India Studies in Business and Economics

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Editors

Investigating Cultural Aspects in Indian Organizations

Empirical Evidence

Springer

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Foreword

In the 1990s, there was a considerable debate over Asian values, which was sparked by the tiger economies of East Asia, and in particular, by political leaders including Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew and Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamed. Asian values, they argued, were the product of a particular cultural configuration that distinguished them from the individualism of European ideals. In contrast to European values, Asian values and culture were represented as being rooted deeply within principles of collectivism. Underpinning these values were notions of filial piety and loyalty to family, the organisation or indeed the nation, where personal freedom was secondary to the greater good of collective identity. Interestingly, these debates were linked inextricably to certain forms of democracy and were highly charged politically.

In other parts of Asia, such as Japan, there were also related notions of culture that suggested certain uniqueness about how business and management operated. Indeed, it was suggested that such differences were at the core of the nation's ideology and that cultural norms, mores and values defined how an organisation operated and conducted business. These cultural values were essentially built upon trust. The notions of trust have been expanded by Francis Fukuyama who, in his book *Trust: The Social Values and the Creations of Prosperity,* pointed out how this was central for organisations to develop from family businesses to large-scale enterprises through close networks that often spanned several countries in the region.

In this book, Vijay Pereira and Ashish Malik set out to examine culture in Indian organisations. They are eminently qualified to undertake such a task given their expertise in the area and their intimate knowledge of Indian business and management practices. What makes India unique in business is undoubtedly the fact that it is the world's largest and most diverse democracy. The size and diversity of the nation not only presents it with challenges but also with advantages. As a democracy, with a very robust media, Indian organisations operate within a particular cultural milieu. It is that milieu that Pereira and Malik seek to map through research and practice. This book has a variety of key international contributors who not only tackle questions of culture broadly but also provide innovative theoretical approaches to understanding culture within Indian organisations.

As globalisation impacts virtually every part of our world, it is vital to understand how business and management operates in what is certain to be the second largest economy in the world. The question of culture in Indian organisations is reminiscent of the debate about Asian values and trust networks within the Asian region. This book provides a novel and innovative approach to what will inevitably become a much broader debate as the giant Indian economy continues to flex its muscles.

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Preface

A nation's culture resides in the heart and in the soul of its people

—Mahatma Gandhi

You have to grow from the inside out. None can teach you, none can make you spiritual. There is no other teacher but your own soul.

—Swami Vivekananda

One of the most widely shared definitions of culture is: the way we do things around here. The power of this definition lies in its simplicity and the ease with which this idea can be transferred from one person to another. If it was as simple as it sounds, one would imagine there would be fewer explanations and not 18 million results on Google for the words "culture in Indian organisations". The above two quotes by Mahatma Gandhi—an inspiring political leader and Swami Vivekananda—an inspiring spiritual leader of Modern India highlight the importance of an internal and intangible understanding of the self before we can make sense of the world around us. This book is an attempt to unbundle such complexities one has to deal with in understanding aspects of *Indianness* in the context of organisations.

This book is thus concerned with understanding aspects of Indian culture in domestic and global organisations. Incorporating timely contributions from experts around the world, examining aspects of Indian culture, we hope that this collection of empirical studies will not only provide new and deeper insights into what we already know about this topic but also carve out new and relatively less explored aspects of Indian culture. We believe it will advance scholarship in this exciting new area.

Culture studies has an established tradition of research in a disparate set of disciplines of social sciences, liberal arts, anthropology, business studies, including international business and human resource management and many more. However, at the risk of excluding alternate perspectives and staying focused on business and management studies, we have kept the focus of this collection on aspects of Indian culture in an organisational setting.

This collection contributes by presenting new research on aspects of culture (e.g. religious, demographic, international mobility, cross-cultural and multiculturalism and knowledge management) in an organisational context. We are hopeful this will inspire more research into the emic dimensions of cultural research on a range of personal, group and business outcomes. In the concluding chapter, we also highlight future research directions.

Portsmouth, UK — Vijay Pereira
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