



## PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

---

### 2.7 PRACTISING SACRIFICE AT WORK

“Sacrifice” is a word that has many unpleasant connotations for people, especially in the workplace. But from a spiritual view, sacrifice is anything that takes a situation and makes it sacred, holy, whole and healthy.

“**SACRIFICE**” is a word that has many unpleasant connotations for people, especially in the workplace. When a manager says, “We have to make some sacrifices around here,” it usually means giving something up, or doing without something, either of which would make things more difficult.

But there’s an entirely different way to look at sacrifice, from a spiritual point of view. From its Latin roots, the word sacrifice actually means “to make sacred.” Following the chain of original meanings, sacred means “holy,” holy means “whole,” and whole means “healthy.” Thus, sacrifice is anything that takes a situation and makes it sacred, holy, whole and healthy.

The *Bhagavad Gita* speaks pointedly about the source and importance of sacrifice (yagna). First, true sacrifice involves selfless action that is motivated from our spiritual source:

*Every selfless, sacred action (every sacrifice) is born of the Godhead. (3:15)*

Second, sacrifice is the fundamental law of nature.

*All of life is born of, nourished, and sustained by selfless action, by sacrifice. The whole scheme of nature is centred not on grabbing but on offering selfless action. (3:14, 15)*

Third, sacrifice inspires us to dedicate the fruits of our actions to benefit the greater whole:

*At the beginning, mankind and the obligation of selfless service were created together. Sacrifice means offering, helping and being dedicated to the welfare of all humanity. It implies a mutuality of existence with all other beings. (3:10)*

So, sacrifice is essential for us to be in harmony with creation as well as the Creator. Not to sacrifice is to move away from holiness, wholeness and health. In terms of our spiritual growth, the purpose of sacrifice is to give us the opportunity to reduce our ego desires, and thus feel less separate from Divinity (more whole and healthy).

How can we practise sacrifice at work? One starting point is to be aware of our motivation. If we are motivated by our ego-desires – which are based on separateness rather than our

connection to the greater whole – we will feel that sacrifice means “giving up” something while still feeling a desire for it. If we are motivated from our spiritual source, we will feel that sacrifice means “giving to” something that is bigger than ourselves, thus leaving us with a natural sense of fulfillment.

One way to tune into our real motivation is whether we are attached to receiving something in return for what we do. In other words, are we primarily motivated by what we might get back, or by what we are able to give?

The spirit of sacrifice is a fundamental foundation for a prosperous, healthy workplace. For example:

- The marketing department of an agricultural-chemicals company in India annually makes a small “temple” constructed from its various products and conducts a ritual honouring their customers as embodiments of Divinity. Thus they dedicate themselves to serving their customers as they would serve God.
- Many shopkeepers we have met consistently take a moment to offer silent thanksgiving whenever they receive money from their customers. They continually remember Divinity as the source of their well-being.
- A multi-national company had accumulated a large pool of money for management bonuses; but the top management, led by a spiritual CEO, decided to use the money to give everyone in the company two days of vacation. And management told their customers that the company would be closed for two days to celebrate their success.
- An entrepreneur we know who operates a travel agency and taxi service, always puts major decisions on his home altar and waits for Divine guidance before taking any action. He sees every aspect of his business as an opportunity to serve Divinity in his customers.

Ultimately, working with a spirit of sacrifice brings forth our own highest potential because it strengthens our connection with the sacred source of life. It also evokes the best in others while contributing to the harmony and well-being of all.

So, ask yourself: *How do I know when the motivations for my actions are coming from my spiritual source? What are some specific indicators I have at work that tell me when I am selflessly serving others in the spirit of sacrifice?*

This article is an excerpt from the book, *Put Your Spirituality to Work: Book 2 – Work as a Spiritual Practice*. To download the full book of articles, as well as additional book chapters, articles, workbooks, and research on the subject of “spirituality and human values for leadership and work”, visit our website: [www.globaldharma.org](http://www.globaldharma.org)