

Differences and Challenges Due to Religion: The Influence of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Hinduism on Transnational Ethical Decision-making

Jim Weber

Duquesne University

Paper presented at the Global Challenges to Business Ethics:
China, India, and New Ways to Create Transnational Ethical Cultures
Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, Santa Clara University, March 8-10, 2007

Overview: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism

- ▶ Investigation of key religious values
- ▶ Application of values to a business context
- ▶ Identification of organizational examples embodying religious values in practice
- ▶ Comparison of values across religions

Hinduism: Its Values

- ▶ “You can have what you want” but practice good sense and do not injure others
- ▶ Hindus want to be, to know and seek joy
- ▶ Emphasis on “what people do,” not think
- ▶ Ethical leadership: learner, keep promises, dynamic, actions not words, think first

Hinduism: In Practice

New Belgium Brewery

- ▶ Product labeling: "In this box is our love."
- ▶ Share in the customers' being, knowing and joy; avoid injuring customers

Tata Group

- ▶ Culture: deeply rooted set of values
- ▶ Leadership: twin pillars – trust and integrity
- ▶ Social responsibility since the mid-19th century

Apollo Hospital Group

- ▶ *Vastu* reflected in design of building

Buddhism: Its Values

- ▶ **The Four Noble Truths:** life is suffering, focus on self causes life's dislocation, seek connectiveness, achieve release by following the Eightfold Path
- ▶ **Eightfold Path:** right views, right intention, right speech, right action (not kill, steal, lie, be unchaste, drink), right livelihood, right effort, right mindedness, right contemplation

Buddhism: Its Values

Ethical leadership (ala Michael Roach)

- ▶ **Make money** (enabling one to do more good for others),
- ▶ **Enjoy money** (to keep mind and body in good health),
- ▶ **Business should have meaning** (leave mark on the world)

Buddhism: In Practice

Greyston Bakery

1. Life is impermanent and interdependent
 - ▶ Emphasizes *mandala*, circle; connectedness
 - ▶ Support the circle by hiring the disenfranchised
2. Change is constant
 - ▶ Value agility and innovation
 - ▶ Foster self-sufficiency, be a path for change: provide benefits for employees

Motto: "We don't hire people to bake brownies,
we bake brownies to hire people"

Buddhism: In Practice

Takeda Pharmaceuticals

- ▶ Founded in 1781, “ethical drugs are Takeda’s core business”
- ▶ Takeda-ism: high ethical standards and a strong sense of mission
- ▶ Management pledge of integrity, fairness and honesty in every activity, commitment to build trust

Confucianism: Its Values

- ▶ Fundamental notion of social cohesion

Five key terms:

- ▶ *Jen* – ideal relation between two people: see goodness, respect others, love totally
- ▶ *Chun tzu* – superior person, serve others
- ▶ *Li* – authority and ritual important
- ▶ *Te* – power, based on trust and consent
- ▶ *Wen* – aesthetic focus, seek exalted culture

Confucianism: Its Values

- ▶ Compatible with managerial practice (Romar)
- ▶ Challenges conventional purpose of business
- ▶ Moral values can conflict with economic goals, the case of the Chinese entrepreneurs (Cheung & King)

Confucianism: In Practice

The Weizhi Group

- ▶ Four core beliefs: kindness, sincerity, wisdom, diligence (Ip)
- ▶ “love is at the heart of all corporate activities” (Weizhi employees)
- ▶ Three Slaps On the Face: if dishonest, not trusted by employees, self-centered
- ▶ 1997 Customers’ Most Admired Company

Comparison Across Religions

	Hinduism	Buddhism	Confucianism
Personal self-satisfaction	Have what you want, but good sense and not injure	Selfishness is illness, strive for cure	Focus on important collective well-being, not self
Profit taking	Chance to give to society	Make money to do more for others	Accept costs to maintain moral values

Comparison Across Religions

	Hinduism	Buddhism	Confucianism
Business as a career	A path to being, knowing, joy	Leave good mark on the world	Be your best to be able to help others
Ethical leadership	Learn, act, think Trust and integrity	Wisdom, reasoning, morality Integrity and trust	Authority and power based on trust

Comparison Across Religions

	Hinduism	Buddhism	Confucianism
Business in society	Source of being, knowing and joy	Life is <i>mandala</i> , a circle	Jen – care for, respect, love others
CSR in practice	Tata Group	Greyston Bakery	Weizhi Group

Next paper

- ▶ Validate summation of religious values
- ▶ Assess values in practice by organizations
- ▶ Test values as decision tool for managers
- ▶ Compare “eastern values” with “western values” for a universal ethic, building an ethical decision-making framework