

Article

Compassion, Performance & Programs for Excellence

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Abstract

The paper presents strong evidence showing that higher S, R, T levels of consciousness, which necessarily equate to higher levels of compassion, reduce defect levels in products and services even if six sigma programs are not in place. It follows therefore that compassion will boost the performance of six sigma programs. The link of compassion to performance is unexpected presenting a huge opportunity for all organizations in any country to improve the performance at all levels whether or not six sigma programs are in place.

Keywords: compassion, performance, meditation, consciousness, programs for excellence.

Introduction

Over the past couple of years the authors have published several papers in this journal on a scientific framework for individual and national transformation (1 – 4). The authors pointed out that nations are characterized as developed or emerging/developing on the basis of defect levels in their products and services (5). As depicted in Figure 1, developed nations are characterized by low defect levels while emerging/developing nations are characterized by high defects levels. The plot is believed to be correct in the qualitative sense.

Defects in products and services of nations arise for two fundamental reasons: (1) The processes which produce them are not designed and put together sufficiently well and therefore unable to deliver acceptably low possible defects upon commissioning, and/or (2) The processes and transactions are not operated in the best possible manner. Six sigma pioneered at Motorola in the late seventies and early eighties being the correct methodology for designing and operating all processes and transactions in any field of activity for the best possible performance, it is logical to surmise that emerging/developing nations would have a certain shot at joining the ranks of developed nations if they were to embrace six sigma in all their activities in a national initiative. Developed nations need to do so as well if they are to maintain their preeminent status in the globalized world so the standard of living of their societies is not compromised. The authors have termed this, *Scientific Framework for the Excellence of the External* which allows everyone to do all that they do from wakeup time to bedtime including things at work in the best possible manner and six sigma is the wherewithal for achieving this objective.

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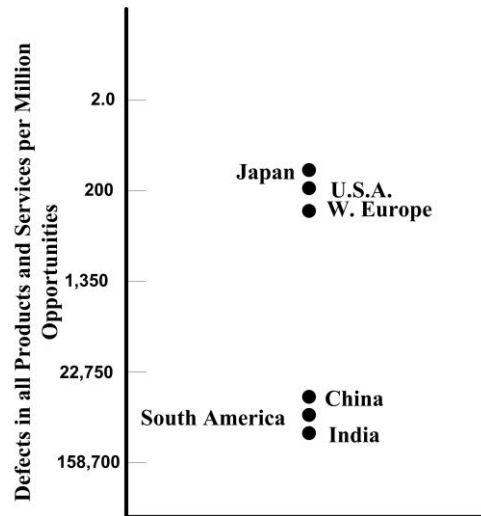


Figure 1. Defect Levels vs. Nations

The authors pointed out that while six sigma is essential for the excellence in the external world, it is not insufficient for emerging as one's best. What completes the quest for excellence is the pursuit of *the Excellence of the Internal* whose goal is to remain serene and relatively unaffected in the presence of ever-changing external conditions which are part and parcel of life. Raising the S, R, T level of consciousness and becoming compassionate is the key to achieving this state and meditation is one way to achieve the objective. In such a state, the decisions and actions of individuals and the organizations they represent are much more conducive not only for their own wellbeing but also for their families, organizations, nations, and the world.

The two scientific frameworks, one for the excellence of the external and the other for the excellence of the internal, may appear to be obliquely related. The purpose of this paper is to present strong evidence that higher level of consciousness can deliver outstanding performance even in the absence of six sigma. It follows therefore that compassion will boost six sigma success. Conversely, in the absence of a concomitant effort to raise the level of consciousness, and therefore compassion, six sigma initiatives will fall short of expectations. This realization is nothing short of a *Eureka moment* for it provides individuals, organizations, and nations a path forward for improvement heretofore unrecognized regardless of the phase of rise and decline their societies may find themselves at present.

Relevance of the Theory of Rise and Decline of Cultures

The first author developed a theory of rise and decline of societies in the early nineties. A brief discussion of the theory with reference to three of the author's most favorite societies; India, Greece, and the United States is relevant to the topic at hand. Rise and decline are natural phenomena and no culture is immune to them. Furthermore, the phenomenon of rise and decline is cyclical as many natural processes are. Rise and decline occurs because of the transformation of the three components of the mindset, S, R, and T (the definitions are at the end of the article). During the period of rise, the S component is dominant and when the average S component of

the society reaches its maximum, the society is at its best. Following this, the S component begins to decrease and the T component begins to assume dominance and the society begins to decline. The society continues to decline as the average T component of the society increases and when it reaches its maximum, the society is at its worst and then it is time for the S component to begin its ascent and the society begins to rise again. The perceived locations of the three nations on the rise and decline curve are shown in Figure 2.

After making phenomenal contributions to human civilization, India declined in its last cycle over two thousand years ago and is now rising again. The rise and decline of Greece as gleaned from Figure 3 which plots the Greek individuals listed in the twenty-three volumes of the Encyclopedia Britannica indicates that Greece declined around the 5th Century C. E.

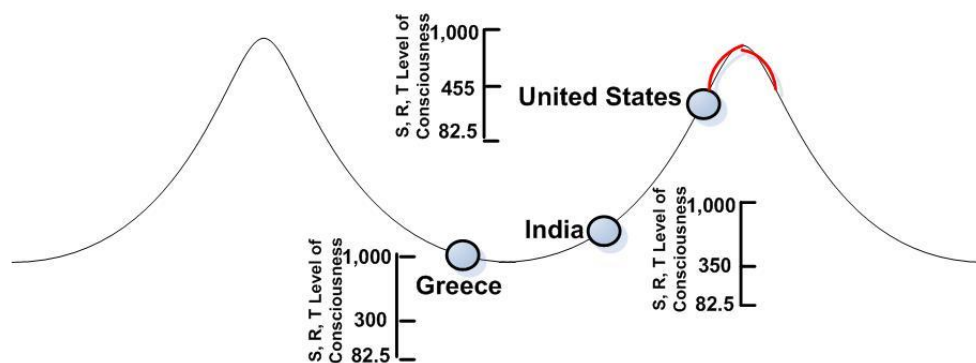


Figure 2. India, Greece, and the United States in their current phase of Rise and Decline

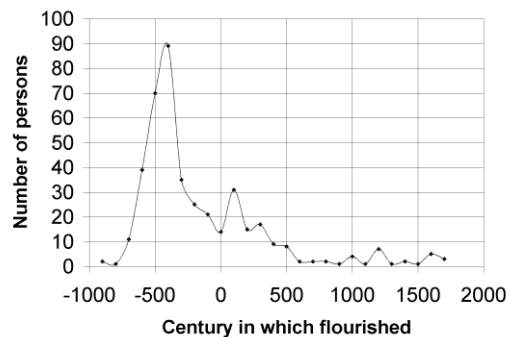


Figure 3. Rise and Decline of Greece in the Last Cycle

The United States is thought to be somewhere in the region marked in red in Figure 2. Only in hindsight would we know where the US was at this point in time. The calibrations for the US and India in Figure 2 were reported by Dr. David R. Hawkins, MD in his work *Power vs. Force* (7). He also coauthored the book *Orthomolecular Psychiatry* with The Late Linus Pauling, Nobel Laureate in Chemistry and Peace. So powerful is the theory of rise and decline that the very culture whose wisdom led the theory itself finds calibrated considerably lower than the United States at this point in time. The reported calibration in case of Greece in Figure is the first author's perception, possibly in error by as much as $\pm 30\%$.

The Evidence

The evidence has come about from an unlikely place, The 2013 Kumbh Mela, in Allahabad, India. This is especially significant as the sample size is very large, in millions, an envy of statisticians. It would be impossible to deliberately conduct such a large experiment to assess the benefits of rising levels of consciousness. Kumbh Mela, believed to be the largest religious gathering on earth is held every 12 years on the banks of the confluence of the holy rivers Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati. Between the twelve-year events, the Mela alternates every three years between the cities of Nasik, Allahabad, Ujjain and Haridwar. Most recently the Mela was celebrated at the Holy confluence of the rivers in Allahabad during the first quarter of 2013. The Financial Times carried an interesting article on March 1, 2013 written by Victor Mallet titled, “**Pop-up Mega City is a Lesson for India**” along with a photograph of the tent city in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Temporary tents for devotees during the Kumbh Mela in Allahabad
(Source: The Financial Times, March 1, 2013)

Excerpts from the article presented here strengthen the hypothesis compassion boosts performance.

- Mr. Onno Ruhl, Head of the World Bank in India, who visited the Kumbh Mela this year, was moved to bathe in the Ganges himself. He calls it an incredible logistical operation. Says Mr. Ruhl, “the city on the sandbanks, soon to be dismantled before the river floods, “has water, sanitation, power, and solid-waste management, everything, actually, that many Indian cities lack”.

- Harvard researchers describe it as “a pop-up mega city”. On the sandbanks of the river Ganges at Allahabad, bureaucrats and workers from Uttar Pradesh, India’s most populous and one of poorest state, took less than three months to build a tent city for 2 million residents complete with hard roads, toilets, running water, electricity, food shops, garbage collection, and well-manned police stations. This year’s event attracted millions of pilgrims from across India who came to wash away their sins in the Ganges at its confluence with the Yamuna. Over its two months to mid-March, the Mela attracted 80 million-100 million visitors, with up to 30 million attempting to bathe in the river on February 10 alone, officials say. Precise numbers are hard to come by but the devotees and foreign visitors are generally full of praise for the organizers of what is arguably the largest gathering of humans on earth. Apart from a February 10 stampede at the nearby Allahabad railway station in which 36 were killed, the Kumbh Mela itself has so far gone off smoothly. Fresh water comes out of the taps. Toilets are disinfected. Trained police carefully shepherd the crowds to the bathing areas. The lights come on at night.
- To somebody who does projects, it’s like a mega-refugee camp that came up overnight and gets sustained and managed for two months with people filtering [in and out] at a rate of millions a day. It’s managed by the Uttar Pradesh government. If somehow we could translate that capacity to day-to-day business, you could transform UP. It’s a really powerful thought.” Uttar Pradesh is often seen as the epitome of all that is wrong with India. With a population of over 200 million – larger than Brazil’s – the state is notoriously corrupt and inefficient. Take sanitation. In the decade to 2011, the UP government reported steadily rising construction of latrines in rural areas with the help of \$600 million in public funds. But the 2011 census showed that almost no toilets had actually been built. Most of the money was stolen, leaving tens of thousands of children to die each year as a result of diarrhea spread by what one aid worker called “appalling” sanitation. There are few such problems at the Kumbh Mela, however.
- Devesh Chaturvedi, a senior official who is divisional commissioner of Allahabad, is proud of the “huge task” that he and perhaps 100,000 workers completed in organizing this year’s festival. He mentions 165 km of roads on the sand made of steel plates, 18 pontoon bridges, 560 km of water supply lines, 670 km of electricity lines, 22,500 street lights and 200,000 electricity connections, as well as 275 food shops for essential supplies such as flour, rice, milk and cooking gas. Mr. Chaturvedi agrees there is a contrast between the successful provision of these services and the way life continues in the rest of the state, and has two explanations. First, the authorities ensure that all those working on the project are accountable for their actions and the money they spend. Second, those involved are highly motivated. “They feel it’s a real service to all these pilgrims who have come here, the sadhus [holy men] and the seers, so it’s a sort of mission which motivates them to work extra, despite difficult working conditions.”
- Good organization and efficient infrastructure, in short, are no more impossible in India than anywhere else. “The lesson is, it can be done,” says Bhagawati Saraswati, a Californian-born Hindu devotee (whom the first author knows as Dr. Thoebe Garfield, Ph. D., Stanford along with Swami Chidanand Saraswati, Head of the Ashram Paramarth Niketan in Rishikesh) camped on the river bank with other members of an ashram based on the upper Ganges. She notes the “phenomenal” number of man-hours and employees devoted to the Kumbh Mela, and

says the event shows that India can organize itself. “It’s an amazing lesson,” she says. “What it means is: India can do it. All of the villages, all of the cities can have electricity, they can have running water, they can have roads. That attention, that focuses, that clarity, that commitment, just has to be there.”

- In the concluding thoughts on the article, Victor writes, a question on the minds of both Indians and foreigners is: How? Why? Or rather: if the authorities can build infrastructure so efficiently for this short but very large festival and its instant city, why can they not do the same for permanent villages and towns?

We trust the answer is clear to the readers of this article. This level of performance would have been impossible in the absence of a high level of consciousness. This means that such performance is possible when the level of consciousness is raised and in such an environment, six sigma will lead to unparalleled excellence.

Discussion

For the last seven years the first author has been conducting six sigma training for the MBA students of the Gatton College of Business & Economics, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, in Greece at the Technical Education Institute (TEI) of Piraeus, Athens. The framework for external and internal excellence is appropriate for all three nations which are in different stages of rise and decline. The challenge for Greece is to turn the direction as it currently finds itself in the depth of decline. The challenge for India (or China for that matter) is to accelerate its rise while the challenge for the United States is to maintain a favorable trajectory to keep decline at bay longer.

Courtesy of Nikolas Rouhatas, an elected Councilman in Office of the Mayor of a city of 200,000 in Greece who was a student in the recent six sigma offering at TEI, the first author had the pleasure to meet with Dr. Andres Papastamou, Special Adviser to the current Greek Prime Minister, Hon. Mr. Antonis Samaras. The meeting lasted for ninety minutes and it was clear that Dr. Papastamou had fully understood the need to embrace both frameworks of excellence in Greece.

On the concluding day of the recent six sigma training program in Greece, the first author inquired how many students would be interested in learning the scientific framework for the excellence of the internal on the following evening. Since virtually everyone raised their hand, the TEI management graciously invited the first author to give the talk to the students on Friday March 1, 2013 to which former students from the previous cohorts were also invited. Some thirty-five to forty students and former students came for the talk and went away fully convinced about the value of the two frameworks not only for them but also for Greece. The first author will always cherish the signed copy of the book of Poems by a Greek Poet the Late C. P. Cavafy and a replica of an ancient Greek statue from the students. If two weeks of training can make this level of change in the mindset of students, then we must assume that diligent pursuit of the framework is just what the doctor ordered.

Over the past year, the first author has also has presented talks on the Framework for internal excellence in the United States, Peru and India to learn how people of different cultures, races, and religions would react to the ideas. The reactions of the audiences in all four countries have been overwhelmingly positive. This should be taken as a complement to the framework and not intended to convey a self-serving intention. Figures 5(a) – (c) are photos from the offerings in Peru, Louisville, and Greece.



(a) Peruvian Congress at Lima



(b) Metro Louisville Program Hosted by Tony Belak/ J. R. Curtin



(c) University of Kentucky MBA at TEI/Piraeus Athens, Greece

Figure 5. Participants in Scientific Framework for Excellence of the Internal Program

Dr. Mikel Harry who helped introduce six sigma at General Electric in the early nineties wrote an article for the Times of India in 2004 (8) titled, “*India should use 6 Sigma to catch up with the world*” urging Indians to embrace six sigma even in mega projects like linking of the rivers with plentiful water with those which perennially suffer from draught conditions. Had he been made aware how significant the problem of pollution of Indian rivers had become, he would have added it to the list. It is now possible to make an even more powerful statement. India, or for that matter any nation, should introduce formal programs to raise the level of consciousness to become to become more compassionate and that in itself will reduce defect levels in products and services. Of course, embracing six sigma will improve performance. For example, in the Government of India project supported by the World Bank to clean up the Ganges river of the

Allahabad example, the route to progress is to raise the level of consciousness of the people living around the 2,500 km stretch of the river. Cleaning up will take care of itself and six sigma will be invaluablely helpful. The first author had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Harry about a decade ago in Arizona and there is every reason to believe that the paper will resonate with him.

According to the Times of India reporter, Dr. Harry was candid about its limitations. *“Six Sigma is not a panacea. It helps you innovate better, not invent. It’s just a better mousetrap which helps bring about higher levels of value with customers and shareholders.” But he’s also passionate about its benefits. “Six Sigma is a credible journey. TQM is a dream. Dr Deming awakened the world to the need for quality. But he didn’t put down a roadmap on getting there. I did. I’m saying with all humility that Six Sigma has proven itself as a superior way of thinking.”*

In fact, the authors of this article are comfortable with the assertion Six sigma is as valuable for external excellence as Vedas, Upanishads, Geeta, Yoga Sutras, Shastras, etc., are for internal excellence. Without six sigma it would have impossible to decipher the ancient wisdom of the excellence of the internal. The readers might find it interesting that the New York Times had titled their 1998 article, Six Sigma Enlightenment (9)!

Six sigma being an auditable methodology, there are a myriad of opportunities to further validate the crucial role of compassion in improving performance. Here are some examples:

- **Business Excellence.** The application of these ideas in corporations should lead to demonstrably better bottom-line performance and higher satisfaction levels of all parties.
- **Healthcare Systems.** Significant variations in patient outcomes and costs have been reported across hospitals in the United States. Six sigma is clearly an issue but it would be most interesting to investigate the impact of rising compassion levels on the performance. We are rather sure the difference would be substantial.
- **Complaint management.** Management of complaints may present an interesting opportunity to assess the efficacy of thesis in this paper.

We are heartened to note that the Metro Louisville Mayor may have implicitly recognized the thesis of this article. He is not only a six sigma black belt but has embraced a vision to make Metro Louisville the most compassionate city in America. In 2013, the week of April 13 -21 was dedicated to acts of compassion, public service, as a part of an official Kentucky Derby Festival event, joined by the Festival, Metro United Way, and Jefferson County Public Schools and the Metro Government as sponsors. Last year’s effort prompted the U.S. Conference of Mayors to recognize Louisville as “America’s Most Livable City.”

We are also pleased to have come across several corporations which are practicing compassion in one form or another. For example, PNC Bank has embarked on an initiative called *Human Sigma* which in our language translates into *Compassion + Six Sigma = Human Sigma*, and Google is passionate about everyday compassion at Google.

Conclusions

The explicit link of compassion to performance is identified and evidence presented to substantiate the claim. A scientific framework for raising the S, R, T level of consciousness and therefore compassion being on hand, the link represents a wonderful opportunity for individuals, organizations and nations to improve performance in any field of endeavor regardless of the phase of rise and decline they may find themselves in at the time. The concepts cut across all boundaries of race, caste, religion, and national origin. We conclude by adding that some of the feelings expressed in this paper although well intentioned have the scope to raise our R and T components and make us less compassionate, not more.

Definitions and Notes:

- **S:** Truthfulness, honesty, steadfastness, equanimity; **R:** Attachment, bravery, ego, ambition, greed, desire to live; **T:** Lying, cheating, causing injury in words or deeds, sleep.
- Minimum S, R, T required for life.
- **S** component strongly correlates with the positive emotions (Unconditioned love, kindness, empathy, compassion, gratitude, forgiveness, etc.); Excessive **R, T** components strongly correlate with negative emotions (Anger, hostility, hatred, irritation, sorrow, fear).

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