

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP: A STUDY ON FOUR SPIRITUAL LEADERS

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Abstract

When one thinks of leadership, the most common thing that comes to one's mind is a military officer giving orders and closely supervising so that work gets done. This aspect can be a part of leadership but they are not the essence of Spiritual leadership. Spiritual leadership is basically '**Servant leadership**' as it involves humbling oneself and doing tasks that no one else wants to do. Spiritual leadership has a humility, service and integrity as its basic components. People follow a spiritual leader since he serves alongside them by setting an example. Also people cannot follow a leader whom they do not respect, wherein the importance of integrity comes into play. A lot of study has been done on Jesus as a spiritual leader; hence in this study emphasis has been placed on Moses, Sri Ramakrishna Paramhans, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Bhashyanandaji. This report emphasizes on the contributions made by the above mentioned four leaders. A set of attributes of spiritual leadership has been identified from the literature and all the four leaders have been evaluated on that basis. In this paper, the intention is to:

1. Describe Spiritual Leadership,
2. Understand the various attributes of Spiritual Leadership,
3. Compare the four Spiritual Leaders under study based on the attributes.

Key words: Leadership; Spirituality; Managerial development.

1.0 What is Leadership?

1.1 Introduction

In one of his best known essays White wrote [1] "There is a bright future for complexity, what with one thing always leading to another." What White distills in his observation about complexity is a basic truth about leading and learning – about the way we discover something valuable, give it a tug and finds it inevitable leads us to another discovery and then another.

Many people believe that leadership is simply being the first, biggest or most

powerful. Leadership in organizations has a different and more meaningful definition. Very simply put, a leader is interpreted as someone who sets direction in an effort and influences people to follow that direction. How they set that direction and influence people depends on a variety of factors.

Robert K. Greenleaf defines leadership [2] as - "Going out ahead to show the way - is available to everyone in the institution who has the competence, values and temperament for it, from the chair to the least skilled individual."

One of the definitions of Leadership [3] could be "Leadership is a function of knowing yourself, having a vision that is well communicated, building trust among colleagues, and taking effective action to realize your own leadership potential."

A traditional definition [4] of leadership: Leadership is an interpersonal influence directed toward the achievement of a goal or goals.

Three important parts of this definition are the terms interpersonal, influence, and goal.

Interpersonal means between persons. Thus, a leader has more than one person (group) to lead.

Influence is the power to affect others. *Goal* is the end one strives to attain.

Basically, this traditional definition of leadership says that a leader influences more than one person toward a goal.

Leadership is a dynamic relationship based on mutual influence and common purpose between leaders and collaborators in which both are moved to higher levels of motivation and moral development as they affect real, intended change.

John Maxwell [5] sums up his definition of leadership as "leadership is influence - nothing more, nothing less."

This moves beyond the position defining the leader, to looking at the ability of the leader to influence others - both those who would consider themselves followers, and those outside that circle. Indirectly, it also builds in leadership character, since without maintaining integrity and trustworthiness, the capability to influence will disappear.

1.2 Qualities Of A Great Leader

What makes a great leader? Some say it is the ability to give a clear sense of direction. Some, that it is the ability to make tough decisions. Others, say that great leadership is the ability to command and control, or, conversely, to inspire loyalty in those led through strong emotional empathy. Great leadership depends primarily on vision—not just any type of vision, but one that we can appreciate intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually.

A vision is something [6] we reach for, something we aspire to, something that is the glue of our enterprise, the driving force, the vitality within it. When we are touched by a vision, our deepest values come into play and we have a sense of abiding purpose to our enterprise. In our world today, the thing we are most lacking is leaders who can convey vision.

One reason that visionary leadership is in short supply today is the value our society places on one particular kind of capital—material capital [7]. Too often the worth or value of an enterprise is judged by how much money it earns at the end of the day, or how much worldly power it gives us over others. This obsession with material gain has led to short-term thinking and the narrow pursuit of self-interest. It is true that any kind of enterprise we want to engage in requires some kind of financial wealth if it is to succeed in the short term. But for leadership to inspire long-term, sustainable enterprises, it needs to pursue two other forms of capital as well: social and spiritual. These three types of capital resemble the layers in a wedding cake. Material capital is the top layer, social capital lies in the middle, and spiritual capital rests on the bottom,

supporting all three.

Spiritual Leadership

Servant-Leadership [9] / Spiritual leadership is a practical philosophy which supports people who choose to serve first, and then lead as a way of expanding service to individuals and institutions. Servant-leaders may or may not hold formal leadership positions.

True spiritual leadership, with a spirit of humility and service, will cause people to follow you because they want to, not because they have to. Genuine humility and spiritual leadership is attractive. People want to follow a person who serves alongside them and sets an example for them.

Spiritual leadership insists on humility. Humility is the attitude that puts others ahead of you, that considers others more important than yourself. It was said of Moses, the leader of over one million Israelites, "Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth". Thinking too highly of self prevents us from genuinely caring for others. Humility enables you to serve others wholeheartedly and thereby set an example that others will follow.

Spiritual leadership also requires integrity [10]. People do not want to follow a person they do not respect. The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. He or she is sharply different from the person who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. For

such it will be a later choice to serve – after leadership is established. The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature.

The difference manifest itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, will they not be further deprived?"

1.3 Definition

"A Spiritual leader [11] is one who serves all the stakeholders in an organization with the principles of fairness and equity."

Fairness: Fairness means everyone gets what they need.

Equity: The state, quality, or ideal of being just, impartial, and fair.

2.0 Spiritual Leadership: Implications For Corporate Managers

It's basically the personal search for identity and other implications are:

- ❖ To wrestle with the connection between contemplation and action in the organization.
- ❖ To learn a particular process for discernment with/in a system or structure called "The Social

Discernment Cycle.” This includes a reflection on the confluence between the way God is working with one in the personal, interpersonal and structural arenas of one’s life.

- ❖ To learn some basic skills in social analysis.
- ❖ To transfer this spiritual practice to other potential leaders in the office settings.

2.1 Why is the Study of Spiritual Leadership Important?

Servant leaders differ from other persons of goodwill because they act on what they believe. Consequently they know experimentally and there is a sustaining spirit when they venture and risk. To the worldly, servant leaders may seem naive and they may not readily adapt to the prevailing institutional structures.

1. The ideas in servant Leadership point toward a possible path forward and will continue to do so.
2. The changes ahead will be difficult since people want to create work environments which have servant leaders.
3. There is a depth of commitment required to built truly innovative organisations.

Attributes of a Spiritual Leader

2.2 Characteristics Of A Servant Leader

Servant-leadership encourages [12] –collaboration, trust, foresight, power of articulation, power of motivation, use of inner power and empathy.

We have considered four spiritual Leaders viz- Moses, Sri Ramakrishna Paramhans,

Swami Vivekananda and Swami Bhashyanandaji. A lot of study has been done on Jesus Christ as a Spiritual Leader hence we have considered other leaders.

2.2.1 Moses

Throughout history there have been many individuals who could be considered leaders, but some stand out among the others. An example of a superb leader is Moses [13] in the Bible. Moses is viewed as a righteous man in God’s eyes and is chosen to lead the Hebrews out of oppression in Egypt. Contained in the story of Exodus are many examples of Moses’ sacrifices and the hardships he endured while freeing the Hebrews. The faith of Moses was tested numerous times throughout the story, and, in some instances, it seemed that Moses had lost faith, however, being the “righteous” man that he was, he stuck it out until the end. When compared to Noah and Abraham, Moses is a “pillar of faith” for surviving his tests and for being the perfect tool for God’s plans. In the Old Testament stories, God seems to want his earth to be peaceful and without sin and when he sees that the world is corrupt, he decides to conduct a purge.

2.2.2 Shri Ramakrishna

He represents the very core of the spiritual realizations of the seers and sages of India. His whole life [14] was literally an uninterrupted contemplation of God. He reached a depth of God-consciousness that transcends all time and place and has a universal appeal. Seekers of God of all religions feel irresistibly drawn to his life and teachings. Sri Ramakrishna, as a silent force, influences the spiritual thought currents of our time. He is a figure of recent

history and his life and teachings have not yet been obscured by loving legends and doubtful myths. Through his God-intoxicated life Sri Ramakrishna proved that the revelation of God takes place at all times and that God-realization is not the monopoly of any particular age, country, or people. In him, deepest spirituality and broadest catholicity stood side by side. The God-man of nineteenth-century India did not found any cult, nor did he show a new path to salvation.

2.2.3 Swami Vivekananda

He extracted [15] scientific truths from Upanishads and Vedanta and put breaks on the criticism of religion as non-scientific mumbling. The old philosophy of Vedanta was given new form suited to the modern scientific thinking. His vast knowledge of Eastern and Western culture as well as his deep spiritual insight, fervid eloquence, brilliant conversation, broad human sympathy, colorful personality, and handsome figure made an irresistible appeal to the many types of Americans who came in contact with him.

His life and teachings are of inestimable value to the West for an understanding of the mind of Asia. William James, the Harvard philosopher, called the Swami the "paragon of Vedantists."

2.2.4 Swami Bhashyananda

In 1968, was driving to Detroit when he chanced upon this place which rather quaintly had the same name as India's most sacred river. He immediately decided to start a monastery there. The land was bought and soon the monks themselves transformed the fruit-tree filled farm. By 1976, the land

had been cleared and the first unit, a barn, raised. Soon the "barn" became a retreat dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and the propagation of Vedanta.

Swami Bhashyananda [16] was a frequent traveller, making semi-annual pilgrimages to India and dividing his time between Chicago and Ganges, as well as establishing over 40 "satellite" Vedanta groups throughout the United States and Canada.

Comparison of the 4 spiritual leaders under study using the 7 attributes

The 7 attributes of Spiritual Leadership are seen and compared with the 4 gurus under study:

Collaboration - To work together

Trust - Firm reliance on the integrity, ability, or character of a person or thing.

Foresight - Perception of the significance and nature of events before they have occurred.

Power of articulation - The act or manner of producing a speech sound

Power of motivation - The inner desire or drive to achieve something

Use of inner power - It's something that raises man over other animals.

Empathy - Putting ourselves into others shoes.

a. Collaboration

- ❖ Everyone who came to Sri Ramakrishna felt uplifted by his profound God-consciousness, boundless love, and universal outlook. Each seeker saw in him the highest manifestation of his ideal. By coming near him the impure

became pure, the pure became purer, and the sinner was transformed into a saint.

- ❖ The natural tendency of Vivekananda's mind [17], like that of his Master, Ramakrishna, was to soar above the world and forget itself in contemplation of the Absolute. But another part of his personality bled at the sight of human suffering in East and West alike. It might appear that his mind seldom found a point of rest in its oscillation between contemplation of God and service to man. Be that as it may, he chose, in obedience to a higher call, service to man as his mission on earth; and this choice has endeared him to people in the West, Americans in particular.

In the course of a short life of thirty-nine years (1863-1902), of which only ten were devoted to public activities-and those, too, in the midst of acute physical suffering-he left for posterity his four classics: Jnana-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga, Karma-Yoga, and Raja-Yoga, all of which are outstanding treatises on Hindu philosophy. In addition, he delivered innumerable lectures, wrote inspired letters in his own hand to his many friends and disciples, composed numerous poems, and acted as spiritual guide to the many seekers, who came to him for instruction. He also organized the Ramakrishna Order of monks, which is the most outstanding religious organization of modern India. It is devoted to the propagation of the Hindu spiritual culture not only in the Swami's native land, but also in America and in other parts of the world.

He literally shook the Indian nation to its foundations, electrifying it to dynamic self-expression, through his speeches and writings as also conversations.

His work is being continued today by the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission. The Mission is an ideal service organization embodying the teachings of practical Vedanta.

- ❖ Swami Bhashyananda has played a major role in spreading the message of Hinduism across the western world

Vedanta Societies were established in the large cities of this country and in Europe. But these centers were only a part of his work. More important was introducing Vedantic ideas into the bloodstream of academic thinking. Dissemination was the goal. It mattered little to Swami Bhashyananda whether credit was given to Hinduism or not, so long as the message of Vedanta reached everyone. On many occasions he said: "Knock on every door. Tell everyone he is Divine"

b. Trust

- ❖ When the Hebrews reached Sinai, on the Sinai Peninsula, Moses [18] ascended the mountain to speak with Yahweh (God). He spent 40 days and nights with Yahweh, from whom he received two tablets of stone on which were inscribed the Ten Commandments, which thereafter constituted the fundamental laws of the Hebrews. After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness and desert under Moses's leadership and the endurance of many hardships, such as earthquakes, plagues, fires, thirst, and wars with the native people of

Palestine, the Hebrews at last came to Canaan.

- ❖ At a time when the very foundation of religion, faith in God, was crumbling under the relentless blows of materialism and skepticism, Sri Ramakrishna, through his burning spiritual realizations, demonstrated beyond doubt the reality of God and the validity of the time-honored teachings of all the prophets and saviors of the past, and thus restored the falling edifice of religion on a secure foundation. Drawn by the magnetism of Sri Ramakrishna's divine personality, people flocked to him from far and near — men and women, young and old, philosophers and theologians, philanthropists and humanists, atheists and agnostics, Hindus and Brahmos, Christians and Muslims, seekers of truth of all races, creeds and castes. His small room in the Dakshineswar temple garden on the outskirts of the city of Calcutta became a veritable parliament of religions.

c. Foresight

- ❖ The Ramakrishna Mission aims [19] at man-making and character-building education. Sri Ramakrishna reminded the educationists of the country again and again that religion should be the core of our education system as it helps one to attain real manhood. Education which makes the whole society happy with the happiness of the individual and which produces a society, which is constrained and fair in its relation with other societies, is called the right type of education. Whatsoever removes misery and increases happiness and makes the happiness

stable is real education.

- ❖ Swami Bhashyananda's work in Chicago was distinguished by vigorous expansion. Within a year of taking charge, the congregation of the center tripled and in 1966 he moved the center from its Elm Street location to its present address. He also purchased a nearby bungalow for use of women devotees. Major contribution of Swami Bhashyananda comes as the founder of the reputed 'Ganges Monastery' at Michigan, U.S.A.. The Vivekananda Monastery and Retreat at Ganges, Michigan, provides a place for spiritual seekers to engage in prayer, meditation and study away from the distractions and cares of daily life. The Ganges retreat provides an atmosphere conducive to solitude and meditation in a non-sectarian context of reverence for all faiths, embodying the all-encompassing outlook of Sri Ramakrishna.

d. Power of Articulation

- ❖ The greatest contribution of Sri Ramakrishna to the modern world is his message of the harmony of religions. To Sri Ramakrishna all religions are the revelation of God in His diverse aspects to satisfy the manifold demands of human minds. Like different photographs of a building taken from different angles, different religions give us the pictures of one truth from different standpoints. They are not contradictory but complementary. Sri Ramakrishna faithfully practiced the spiritual disciplines of different religions and came to the realization that all of them lead to the same goal. Thus he declared,

"As many faiths, so many paths." The paths vary, but the goal remains the same. Harmony of religions is not uniformity; it is unity in diversity. It is not a fusion of religions, but a fellowship of religions based on their common goal — communion with God. This harmony is to be realized by deepening our individual God-consciousness. In the present-day world, threatened by nuclear war and torn by religious intolerance, Sri Ramakrishna's message of harmony gives us hope and shows the way. May his life and teachings ever inspire us.

- ❖ In America Vivekananda's mission was the interpretation of India's spiritual culture, especially in its Vedantic setting. He also tried to enrich the religious consciousness of the Americans through the rational and humanistic teachings of the Vedanta philosophy. In America he became India's spiritual ambassador and pleaded eloquently for better understanding between India and the New World in order to create a healthy synthesis of East and West, of religion and science.

e. Power of Motivation

Swami Vivekananda had vast knowledge of Eastern and Western culture [20] as well as his deep spiritual insight, fervid eloquence, brilliant conversation, broad human sympathy, colorful personality, and handsome figure made an irresistible appeal to the many types of Americans who came in contact with him. People who saw or heard Vivekananda even once still cherish his memory after a lapse of more than half a century.

f. Use of Inner power

In his own motherland Vivekananda is regarded as the patriot saint of modern India and an inspirer of her dormant national consciousness. To the Hindus he preached the ideal of a strength-giving and man-making religion. Service to man as the visible manifestation of the Godhead was the special form of worship he advocated for the Indians, devoted as they were to the rituals and myths of their ancient faith. Many political leaders of India have publicly acknowledged their indebtedness to Swami Vivekananda.

The Swami's mission was both national and international. A lover of mankind, he strove to promote peace and human brotherhood on the spiritual foundation of the Vedantic Oneness of existence. A mystic of the highest order, Vivekananda had a direct and intuitive experience of Reality. He derived his ideas from that unfailing source of wisdom and often presented them in the soul stirring language of poetry.

g. Empathy

- ❖ Moses served as a handy total-time leader and a wonderful scapegoat when blaming was in season. The people hadn't learned yet that trust in God didn't mean just loading it on Moses. God had endowed them with gifts to manage the common life and to solve their problems. Trusting God involves using those gifts gratefully for their own good and for the common good. That's their responsibility. Moses was smart enough to implement a re-organizational plan and did the teaching and training and suddenly Moses rediscovered joy in life..
- ❖ Since its establishment in 1897, the

Mission has been running thousands of institutions for formal and non-formal education. These include orphanages, students' homes, a Blind Boys Academy, non-formal and adult education centers, self-employment training centers, Samaj Sevak Training Centres, agricultural research institutes, cattle farming institutes, technical schools, polytechnics, community polytechnics, computer training centers, language schools, libraries, librarianship training centers, hospitals and institutes for training nurses, teachers' training institutes, post-graduate medical research institutes, Veda Vidyalyaya, and countless formal schools and colleges.

As a part of their programme of service to the sick and the ailing, the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission run indoor hospitals, out-patients' dispensaries, mobile health units, etc. The Mission also runs a T.B. Clinic in Delhi, 5 Nurses Training Centres, a Medical Research Centre attached to Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratisthan - one of the leading hospitals of the city of Calcutta and a T.B. Sanatorium at Ranchi, in the state of Bihar. Besides, there are 14 other hospitals, 93 out-patients' dispensaries and 30 mobile dispensaries conducted by the Mission. Also find below work done:

1. Work for women: Relief and medical services are rendered to men and women alike. A woman can visit a shrine of a center, attend its public celebrations, classes and meetings, and enjoy library facilities just a man

does. Besides, some of the centers have units working exclusively for women.

2. Attention to the weaker sections: While providing education, medical services and distress relief, the Ramakrishna Math and Mission pay special attention to those who are weak from both material and cultural points of view

❖ Swami Bhasyananda's [21] is very vital in establishing the importance of Hinduism in the western world, particularly with the younger generation. He has been instrumental in discouraging the caste system prevalent in present society. He has said that in the modern period, caste that has flourished in India all these two thousand years is going to disappear completely. Nobody can sustain it; modern conditions are going to destroy it; and everybody would be happy with this development. It happened as specified. All the great modern teachers and leaders of India welcomed this abolition of caste-privileges, because it militated against human freedom and equality in a big way. That is why caste system or varna has no place in India today and has been completely abolished.

The attributes of a spiritual leader can be summarized as: Collaboration, Trust, Foresight, Power of articulation, Power of motivation, Use of inner power, Empathy

Table 1: Demonstration of the Attributes

	Moses	Sri Ramakrishna	Swami Vivekananda	Swami Bhashyananda
Collaboration	—	High	High	High
Trust	High	High	High	High
Foresight	—	High	High	High
Power of articulation	—	High	High	High
Power of Motivation	High	High	High	—
Use of Inner Power	—	High	High	—
Empathy	High	High	High	High

3.0 Implications Of Spiritual Leadership

3.1 Moses

Leadership is a big issue in our time. In the religious communities, we are all looking for people who can really pull the complexities of 21st century life together into some coherent whole. But if there are such leaders, their voices are very muted in our time - drowned out by fads and ads and mad communicating.

In congregational life, we know that finding leaders for the youth program and the various teams and task groups is an ongoing challenge. Some who were leaders are tired out, others don't feel confident about their gifts, and yet others are into so many other things already that giving leadership in the congregation seems just another burden. So leadership is a big issue - but not just in our era [22].

For about 4000 years, Moses has been considered one of the great religious leaders of all time.

Interestingly, he didn't think so. When he experienced God's call to him, he kept telling God: What are you asking me for?

In any case, whether there were 2 million or 2000 followers, Moses was the leader of this rag tag band of escaping slaves. He had experienced God's call. He had pushed the people to follow God's guidance. He had prayed for the people before God. He had inspired, encouraged, and brow-beat the unruly and grumbling lot. He had skills and the people were only too ready to let him exercise those talents totally for their benefit. And when problems arose, it was dump on Moses time!

Moses served as a handy total-time leader and a wonderful scapegoat when blaming was in season. The people hadn't learned yet that trust in God didn't mean just loading it on Moses. God had endowed them with gifts to manage the common life and to solve their problems. Trusting God involves using those gifts gratefully for their own good and for the common good. That's their responsibility. Moses was smart enough to implement a re-organizational plan and did the teaching and training and suddenly Moses rediscovered joy in life..

3.2 Sri Ramakrishna

Though it is true that Swami Vivekananda

started the Ramakrishna Mission on 1 May 1897, the origin of the Mission can be traced back to long before that - in the Dakshineswar days of Sri Ramakrishna's life. When Sri Ramakrishna had completed his spiritual practices in the various paths of Hinduism as well as in other religions, he had several realizations about himself and his future mission.

3.3 Swami Vivekananda

Inspired by Vivekananda's message, there have sprung up numerous organizations, institutions, study-circles, meditation centers, and philanthropic groups.

In its Annual General Report (released in April 2003) we see that last year the Order maintained 14 hospitals and 141 dispensaries in which 7.3 million patients, most of them poor and from rural and tribal areas, were treated at the cost of \$7 million. In the field of education, the Order spent \$7.5 million in maintaining its 600 schools, colleges, and orphanages that served the needs of 169,165 students. The Order's work in times of natural disasters is also impressive: last year it spent a total of \$4.7 million on relief and rehabilitation activities, which included rushing food supplies to people in distress due to fire, flood, storm, and earthquake, and building storm-proof and earthquake-resistant houses for the afflicted.

Each in its own way, every Vivekananda-inspired group and community is trying to translate his message into action for individual and collective welfare. Assuming that their understanding of Vivekananda's message is free from distortions, we can say that he "lives" in their group activities to the extent they succeed in bridging the gap

between theory and practice.

3.4 Swami Bhashyananda

Swami Bhashyananda's role is very vital in establishing the importance of hinduism in the western world, particularly with the younger generation. He has been instrumental in discouraging the caste system prevalent in present society. In his own words, "I have told you that, in the modern period, caste that has flourished in India all these two thousand years is going to disappear completely. Nobody can sustain it; modern conditions are going to destroy it; and we are all happy at this. All the great modern teachers and leaders of India welcomed this abolition of caste-privileges, because it militated against human freedom and equality in a big way. That is why caste or varna has no place in India today [23].

Swamiji has been a guiding force with qualities in him which make him a role model for the present generation. He has shown us the path of universal brotherhood and the importance of living in coherence with each other.

He was a great visionary who has created a congenial environment for our generation. Hinduism has come a long way by the services of Swami Bhashyananda. It has moved out of the boundaries of Indian sub-continent and has evolved as a global phenomenon. People have started to realize the applications of "Hindu" philosophy in daily lives.

He has further helped the cause of bringing to light the relevance of Hindu Philosophy during present times.

4.0 Social Transformation Brought About

By These 4 Leaders

4.1 Moses

In modern terminology scriptural social justice would include charity, social reform, and social transformation (or revolution). All three components are needed. The modern evangelical church excels at charity, occasionally engages in specific social reform and rarely attempts social transformation; i.e., a reconstruction of the entire society, a revolution of values.

The understanding and practice of charity is widespread so we need not elaborate on this aspect of social justice. Social reform occurs when one attacks a specific problem such as the lack of quality low income housing without necessarily addressing the values and social structures which create poverty and homelessness. Habitat for Humanity is an excellent example of a social reform ministry. It builds low income housing and sells the houses to the poor at no interest, thus enabling the poor to own their homes.

The issue of slavery is instructive in pointing out the need for something more than social reform. Lincoln freed the slaves, a bold and dramatic social reform. Before the century was out, however, most southern blacks were back in a semi-slavery status through rigid social segregation and an economic system of sharecropping. The underlying values which supported slavery, racism, and greed, had not been changed so they soon spawned new forms of oppression. The 1960s civil rights movement achieved some additional reforms such as voting rights, but again the underlying values of racism and greed were not challenged and changed in any fundamental way. Therefore, in the

1980s we experienced resurgent racism and legitimated greed implemented through our existing social institutions [24].

"Bread for the World", a Christian lobbying organization located in Washington, D.C., attempts to influence lawmakers to pass legislation to help the poor and oppressed of the world. A Christian voice for justice in the center of governmental power, Bread for the World has had some success in changing societal values and practices.

In the Old Testament, the leaders of society (i.e., rulers, kings, judges and priests) were addressed by the prophets as they opposed oppression and called for justice so that the people could experience shalom. Though not as fully recognized by evangelicals, one of Jesus' ministries was to function as a prophet in his day. Jesus opposed the oppression of the poor, cleansed the temple, and called for the Jewish religio-political-economic leaders to repent, to change their ways.

4.2 The Ramakrishna Movement

With the emergence of the Ramakrishna Mission, however, the situation changed dramatically. Sri Ramakrishna indirectly provided the main impetus for this movement. The life and teachings of this man of God have had a tremendous impact on the world at large as well as on the people of India. It could be argued that Ramakrishna's vision of Hinduism, and its popularisation by western converts like Christopher Isherwood have largely coloured western notions of what Hinduism is.

When it started in 1897, the Ramakrishna Order [25] consisted of a dozen monks or so and had practically no assets. Even now,

with its 139 centres and barely a thousand monks, it is small compared with the Christian organizations, but it is a name that commands respect all over India and even outside. What is the secret behind this? What exactly do the monks do in India and abroad? It must be made clear at once that the Ramakrishna Mission does not believe in conversion in the sense of the word as understood in common parlance.

Today, the Ramakrishna movement has become a great power for peace and happiness in this country as well as outside. In India where different sects and communities live, the idea of tolerance and brotherly feelings towards each other has great relevance. Another factor which contributes much to its popularity is the rational approach it brings to bear upon every vital problem of life. People who are influenced by Sri Ramakrishna believe religion to be a kind of science open to study and investigation. The fact that the Movement lays great stress on selfless service as a means of God-realization also attracts many people. The service it gives is open to all, irrespective of caste or creed or language.

As the movement spreads, the attitude of the common people towards religion is also changing. Previously, religion was equated with rituals, but now people realize that religion is essentially a science of 'being and becoming something', something that concerns man's inner nature. The habit of prayer is good but if this is not accompanied by a corresponding improvement in one's nature, it is not worth much.

There must be much truth in this, else it is difficult to explain the influence Sri Ramakrishna and the order of monks

bearing his name have had over people all over the world. The strength of Ramakrishna Movement is not in money, men or organization, but the ideas it tries to present. These ideas are fast spreading, and wherever they are spreading, they are producing a great impact. Silently but inevitably, they are changing the minds of the people who come under their influence. They act like a catalytic agent transforming their personalities.

4.3 Swami Vivekananda

It was Swamiji's hope that India would create a new social order and a new civilization by combining her best spiritual traditions with the latest advancements in science and technology. She would be rich both materially and spiritually. He knew affluence was not enough, man had to be human, too. He wanted India to set an example in this.

The teaching's of Swami Vivekananda [26] Instrumental in developing a transformed India which we all dream of. He showed us the direction and way to succeed. Every great people and luminaries always followed his teachings. He showed us how strong we are as a nation. He cemented the self-belief in each of us. Vivekananda showed us that we should treat people irrespective of caste, creed or religions. By imbibing all his teachings we are trying to create a better world that would be worth living. While constructing a better society we should keep these teaching in mind "That society is the greatest, where the highest truths become practical."

4.4 Swami Bhashyananda

The appeal to today's youth is unmistakable. Vedanta declares the perfect freedom of

every soul to be itself. It denies all distinction between sacred and secular: they are only different ways of expressing the single truth. And the sole purpose of religion is to provide for the needs of different temperaments: a god and a practice to suit everyone. In a word, religion is "doing your own thing,"

5.0 Conclusion

The primal responsibility of those in spiritual Leadership involves shepherding which would include:

1. Feeding: teaching the words of God
2. Overseeing: the general Affairs / well being
3. Praying: for the needs of the congregation
4. Protecting: from false doctrine
5. Correcting
6. Leading the congregation
7. Giving adequate direction

It's seen that spiritual leaders have a certain level of responsibility and position hence they are worthy of respect and obedience.

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