage to the environment. But conventional economics misinterpreted stability as stagnation and stationary state movement as no movement at all, throwing people into the ecological imbalance.

Whatever the cause, technology or man-made, businesses have a bleak future if this ecological imbalance not corrected quickly. Where is a sustainable business without sustainable resources for it to turn into products and services? The going-concern theory in finance is postulated on eternal life of firms, and valuations of these firms rest on this theory. The long-term direct impact of sustainability crisis on businesses is apparent.

**Integrating Spirituality**

Yet, science and technology have to progress for civilization to progress. The solution is to make technology complementary to life, rather than threatening its very existence. Science and spirituality are complementary, not contradictory (Agarwal, 2007). Philosopher Midgley (2000, 2001) echoed this
integration when she called for reuniting science and spirituality. The Vedic scriptures describe the combination of para-vidya or spiritual wisdom, and apara-vidya or scientific knowledge, as a necessity for the advancement of science and technology to enable it to serve humanity in the right perspective (Agarwal, 2007). To Pope John Paul II, companies are established not just for the sake of their owners but for the whole of human society – a corollary to his view that the world's material goods are intended for all human beings. Profits are necessary for the viability of the company, but the act of providing for the human material needs is not to be sacrificed in the attempt to gain maximum profits (O’Boyle, 2005). Several scholars (Ashar and Lane-Maher, 2004; Conger, 1994; Heaton DP, Schmidt-Wilk J & Travis F, 2000) agree that spirituality is not a luxury that follows material success but rather an essential, personal, and universal need of human nature.

Spirituality causes a shift in thinking from one based on self-interest, to community interest, a necessary principle of sustainability. For example, Conger (1994) noted the transcendental quality of spirituality ‘which lifts us beyond ourselves and our narrow self-interests . . . it is the most humane of forces and helps us to see our deeper connection to one another and to the world beyond ourselves’. Mitroff and Denton’s (1999) survey participants, saw serving humankind, future generations, and the immediate community as an integral part of spirituality. King and Crowther (2004) cited Piedmont (1999) who stated that spiritual transcendence is ‘the capacity of individuals to stand outside of their immediate sense of time and place to view life from a larger, more objective perspective’. Thus, it is only through a spiritual lens that the larger picture becomes apparent.

What is this larger picture? As Charlton (2003, cf Reason, 2007) explains, ‘the living beings of the world: viruses and bacteria, plants, insects, mammals (including humans), the great ecosystems, the seas, the atmosphere; all comprise a single interconnected mental system. Thus, radical interconnectedness is inescapable’. (Charlton, 2003: 116, original emphasis). Vedic Hindu dharma has always upheld the principle of co-existence, of ‘live and let live’, and expects a high moral responsibility to ensure adequate care of all animal and plant life, and an attitude of gratitude towards them with no place for violence or killing of any animals for any purpose (Agarwal, 2007), and concludes that the problems of environmental and ecological degradation are due to our violation of these basic laws of co-existence.

Spirituality fuels creativity which is the crux of innovation that drives the economies. Follett (1924) observed that to unleash our creativity, we must unclose our spiritual sources and allow nothing to come between our spiritual sources and our life. As she stated, ‘the élan vital must have free play’. Hutchinson and Burkitt (1999) cite Douglas (1919) who was scathing of the notion that invention (the true source of wealth), whether in arts, science or technology cannot be stimulated by the carrot and stick approach of pay packets. For organisations, this means that unless they learn how to harness the
"whole person" and the immense spiritual energy that is at the core of everyone, they will not be able to produce world-class products and services through merely providing other incentives (Mitroff and Denton, 1999).

When internalized by every individual in a firm, this spiritual perspective can create a ripple effect in the firm and set in motion a virtuous cycle that creates a spiritual organization. Marques (2006) illustrates a model of a spiritual worker.

"An individual gets confronted with internal reasons for enhanced spiritual performance: a transformation happens, and an increase in willingness to connect is ignited. The now more spiritually attuned worker... connects with colleagues in order to enhance mutuality and reciprocity... which, in most cases, triggers a similar response in return. Here, is where the integrated aspects start coming into play. Owing to the spiritual worker's encouraging behavior, co-workers will become positively influenced, reflect on their behaviors as well, and increasingly engage into team performance, which is expressed in increased support, elevated trust, and enhanced understanding. Ultimately, all or most workers within the positively affected department will demonstrate a greater degree of responsibility and ownership, as well as awareness of the bigger picture, and, through their increased team behavior, will generate greater output and, hence, better organizational performance (external aspects), which will, in the right environment and under the right leadership, be translated to the workers in the form of increased job satisfaction. Increased job satisfaction, in turn, will further elevate the internal motives for the individual to remain a spiritual worker.”

A recognition of spirituality as the fundamental aspect of the human personality allows an organization to manage change more efficiently and effectively. While traditional approaches of change management aim at managing change from the outside in and requires enormous effort and persistence, knowledge of the spiritual foundation of life means that change can be handled from the "inside out" (Heaton et al., 2004).

An organisation that has one or more spiritual workers is well placed to be a role model for other organizations by demonstrating that adherence to ethical practices and acknowledging and encouraging spiritual workers will lead to not only financial success but also non-financial rewards. The concept of ‘wholesome organisation’ by Pragati Leadership Institute (Wakhlu, 2007) discusses the sustenance of business where intellectual capital has to be managed skilfully. This involves exploring new ways of expanding insight, innovation, inspiration and integration, to work joyfully together to produce high quality measurable results. In the emerging environment, the best people are those who are "healthy," meaning balanced in body, mind, and spirit. These new leaders tend to have a broad point of view, combining hard-edged skills with a softer, more humane approach. They are in
touch with whom they are physically, emotionally, and intellectually and embody the best of our culture, or the renaissance leaders for the 21st century (Neal 1999). The spirituality of the leaders is the key to maintaining the organization’s spirituality (Konz and Ryan, 1999). Cavanagh (1999) observes that several top managers of firms have articulated the overtly Christian vision that guided them as chief executive officers of their respective firms. Max DePree, Chairman and CEO of Herman Miller, the firm that was regularly listed on Fortune’s list of “best managed” and “most innovative” companies during DePree’s tenure, spelled out his humane and religiously based philosophy of management (DePree, 1989). There are several articles that discuss how spirituality in the workplace can help to achieve longer term enterprise stability, growth and profitability (Burack, 1999). When employers and employees are naturally situated in the ‘sustainable’ frame of mind, it is not difficult for an organisation, or for an economy, to carry the tenets of sustainability forward. In fact, the actions of individuals to connect their material selves with their spiritual selves create sustainability automatically making the sustainability crisis debate, defunct.

The surprising aspect is that sustainability definitions do articulate this spiritual dimension. It has not been acted upon or operationalized. Two definitions that highlight this spiritual component of sustainability are provided below.

“Primary objective of sustainability is to achieve satisfying lives for all while staying within the bounds of nature. If either of these elements is not achieved then we will have failed in our efforts to reach sustainability” (Chambers, Simmons & Wackernagel, 2000)

“Sustainable development means achieving a quality of life (or standard of living) that can be maintained for many generations because it is: 1. Socially desirable, fulfilling people’s cultural, material, and spiritual needs in equitable ways; 2. Economically viable, paying for itself, with costs not exceeding income; 3. Ecologically sustainable, maintaining the long term viability of supporting ecosystems” (IUCN – World Conservation Union, 1993)

This ‘unseen’ and implicit component of sustainability, that is, spirituality, is so important that sustainability cannot be completely explained without the spirituality component. Reason’s (2007) discussion on the Gaia theory, or planetary systems science, acknowledges that even though the Gaia provides a coherent scientific account of the sustainability issue, well supported by detailed scientific study, it is inadequate to respond fully to the challenge of the destruction of ecological systems.

**The need for god consciousness**

One disconcerting aspect of integrating spirituality in business is the debate on the presence and acknowledgement of God. In his article titled ‘Creation, imagination, and business: is there a link?’
Doost (1996) concluded that there is a place for the discussion on the concepts of God, spirit, creation, creativity, and imagination in accounting and other business disciplines. He cites Pacioli who states that the ultimate symbol of honesty and balance is God and argues that if we devise the most sophisticated systems in accounting but do not focus, emphasize, and teach the very essence of the whole thing which is honesty, integrity, and balance, that is God, it means we have failed in our objective. The Enron debacle and the hordes of corporate governance failures are a testimony of this failure. It is interesting to note the responses from accounting students in South Carolina, USA, to Doost’s survey. To quote a few, ‘Spirit is within each one of us and is important to keep it healthy, for each wrong that is not corrected just becomes a wrong that is okay’; ‘The concepts of God, spirit, creation are relevant to systems and an integral part in general’; ‘With God, I can do everything. Without God, I can do nothing’.

History is replete with great scientists like Galileo Galilei, Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein, who never denied the existence of the Divine Force. These scientists marvelled at the intricate laws of planetary motion and accepted the existence of a super intelligent Cosmic Creator. Sir Isaac Newton once invited a scientist friend to dine with him. This man was an atheist. So, Newton placed a model of the solar system on the table and invited his friend to view it. On seeing the model, the friend exclaimed: “What marvellous craftsmanship! Who fashioned this exquisite model?” “Nobody,” Newton said casually. “What do you mean?” asked his friend. Newton smilingly remarked that how could anyone insist that the model had a maker, while denying the existence of a divine creator for the cosmos’ (Agarwal, 2007).

At the time of writing this paper, The Australian newspaper reported that based on 2006 census statistics, Godlessness is on the up and gathering momentum mainly among Australia’s youth. It added that “Even our most devout, those aged over 70, are now less inclined to hold some form of religious belief than were their age-counterparts at the turn of this century. This would suggest that there is a broad-based movement away from the notion of belief. The rapid expansion of some congregations is being entirely offset by the greater contraction of others”. The report concluded by remarking that “Today - and especially among Generation Y, who have only ever experienced peace and prosperity - the prevailing belief system is far more likely to focus on the here and now”. However, immediately after the news item it was interesting to read the comments posted in response to this article. The comments (38 at the time) seemed to unequivocally state, ‘atheism is a new religion’ to ‘religion and God are distractions better left out’ (The Australian, June 28, 2007).

Srila Prabhupada, the founder of the International Society for Krsna Consciousness has discussed eloquently on how God consciousness creates a sustainable world. According to him,
“Self-sufficiency is the highest form of ecological evolution. Sustainability is achieved because it produces more, or at least an equal, amount of energy as is consumed in maintaining the system. Could not the latest panacea be easily remedied by a civilization focused on an environmentally-harmonious, God-conscious culture of simple living and high thinking? Certainly, but not until the sensual buzz of material gratification is replaced by knowledge... Simple living requires the philosophical basis and inspiration provided by spiritual life. Without this higher taste, the lower self (mind and senses) erodes the desire and morality needed to develop one's relationship with Krishna (God). In essence, it is this pleasure of the eternal relationship with God that is being sought after even through consumerism. In the end, it (the relationship with God) is the only true pleasure. So without this higher taste, the mind eventually returns to material pleasures and the attractiveness and relevance of simple living is lost. So simple living alone, without higher thinking is not recommended. Connection to the Supreme is key” (Srila Prabhupada, 1972)

The relationship between spirituality and religion

A review of the literature on spirituality and religiousness reveals that the conceptualization of both constructs and the words used to describe them are undergoing refinement (King and Crowther, 2004) and that spirituality, religion and work as a field of inquiry is experiencing an interim time period when new research models appropriate to this emerging discipline are being developed (Lund Dean, Fornaciari and McGee, 2003). Although there exists two different views, one, a perception that spirituality and religion are indistinguishable and the other, an argument that religion and spirituality are uniquely different, there is a consensus that one fosters the development of the other. Throughout history, spirituality and religion have been integral to economic activities (Kale, 2004). This interrelationship between spirituality and religiousness where one nurtures the other is understandable when one delves into the definitions of the constructs. While religion is defined as an organized system of beliefs, practices, rituals and symbols designed to facilitate closeness to the sacred or transcendent (God, higher power, or ultimate truth/ality), and to foster an understanding of one's relation and responsibility to others in living together in a community, spirituality is defined as the personal quest for understanding answers to ultimate questions about life, about meaning, and about relationship to the sacred or transcendent, which may (or may not) lead to or arise from the development of religious rituals and the formation of community (King and Crowther, 2004).

TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK THAT INCORPORATES SPIRITUALITY

Based on the above discussions the following framework outlines the important variables that need to be considered to understand ‘wholesome sustainability’. This deeper understanding will aid in tackling the crisis more effectively.
The above framework is simple and identifies the major issues in the sustainability debate. They are shown as a seven-sided star to denote the fact that the remedy for all these issues lies in promoting spirituality. As the theoretical review posited, the spiritually inclined individual and organization naturally abstains from wasteful production and excessive consumption, leading to prudent use of resources. Thus, only by incorporating spirit the major material problems can be tackled.
IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

There is mounting evidence that a focus on sustainability brings financial rewards for firms. A back calculation of the Dow Jones Sustainability Global Index between 1994 and mid-1999 has shown that it would have outperformed the Dow Jones Global Index by a substantial margin, achieving an annualized return of 17 percent compared with the Global Index’s 13 percent (World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 1999). It is not surprising to see companies scrambling for a seat on the sustainability bandwagon, touting it as their topmost agenda. However, there is a danger of this becoming another management fad. Mueller, Klandt, McDonald, & Finke-Schuermann (2007) citing researchers, observed that the concept of sustainable development is considered as abstract and as a theoretically possible goal by many companies with some firms believing it will impede their growth and competitiveness. As Onwueme and Borsari (2007) observed this could be due to a lack of understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of sustainability, which can be remedied by ‘educating the masses in sustainability through formal and informal means’.

As discussed earlier, the education system needs to be revamped to integrate spirituality. People need to be educated on the difference between religion and spirituality. Whilst it is important to be spiritual, the focus should not be on a particular religion. For instance, on 29 October, 2006, the Australian Federal government announced a $90 million funding scheme for state schools to recruit chaplains. Julie Bishop MP Federal Member for Curtin, Minister for Education, Science and Training, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women’s Issues, responded to critics who questioned the role of the chaplains by stating ‘we have a national framework for values; this has been part of the Australian government’s focus for schooling. But we believe that there is a place for school chaplains if the school community desires it, to support students to for example, explore their spirituality, to provide guidance on religious and values and ethical matters, to provide guidance for students on issues concerning human relationships’ (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 29 Oct, 2006). This is a particularly positive move towards creating a more balanced person as well as being tolerant to the religions with the focus being on attaining spirituality. Businesses must join in with more conscious efforts in this direction as well as a courageous articulation of the benefits of spirituality.

Another interesting observation is brought by Kozlovsky (1974) to the sustainability debate. According to him, in the process of implementing sustainability measures, ‘those who think that they have achieved perfection must reckon with their own ‘sustainability deficit’ which is less than 100% and, continue to strive for further improvement. Just as important, they must learn to treat other people as fellow bearers of sustainability deficits, who must be encouraged along the path of sustainability.... A holier-than-thou attitude towards people with a lower sustainability index is likely to stigmatize the listener and harden resistance to the message. Such sanctimonious superciliousness only invites
resistance from those we are trying to inform and educate'. The basic premise is that such exchanges inevitably prove to be highly educational for all concerned, and invariably boost the sustainability index of the entire society.

This paper has proposed a framework that integrates spirituality with the major sustainability issues to increase our understanding of why monumental efforts in tackling sustainability issues have failed. The proposed framework brings a unique perspective to sustainability theory and practice. The article demonstrates that it only through the integration of the spirit that one gains a wholesome perspective of sustainability. By moving the individual from self-interest to community-interest, by limiting wants to necessities, and by expanding consciousness to increase creativity and innovation for economic advancement, spirituality not only kindles, but maintains sustainability. The promotion of the spiritual dimension is thus a positive force that works in a virtuous cycle, in contrast to the negative forces of control and regulation of material causes, thus demonstrating that integrating spirit does indeed matter for tackling the sustainability crisis. Future research should seek to identify every major and minor sustainability issue and review the underlying spiritual dimension and linkages. A large scale survey and focus group sessions can aid in strengthening the framework and fine-tuning the parameters. As Fornaciari and Lund Dean (2001) observed, the inadequacy of traditional social science research tools to address spirituality and god consciousness needs to be acknowledged. They cite an example of a scholar who stated in frustration, 'We're trying to factor analyse God!'. The authors cautioned that if new paradigmatic approaches to measurement and conceptualization of spirituality and religion are not adopted there is a high probability that the results produced from such research will be trivial, and that the stream itself will ultimately be abandoned as yet another fad.

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