Mapping Cultural Diversity within India: A Meta-analysis of Some Recent Studies

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Cross-cultural comparative studies mostly have been based on the assumption of cultural homogeneity that equates culture with nation. This assumption overlooks the cultural diversity that might exist within a nation. This article is based on the review of four empirical studies conducted by J.B.P. Sinha and his associates focusing on cultural diversity within India. A review of these studies revealed seven pan-Indian cultural preferences: (a) collectivist orientation; (b) respect for status and power; (c) primacy of personalized relationship; (d) desire to be embedded in an in-group; (e) familism; (f) context-sensitive (situational) behaviour; and (g) cynical view about others. However, it also revealed location-specific cultural preferences. The authors have analyzed these preferences, extracted from the findings of these studies for those locations which have been covered in more than one study, to present an holistic picture of the culture of each location. Sinha and his associates view cultural differences among various locations as a consequence of different degrees of infrastructural development in those locations. The authors are inclined to argue that cultural change is context sensitive and depends on the historical and cultural legacy inherited by a location. They argue for an evolutionary–emic approach to study cultural diversity within India.

Background

Currently there is a visible trend towards globalization of national economies. There has been relatively freer flow of foreign direct investment across nations compared to the past. In this context, business leaders, corporate executives as well as academicians have realized the needs to understand and appreciate cultural differences among nations. Corporate leaders, particularly of multinational corporations (MNCs), have acknowledged in various ways the criticality of understanding the cultural characteristics of various nation-states, which they believe would help them manage their organizations effectively in host nations. The societal effect on the functioning and effectiveness of

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business organizations has been accepted as an important factor in managing multi-national organizations.

International Comparative Studies to Understand National Culture

Various international comparative studies have been attempted to explore and delineate the overall characteristics of nations. Unfortunately, however, in most studies the terms 'nation and culture have been used as if they are synonymous, with national boundaries separating one cultural group from another. Rarely have more specific definitions of culture been used, nor has domestic cultural heterogeneity been considered' (Adler et al. 1986: 261). Such a conceptualization is a convenient simplification of the complex reality, which could be a result of what Child (1981: 304) calls 'intellectual laziness'.

Hofstede (1980), however, argues that nation could be equated to culture because strong integrating forces like single dominant language, education system, army, political system, shared mass media, markets or national symbols can produce substantial sharing of culture in a nation that has existed for some time. Hofstede's line of argument is disputed by Schwartz (1999) and Thomas (2002) who argue that:

- National boundaries do not necessarily correspond to the boundaries of organically developed, relatively homogeneous societies with a shared culture (Schwartz, 1999: 29).
- There could be multiple cultures within national borders and same cultural group could span many nations (Thomas 2002: 36).

Holistic and Analytic Approaches to Study National Culture

Holistic Approach

There are several ways to study national culture. Most commonsensical approach to understanding a culture is to see it as a 'way of life' of its people. Different elements or aspects of a way of life are connected with each other. There is a natural consistency among them. In this sense, culture is a holistic idea, which can not be easily broken into its elements. This is because all parts must be guided by the same set of values. Hence, one way of understanding culture may be to understand a characteristic object, event or ritual having a salient position in that culture. This approach takes a 'holistic' view of culture (Gupta and Panda 2003). In such an approach, one takes a general overview of the cultural characteristics. In the process, the diversities and contradictions to a general pattern of behaviour are ignored as 'deviations'. Such a holistic approach has been adopted by Gannon and his associates to study the culture of 23 nations. They associate each of the nations with a metaphor which captures its salient cultural characteristics.

Gannon (1994: 301) has chosen 'The Dance of Shiva' (Coommaraswamy 1969: 66) as the cultural metaphor for India. The reason for choosing it as explained by him is:

It is not always possible to identify a nicely logical and easily understandable basis for many of the contradictions that exist in Indian society …. In India, the philosophy of life and the mental structure of the people come not from a study of books but

from tradition. However much foreign civilization and new aspirations might have affected the people of India, the spiritual nutrient of Hindu philosophy has not dried up or decayed; within this tradition, the role of the Dance of Shiva, described below are accepted by all Hindus:

Shiva rises from his rapture and, dancing, sends through inert matter pulsing waves of awakening sound. Suddenly, matter also dances, appearing as brilliance around him. Dancing, Shiva sustains the world's diverse phenomena, its creation and existence. And in the fullness of time, still dancing, he destroys all forms—everything disintegrates, apparently into nothingness, and is given new rest. Then out of thin vapor, matter and life are created again. Shiva's dance scatters the darkness of illusion (līlā), burns the thread of causality (karma), stamps out evil (avidyā), showers grace, and lovingly plunges the soul into the ocean of bliss (ānanda).

Religious diversities and contradictions coexist in Indian society. Majority of Indians are even now tradition oriented. The idea of cycles is a common thread in traditional Indian philosophy and manifested in every aspect of life in India: cyclical Hindu philosophy (a journey toward salvation), the cycle of life (student–family–retirement–sannyasin), the family cycle (continuation of generation), the cycle of social interaction (a sense of *dharma*), the work and recreation cycle (progress toward salvation through unselfish performance of work) are well-represented by the dancing Shiva. Gannon and his associates found Indian culture highly religious and dominated by family system.

Analytical Approach

Though such a holistic approach is useful in getting a quick insight into a culture, it may not make it easy to compare two or more cultures. For such a purpose a more analytical approach is needed using various frameworks. The analytical approach is more popular among researchers doing comparative studies, where every culture is characterized by a set of common dimensions. Cultures are usually compared along the identified dimensions of a chosen or newly conceived framework. Nations are clustered in groups in terms of their cultural profiles.

India's Place in Country Clusters An important issue that seems relevant to an understanding of Indian culture is the grouping of countries which Indian national culture is perceived to most closely resemble by various researchers. A brief overview of India's place in various country clusters reveals that Indian cultural profile is too complex to be marked off under one category. Researchers have placed India in Anglo, Latin American, Far Eastern, South Asian groups and even deemed it an unclassifiable culture (refer to Table 1). Researchers have clustered nations on the basis of identified cultural dimensions (Haire et al. 1966; Sirota and Greenwood 1971; Ronen and Kraut 1977; Hofstede 1976, 1980; Schwartz 1999; GLOBE Study 2002), influence of religions (Huntington 1993, 1996) or the extent of the influence of modernization (Inglehart and Baker 2000).

Haire et al. (1966) place India along with Argentina and Chile in a Latin American cluster. Sirota and Greenwood (1971) and Ronen and Kraut (1977) put India in the Anglo cluster along with other English speaking nations. Hofstede (1976) could not

Table 1
India vis-à-vis Other Nations on the Basis of Clustering Patterns

Cluster	Researchers	Other Countries in the Cluster
Independent	Ronen and Shenkar (1985) Hofstede (1976)	None
Anglo	Ronen and Kraut (1977)	UK, USA, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa
	Sirota and Greenwood (1971)	UK, USA, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, Austria and Switzerland
Latin American	Haire et al. (1966)	Argentina and Chile
Far East	Hofstede (1980)	Hong Kong, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand
	Schwartz (1999)	Thailand, Hong Kong, Nepal, Taiwan and Singapore
South Asia	GLOBE Study (2002)	Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand

find any other nation with cultural profiles similar to India and hence put India as an independent nation. However, Hofstede (1980) in his later study put India in the Far East cluster with countries like Hong Kong, Singapore and so on. Ronen and Shenkar (1985) reviewed 14 international comparative studies and on the basis of their subjective analysis put India as an independent nation, with a cultural profile not similar to any other identified cluster. Recently, Schwartz (1999) on the basis of his value survey across 49 countries, placed India in the Far East cluster along with China, Zimbabwe, Thailand, Hong Kong, and so on. The GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) study, a research programme focusing on culture and leadership of 61 nations, puts India in the South Asian cluster along with Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand (Gupta et al. 2002).

Huntington (1993, 1996) argues that the world is divided into eight major civilizations based on enduring cultural differences that have persisted for centuries. These civilizations were largely shaped by religious traditions that are still powerful today, despite the forces of modernization. Western Christianity, the Orthodox world, the Islamic world, and the Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist, African and Latin American regions constitute the major cultural zones. As a majority of the Indian population is Hindu and Muslims constitute the largest chunk of the minority population, we can safely argue that there are two culture zones: the Hindu world and the Islamic world within India.

Cultural Profiles of India in Major Comparative Studies

England's Profiling

Gregory England (1976) analyzed management values and how they varied by national culture. England studied five nations in depth: the United States, Japan, Korea, Australia and India. He found Indian managers to function in an ethical–moral mode, which implies an evaluative framework consisting

of ethical considerations that influence behaviour towards actions and decisions that are judged to be 'right' and away from those judged to be 'wrong'. In contrast, Japanese and American managers were found to function in a pragmatic mode, which suggests that an individual has an evaluative framework that is primarily guided by considerations of success or failure. Will a certain course of action work? How successful or unsuccessful is it apt to be?

Hofstede's Profiling

Hofstede's landmark study (1980) empirically derived four bipolar value dimensions (cultural facets) that were used to profile a national culture: Individualism–collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity–femininity. Later on, Hofstede (1991) added a fifth dimension, long-term orientation.

India was found to be high on power distance, moderately collectivist and masculine and high on uncertainty avoidance (refer to Table 2 for India's position vis-à-vis Japan and USA). On the long-term orientation (LTO) dimension, India was placed lower than Japan but higher than USA. Hofstede found India's work culture to be autocratic and paternalistic, with strong task orientation and centralized decision making. There is concern with rules and emphasis on patience and modesty. It is low in risk tolerance and high in power distance and masculinity. The score for individualism is low and there is strong emphasis on family and status.

Family, the Metaphor for Implicit Organization Type in India   On the basis of the power distance score and uncertainty avoidance score, Hofstede conceives a two-dimensional matrix to identify four metaphors (market, family, pyramid and well-oiled machine) capturing the characters of typical work organizations in a nation. For India, which is weak in terms of uncertainty avoidance and strong in terms of power distance, he chooses family as the metaphor. The functioning of work organizations is characterized as 'personnel bureaucracy', where 'relationship among people are (sic) strictly determined by the hierarchical framework, but the work flow is much less codified' (Hofstede 2001: 377). The choice of family as the metaphor for Indian work organizations fits with the familial orientation of the Indians, as Gupta (1999) suggests that family cannot and should not be ignored in the Indian context. It has a strong cultural basis in the Indian context. The family is not secondary to business or career achievements, as for Western employees, nor does the family spontaneously subjugate itself to the employing work organization, as occurs among the Japanese.

Table 2
Relative Position of India vis-à-vis Japan and USA in Hofstede's Profiling

Country	PD (Rank)	IDV (Rank)	MAS (Rank)	UA (Rank)	LTO (Rank)
India	77 (10–11)	48 (21)	56 (20–21)	40 (45)	(6)
Japan	54 (33)	46 (22–23)	95 (1)	92 (7)	(3)
USA	40 (38)	91 (1)	62 (15)	46 (43)	(14)

Source: Collated from Hofstede 1980, 1991.

Trompenaars's Profiling

Another study of how cultures differ by Trompenaars (1993) is receiving considerable attention. He developed seven dimensions and compared the relative positioning of nations.

Table 3
Relative Position of India vis-à-vis
Japan and USA in Trompenaars's Profiling

Dimensions	India	Japan	USA
Rule Orientation (v. Relationship)	59	68	95
Individual Freedom (v. Group)	61	60	79
Neutral (v. Affective)	60	83	40
Specific (v. Diffuse)	66	83	89
Achievement (v. Ascriptive)	61	NA	77
Master of fate (v. Fatalism)	72	56	89

(In terms of per cent of respondents)
NA: Not available
Source: Collated from Trompenaars (1993).

Family, the Metaphor for Typical Indian Organizational Culture Trompenaars (1993) has used the metaphor of the family for the typical Indian organizational culture which 'is at the same time personal, with close face to face relationships, but also hierarchical ...' (p. 139). It is 'a power oriented corporate culture in which leader is regarded as a caring father who knows better than his subordinates what should be done and what is good for them' (pp. 139–40). Such a culture tends to be high context and relationships tend to be diffuse. Organizations are also mostly hierarchical with a large number of layers. But a large number of organizations with informal cultures are also present.

Schwartz's Profiling

Building on previous research on the meaning of work, Schwartz (1999) examined the association and influence of values in which people in various cultures attribute meanings to work. His study was based on data collected on cultural values from 49 countries. He identified seven values: conservatism; intellectual autonomy, affective autonomy, hierarchy, egalitarianism, mastery and harmony. He structured these seven values in three bipolar dimensions: (*a*) conservatism versus autonomy (includes both intellectual and affective aspects); (*b*) hierarchy versus egalitarianism; (*c*) mastery versus harmony. India, along with other countries placed in the Far East country cluster, was found to give importance to conservatism, hierarchy and mastery.

GLOBE's Profiling (2002)

The societal practices of the South Asian cluster to which India belongs are rated high on group collectivism (the degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty and cohesiveness in their organizations and families), power distance (the degree to which members of an organization or society expect and agree that power should be unequally shared) humane orientation (the degree to which individuals in organizations and societies encourage and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring and kind to others) and low on gender egalitarianism (the extent to which an organization or a society minimizes gender role differences and gender discrimination). The cluster is distinguished as highly group oriented, humane, male dominated, and hierarchical. As for societal values, the cluster rates high on performance orientation, future orientation, group collectivism and humane orientation. Managers from these countries as a whole are found to be more

performance and future oriented and more assertive. They desire a higher level of structure in their societies, but a low level of male domination and power differentiation. India's position in the cluster seems to be nodal, and hence, taken to be representative of the cluster.

Cultural Homogeneity versus Cultural Diversity: The Debate

Cultural Homogeneity: A Simplistic Assumption

Nation versus Culture   Nations have been equated with culture based on the assumption of cultural homogeneity within a nation. Various frameworks guided by such assumptions have been used in international comparative studies, which essentially provide the basis for explaining and predicting behaviour on a comparative basis. Such frameworks, which use a limited number of cultural dimensions for comparative purposes open up the possibility for a dramatic oversimplification of the effect of culture. Such simplistic assumptions of equating nation with culture and using frameworks based on limited number of dimensions essentially fail to capture the real complexity of their relations.

Sophisticated Stereotypes   Also, this oversimplification results in stating that people from a particular type of culture behave in one way, whereas those from another culture behave in different ways. Consequently, 'sophisticated stereotypes' of a culture have been used in place of the complex reality that exists (Osland and Bird 2000). 'Therefore instead of explaining cultural effects, it can have opposite effects of constraining the way

in which people regard members of another culture' (Thomas 2002: 67). These seeming paradoxes can usually be explained when the situational context or cultural history of a particular country is considered (Osland and Bird 2000). An outsider to a culture might expect certain behavioural patterns from individuals of a country on the basis of his/her interpretation of the findings. When s/he finds a different pattern of behaviour s/he gets a culture shock!

Ignoring or Suppressing Cultural Diversity   'The large number of subcultures that exist within some nations is (sic) at risk of being ignored' (Smith and Bond 1999). Cultural diversity that exists in a nation may get suppressed. As Thomas (2002: 36) cautions, 'We must remember that differences of the magnitude observed between any two countries might also be found between selected subcultures within a country. Within any country, cultural differences that are not obvious to the outside observer are often much more apparent to local nationals'.

Limited Nature of Sample   Further, the accuracy of cultural profiling depends on the quality of samples chosen for the study. It is virtually impossible to collect a truly random sample of cultures, and time and resource constraints limit the number of outcomes that can be examined. Therefore, one can only speculate about the general consequences of a particular cultural pattern based on limited samples.

First Best Guess!   However, these problems do not render the systematic description of cultural variation useless. On the contrary, they can be valuable in selecting comparable national cultures when trying to assess the

degree of similarity or difference in their responses to particular management issues. They are useful tools, both for researchers and practitioners, as long as their limitations are understood. Thomas (2002: 67) suggests, 'they should be used as a first best guess about the behavior of a cultural group prior to developing direct information about individuals in the group and should be modified based on additional information gained ...'. Thomas (ibid.: 35–36) further adds that 'national culture [is] probably the most logical level of analysis from which to begin to understand the cultural environment'.

India: A Case of Unity in Diversity

India is a multilingual, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multicultural society. Though researchers of various hues acknowledge this, they all seem to be comfortable with Hofstede-like arguments that due to the natural barriers of seas and mountains separating the subcontinent from the rest of Asia, Indians, over a period of time, have developed some homogeneity of values and beliefs. All researchers, barring a few (J.B.P. Sinha and his associates) have considered this to be the case, in spite of 'felt' or 'experienced' regional variations within India. There are only a handful of studies available that focus on regional or locational diversity.

Most cross-cultural researches are based on the assumption of 'homogeneity of values' across India. Or else, it seems that researchers base their studies on one or a few locations. The findings are later interpreted as the characteristic of Indian culture, which could in reality be location-specific cultural characteristics. Researchers' assumption of 'homogeneity of values' across India may not be able to provide the correct picture of Indian cultural characteristics. In India, J.B.P. Sinha took initiatives to explore whether the five Indian values identified by him (Sinha 1990) are truly pan-Indian in nature. In the nineties he, along with 19 other researchers across India, conducted a series of empirical studies to explore the regional or locational diversity within India, which is felt and experienced by many. Seventeen locations have been covered in these studies. (Refer to Table 4 for geographical spread and Table 5 for region-wise distribution.) The choice of locations has been constrained by the availability of co-researchers to be part of research projects.

Table 4
Geographical Spread

Location	Study 1 (1994)	Study 2 (2001)	Study 3 (2002)	Study 4 (2003)	Total
Ahmedabad		√	√	√	3
Bangalore	√				1
Baroda	√				1
Bhubaneswar			√		1
Harihar		√			1
Jamshedpur		√		√	2
Kharagpur	√				1
Kolkota				√	1
Lucknow	√			√	2
Chennai	√				1
NCR			√	√	2
Patna	√	√		√	3
Pune				√	1
Samastipur			√		1
Tirupati			√		1
Varanasi	√				1

Source: Collated from studies by Sinha and associates.

Table 5
Region-wise Focus

Region	Locations	Number of Locations
North	Lucknow, Patna, Samastipur, Varanasi, NCR (New Delhi and Gurgaon)	6
East	Bhubaneswar, Jamshedpur, Kharagpur, Kolkata	4
West	Ahmedabad, Baroda, Pune	3
South	Bangalore, Harihar, Madras, Tirupati	4

Studies Conducted by Sinha and His Associates

Salient Indian Values

Sinha conducted his first study in 1990 to identify cultural values that were distinct from Western societies. This study was partly empirical and mostly based on the review of the existing body of literature. Sinha (1990) identified five Indian values which present a contrast to Western values. These five values are: (*a*) embeddedness in one's in-groups; (*b*) harmony and tolerance; (*c*) duty in contrast to hedonism; (*d*) preference for personalized relationship; and (*e*) preference for arranging persons, objects, ideas and relationships hierarchically. Taken together, they reflect the vertical collectivism of Indian culture.

Regional Similarities and Differences

In the second study, Sinha and others (Sinha et al. 1994) covered seven locations across India (Lucknow, Kharagpur, Baroda,

Madras, Bangalore, Patna and Varanasi) to study people's beliefs, practices and preferences. They identified three themes of beliefs, practices and preferences related to (*a*) familism, (*b*) hierarchy and (*c*) personalized relationships that were common across all the seven locations. Familism is related to the Indians' desire to be integrated in the family. This set of themes was also identified in Sinha's (1990) earlier study. People across all these locations were found to value family, while maintaining class and caste hierarchy as well as personalized relationship.

> People in different places in India are perceived to believe, behave and prefer in ways, which reflect collectivism in the culture. Familism, hierarchy and personalized relationships are the major themes of collectivism (Sinha et al. 1994: 148).

Societal Beliefs, Organizational Climate and Managers' Self-perception

In the third study initiated by Sinha (Sinha et al. 2001), they covered four locations across India (Jamshedpur, Patna, Ahmedabad and Harihar) to study societal beliefs, organizational climate and managers' self-perception. They identified two important dimensions of societal beliefs that matter to Indians: (*a*) salience of power and status; and (*b*) primacy of familial and social obligations over professional obligations. Power and status lead to favour *apne log* (in-group members) over *paray log* (out-group members). Second, family and social obligations override work commitment. These findings

validated the common themes identified in the study conducted in 1994 across seven locations. These themes are familism, hierarchy and personalized relationship.

> People obey person (sic) in power because of their position. They consider power and prestige more important than anything else .... They care more for material possessions than warm relationships .... They use their power and positions for showing undue favours to their family and friends .... (Sinha et al. 2001: 38–39)

> People attach greater priority to meeting family and social obligations than work requirements. Work is considered to be less important than family. People take time off their work hours to meet social obligations (Sinha et al. 2001: 39).

Collectivism and Individualism in India

The fourth study (Sinha et al. 2002) covered five locations (New Delhi, Samastipur, Tirupati, Ahemdabad and Bhubaneswar) which focused on behvaioural dispositions of Indians. They found the 'context-sensitive' nature of behaviour of people in all of the five locations.

> Indians combine collectivist and individualist behaviour and intentions in a complex way depending on the structure and meaning of a situation. In family settings and while dealing with family members, they are more collectivists than individualists. This supports Roland (1988), D. Sinha and Tripathi (1994) and Sinha and Verma (1987) that core of Indians' self is familial. Family prosperity, feelings of

family members, concern for their conveniences, and so on induce Indians to react primarily in a collectivist way even by foregoing their personal gains and interests (Sinha et al. 2002: 20).

> Indians are more collectivists than individualists, but depending in the *desha* (place such as family versus non-family), *kaal* (time constraint e.g. the urgency of accepting a job offer) and *paatra* (person having personalised versus contractual relationships), they combine individualist behaviour or intention to collectivist behaviour in varying degree. However, they rarely opt for an individualist behaviour with an individualist intention. This was probably the reason that C&I (a mix of both collectivist and individualist behaviour and intention) was the most endorsed combination ... (Sinha et al. 2002: 21–22).

Facets of Societal and Organizational Cultures: Managers' Thoughts and Feelings

In their most recent study (Sinha et al. 2003) Sinha and his associates covered seven locations (Ahmedabad, Patna, Kolkata, Gurgaon, Pune, Jamshedpur and Lucknow) to study various facets of societal and organizational cultures and managers' work-related thoughts and feelings. This study was different from studies conducted in 1994 and 2001 as it started without any *a priori* cultural theme. The instrument (questionnaire) for this study was developed inductively and jointly by nine researchers, unlike earlier studies (1994 and 2001). In previous studies, J.B.P. Sinha developed the questionnaire on the basis of *a priori* cultural themes identified by him in 1990.

Both studies (1994 and 2001), despite of having convergent findings, suffered from a bias. It was the first author (J.B.P. Sinha), located in Patna, who delineated the traditional Indian orientations and developed items to measure them. In other words, the conceptual frame and measuring tools were rooted at a place that is weakest in infrastructural facilities. This might have precluded the inclusion of items and concepts that might be emerging as more central to people's worldviews at other places. An inductive approach might capture them in a more accurate way (Sinha et al. 2003: 7).

Interestingly, the study revealed four themes that are shared across seven locations: hypocrisy, corruption, inaction and respect for power. People profess to hold and preach high ideals, but do not practise them. Rather, they pursue narrow material interests and care only for their family members. There is pervasive corruption in society. People respect those who have power and status in society, measure success in terms of money, and believe that rich people are superior to the poor in all respects. People value status in society more than anything.

Although the texture of configurations is different in three studies (1994, 2001 and 2003), the common themes are quite distinct. Hypocrisy and corruption are emerging as dominant themes in the present study (2003) that were rather hidden in statements such as 'People let common cause suffer for the sake of family and friends' in the first study (1994) and 'people try to get ahead at the expense of others' in the second study (2001). The highest loading item of the Inaction factors

in the present study (2003), 'People avoid work as much as they can' sounds similar to 'People maintain good relationship even at the cost of work' in the first study (1994) and 'People value family over work requirement' in the second study (2001). The most striking similarity across three studies lies in the beliefs and practices reflecting strong orientation of people towards power and status. Hofstede's (1980) finding that Indian culture is high on power distance is validated across three studies (Sinha et al. 2003).

Salient Cultural Facets of India

Distinct Pan-Indian Cultural Facets

A review of the five studies mentioned here reveals the following salient cultural characteristics (that include beliefs, practices, preferences) of Indians. Table 6 presents the cultural characteristics that are identified as locationally invariant or pan-Indian in all these studies.

Cultural themes identified as pan-Indian or locationally invariant in the series of studies conducted by Sinha and his associates have also been identified as Indian cultural characteristics by many other researchers.

Collectivist Orientation A number of other studies (Hofstede 1980; Sinha and Verma 1987; Triandis 1995; Triandis and Bhawuk 1997; Verma 1999; Verma and Triandis 1998) have labelled Indian culture as collectivist.

Respect for Power and Status Respect for power and status in a way means acceptance of unequal distribution of status and power in the

Table 6
Pan-Indian Cultural Facets

Study 1 Sinha (1990)	Study 2 Sinha et al. (1994)	Study 3 Sinha et al. (2001)	Study 4 Sinha et al. (2002)	Study 5 Sinha et al. (2003)
• Embeddedness • Duty over hedonism • Personalized relationship • Harmony and tolerance • Hierarchical orientation	• Familism (embeddedness in the most salient in-group) • Preference for hierarchy (based on class and caste) • Maintenance of personalized relationships	• Salience of status and power and use them to favour own and discriminate against others • Importance of meeting social and family obligations even at the cost of work requirements	• Context sensitive nature of behaviour depending on *desh* (family vs non-family), *kaal* (time constraint) and *paatra* (person having personalized vs contractual relationships)	• Hypocrisy • Corruption • Inaction • Respect for power

society. This has been also regarded as a hierarchy orientation in the society. Indians value hierarchy (Dumont 1970; Kakar 1978; Roland 1980). Dumont (1970) and Kakar (1978) have stated that the Indian social system is steeply hierarchical and Indians are highly status conscious. Kothari (1970) has observed that Indians feel more comfortable working in superior–subordinate roles rather than as equals. In Hofstede's (1980) data too India scores high on the Power Distance Index (PDI), meaning thereby that Indians are comfortable with large power differentials. Similar findings have been reported by Schwartz (1999) as well as by GLOBE researchers (Gupta et al. 2002). Trompenaars (1993) found that Indians depict their organization with all hierarchies. Tayeb (1988) found that in comparison to British, Indians are submissive, more obedient to the seniors, more dependent on others as well as fearful of people in positions of power. Sinha and Sinha (1995: 166–67) mentioned that, 'once a hierarchy is established, juniors yield to seniors in every conceivable on-the-job or off-the-job occasions (sic)'. 'Check with the boss' is the crux

of the majority of decision making (Dayal 1987), which again is a manifestation of Indians' desire and respect for and comfort within a hierarchical relationship. Other manifestations are 'dependence syndrome' found among Indian subordinates and also their desire to have an 'ingratiating relationship' with the superiors. Sinha (1980) also found that the superior–subordinate relationship is characterized by a great degree of dependence of subordinates on their superiors and because of this subordinates display a great deal of ingratiation with respect to their superiors (Pandey 1986; Dwivedi 1988).

Primacy of Personalized Relationship Indians' preference for personalized relationship has been established through various studies (Sinha 1990; Sinha and Sinha 1995; Sinha et al. 1994, 2001; Gupta 1997). Preference for personalized relationships is a part of collectivist behaviour (Sinha and Sinha 1995: 170) found among Indians (Hofstede 1980). Their desire for emotionally intimate relationships as well as respect for hierarchy

have been captured in Roland's (1988, 1996) conceptualization of emotional reciprocity in familial hierarchical relationships. Kakar (1978: 125) observed that what an Indian is 'sensitive to (or concerned with) are not the goals or work and productivity that are external to the relationship, but the unfolding of emotional affinity'. Consequently, Indians work more sincerely in a person-to-person role rather than in work roles (Dayal 1976).

Desire to be Embedded in an In-group The preference for personalized relationship is manifested in the social consideration of one's own self and others (Kumar and Singh 1976). Indians feel comfortable if they are with other members of preferred in-groups, who are usually their families, friends, colleagues and members of their own caste (Sinha and Sinha 1995). Family is the most accepted in-group for an Indian (Sinha et al. 1994).

Familism Evidence provided by Roland (1988) as well as by other studies (Sinha et al. 1994; Gupta 1997, 1999) found that concern for family is one of the cultural preferences of Indians. Roland (1987: 239) observed that, '[i]n Indian society, with all its enormous heterogeneity, the pervasive dominance of the extended family, almost as an entity unto itself is a constant'. Roland (1988) found Indians to be strongly family oriented. An Indian remains amenable to the influence of her/his extended family, often at the cost of organizational interest (Gupta 1997, 1999; Sinha 1980, 1990). In Indian society, identification with the family is stronger than in Japanese or American society (Gupta 1999). Ramaswamy (1996) has pointed out that Indians are motivated to achievement not for the sake of achievement, but for the enhancement of family status.

Context Sensitive or Situational Behaviour Indians are found to be collectivist as well as individualists and they combine the two orientations in a more complex way than existing theories of the dichotomy of individualism and collectivism are able to explain. This is partly because of high contextual orientation (Sinha and Kanungo 1997) and partly due to complex ways in which they conceive and respond to a situation (Singh and Sinha 1992). It has been found that most people in India perceive a situation and the responses to it as one episode in an ongoing flow of interactive relationships between situations and responses (Sinha and Sinha 1995).

Cynical View about Others Most probably, Sinha et al.'s (2003) study is the first one that provides empirical evidence of the cynical nature of Indians. Respondents all across the seven locations agreed that people's beliefs and practices are cynical in nature.

Besides identifying pan-Indian cultural characteristics, the findings of these studies also revealed that inhabitants of various locations value these cultural facets differently. Besides, each of the areas has some distinct location-specific cultural preferences. The following section enumerates these findings.

Distinct Location-Specific Cultural Facets

The studies conducted by Sinha and his associates revealed locational variation in terms of the salience that inhabitants of those localities attach to various cultural themes, which include beliefs, preferences and practices. In the study conducted in 1994, Sinha et al. (1994: 137–38) found that:

Table 7
Studies Supporting Pan-Indian Cultural Characteristics

Distinct Cultural Facets of India	Studies Supporting the Cultural Facet (which include various manifestations too)
Collectivist	Hofstede (1980); Sinha and Verma (1987); Tayeb (1988); Sinha and Sinha (1995); Triandis (1995); Triandis and Bhawuk (1997); Verma and Triandis (1998); Verma (1999).
Respect for power and status (Hierarchy Orientation)	Dumont (1970); Kakar (1978); Sinha (1980); Pandey (1986); Dayal (1987); Dwivedi (1988); Trompenaars (1993); GLOBE Study (2002).
Personalized relationship	Sinha and Sinha (1995); Roland (1988, 1996); Kakar (1978); Dayal (1976).
Embeddedness	Kumar and Singh (1976); Sinha and Sinha (1995).
Familism	Roland (1987, 1988); Sinha (1990, 1980); Sinha et al. (1994); Gupta (1997, 1999); Ramaswamy (1996); GLOBE Study (2002).
Context-sensitive behaviour	Marriott (1976); Kedia and Bhagat (1988); Ramanujan (1989); Sinha and Sinha (1995); Sinha and Kanungo (1997).
Cynical view about others	Sinha et al. (2003).

Subjects from Patna were markedly different from subjects from other places with the exception of Varanasi, which is closest to Patna both in terms of physical distance and cultural similarity. Subjects from Varanasi too were different from subjects belonging to Kharagpur, Baroda, Lucknow, Bangalore and Madras. There was not a single item on which the Lucknow subjects differed from subjects belonging to Baroda. Subjects from Lucknow and Baroda differed on only one item. Taken together, they constitute a cluster. The subjects from Bangalore did not differ from Madras on any of the items.

The three clusters identified from the study were (a) Patna and Varanasi; (b) Lucknow, Kharagpur and Baroda; and (c) Bangalore and Madras. (Refer to Table 8 for detailed location-specific cultural characteristics.) The distinct cultural characteristics of each of the three clusters are summarized in Table 9.

In the study conducted in 2001, Sinha et al. (2001: 44) found that

Patna and Ahmedabad managers had extreme perception of societal beliefs, organizational climate and their feeling of being insecure. Harihar managers were close to those of Ahmedabad in perceiving the organization as work-centric and caring and rating themselves as task and relationship oriented. However, they were close to Jamsehdpur in perceiving that people meet family and social obligations at the cost of their work requirements. Jamshedpur managers felt nearly as insecure as those of Patna.

The study conducted in 2002 (Sinha et al. 2002: 18) revealed that

Samastipur had the highest and New Delhi and Ahmedabad had the lowest mean score, on purely collectivist responses (CC: Collectivist behaviour with collectivist intention) while reverse was true for purely individualist response (II: Individualist behaviour with individualist intention), and somewhat similar for C&I

Table 8
Findings of Sinha et al.'s (1994) Study

Study	Patna	Varanasi	Lucknow	Kharagpur	Baroda	Madras/Bangalore
Sinha et al. (1994)	Societal Beliefs • Primacy of social obligations over work obligations • Importance of personalized relationship to the extent that corrupt but loyal subordinates are not punished, rather they are protected and promoted (Harmony and Tolerance)	Similar to Patna but to a moderate degree	Societal Beliefs • Relationship orientation (people visit each other without prior intimation); indiscipline is tolerated for the sake of maintaining good social relationship • No undue self-disclosure	Societal Beliefs • Do not entertain unwelcome guests • Do not believe in caste hierarchy • Boast of family heritage and own achievements	Societal Beliefs • Pragmatic • Situation oriented • Seek their own caste men at work or in their neighbourhood • Do not tolerate criticisms by the juniors • Not necessarily familial or formal	Societal Beliefs • Moderate importance to cultural themes being tested

Table 9
Distinct Cultural Characteristics of Three Clusters

Patna and Varanasi	Lucknow, Kharagpur and Baroda	Madras and Bangalore
• Meeting social obligations, willingly or unwillingly, at the cost of work • Maintaining personalized relationships	• People value family heritage • Not much respect for elders and seniors	The study could not find salient cultural preferences for this cluster.

Table 10
Findings of Sinha et al.'s (2001) Study

Study	Patna	Ahmedabad	Jamshedpur Harihar
Sinha et al. (2001)	Societal Beliefs • Strong perception of societal beliefs (power and status discriminate and primacy of social and family obligations over work obligation) Organizational Climate • Boss-oriented and personalized work climates	Societal Beliefs • Weak perception of societal beliefs Organizational Climate • Work-centric and caring work climate	Societal Beliefs • Moderate perception about societal beliefs

(A mix of collectivist and individualist intention and behaviour) and CI (Collectivist behaviour with individualist intention to behave subsequently in an individualist way) responses. New Delhi stood first, Ahmedabad second, and Samastipur fourth on C&I. Ahmedabad had highest, New Delhi had second highest, and Samastipur had the lowest mean score on CI. Tirupati and Bhubaneswar had the mean scores in-between on CC, CI, II. Only on C&I did Tirupati have the lowest mean score.

In their latest study Sinha et al. (2003) identified three factors of societal preferences and practices that had different salience at seven locations. These were (a) people's quick-rich disposition; (b) people's face keeping behaviour; and (c) people's non-work orientation.

The places such as Ahmedabad and Pune ... had less negative images of the people than .... places such as Patna, Kolkata and Jamshedpur .... Ahmedabad and Pune managers had mostly positive while Patna, Jamshedpur and Kolkata had negative images of their organizations (Sinha et al. 2003: 22).

Labelling the Locations: Holistic View of Locations

In this section, we have attempted to label the locations (which are covered in more than one study) on the basis of the cultural characteristics discovered through various studies. Ahmedabad and Patna are the two locations studied most (covered in three studies). Locations like Lucknow, Jamshedpur and the National Capital Region (that includes New Delhi and Gurgaon) are covered in two studies. Rest of the locations are covered in one of the four studies only.

Cultural characteristics of various locations as revealed through these studies, though not confirmatory, yet indicate broad cultural preferences of the locations. As a result, the labelling, which is based on the findings of the studies, is not conclusive. We hope that labelling would provide a basis for researchers for further investigation as well as for practitioners to understand broad characteristics of the inhabitants of these locations, and would also help them in managing a diverse workforce.

Ahmedabad People living in Ahmedabad were perceived to have relatively little

Table 11
Findings of Sinha et al.'s (2002) Study

Study	New Delhi	Samastipur	Tirupati	Ahmedabad	Bhubaneswar
Sinha et al. (2002)	Behavioural Disposition • Lowest in CC and highest in II	Behavioural Disposition • Highest in CC • Lowest in C&I and II	Behavioural Disposition • Highest in IC • Lowest in C&I • Low in CI	Behavioural Disposition • Lowest in CC and highest in CI	Behavioural Disposition • Moderate

CC [Collectivist behaviour with collectivist intention]; CI [Collectivist behaviour with individualist intention to behave subsequently in an individualist way]; C&I (Mix of collectivist and individualist behaviour and intention]; IC [Individualist behaviour with collectivist intention to behave subsequently in an individualist way]; II [Individualist behaviour with individualist intention].

Table 12
Findings of Sinha et al.'s (2003) Study

	Ahmedabad	Patna	Kolkata	Gurgaon	Pune	Jamshedpur	Lucknow
PIA	1	7	5	4	2	3	6
Sinha et al. (2003)	Societal • Low quick-rich disposition • Low non-work orientation • Low face keeping Organizational • Entrepreneurial growth oriented professional (high) • Exploitative, bureaucratic, patronizing or parochial (low)	Societal • Quick-rich disposition, non-work orientation (high) • Low on face keeping Organizational • Exploitative (high), familial (highest) • Patronizing (moderate) • Professional, entrepreneurial, growth oriented (low)	Societal • Non-work orientation (highest), quick-rich disposition, face keeping (high) Organizational • Entrepreneurial, growth oriented (low) • Familial, bureaucratic, patronizing and parochial (high)	Societal • Quick-rich disposition (highest), face keeping (high), non-work orientation (low) Organizational • Parochial and patronizing (high) • Entrepreneurial, growth oriented, familial (low) • Exploitative (moderate)	Societal • Quick-rich disposition (moderate) • Face keeping (low) • Non-work orientation (high) Organizational • Entrepreneurial (low), familial (moderate) • Exploitative (low), bureaucratic (low), patronizing (low), parochial (low) • Growth oriented, professional (high)	Societal • Face keeping (highest), quick-rich disposition, non-work orientation (high) Organizational • Exploitative (highest), patronizing (highest), bureaucratic (highest), parochial (highest) • Entrepreneurial, familial, professional (moderate)	Societal • Quick-rich disposition, face keeping, non-work orientation (moderate) Organizational • Entrepreneurial, familial, growth oriented, patronizing, parochial (high) • Exploitative, professional (low)

PIA: Perception about Infrastructural Adequacy (Rank)

respect, and hence, give little importance to status and power. They consider work obligations to be more important than family and social obligations. They do not aspire to get rich by hook or crook or at the cost of others. They generally profess what they practise. They are serious about work and are committed. The organizational climate was found to be work centric and caring. Organizations here are perceived to be entrepreneurial, growth oriented and professional. People in Ahmedabad are perceived to behave in CI mode (collectivist behaviour with individualist intention to behave subsequently in an individualist way) on most occasions. Such a behavioural disposition makes us conjecture that people would be a part of a collective only as long as they benefit by being its member. Such behaviour seems to be conducive to professional relationships found in organizations located in Ahmedabad. It could be one of the reasons that co-operative movements have taken root in Gujarat. Keeping these conjectures in mind, we label the cultural characteristics of Ahmedabad as 'Growth-oriented Professional'.

Patna   People living in Patna were perceived to have high respect, and hence, give high importance to status and power. They consider family and social obligations to be more important than work obligations. People take time off work to visit friends. Friends drop in during office hours without prior intimation. Personalized relationship is valued highly (similar to non-work orientation). As they respect people in high status and power, there seems to be tendency among the people to want to get rich by hook or by crook, even at the cost of others (quick-rich disposition).

The organizational climate is boss oriented. Juniors try to develop personalized relationship with superiors, while superiors tend to protect and promote loyal, though corrupt or inefficient subordinates. This could be because of the importance they attach to personalized relationship. Organizations are perceived to be familial (the organization is a big family) and exploitative. Patronage-seeking behaviour seems to be common. Organizations were found not to be entrepreneurial, growth oriented or professional. Keeping these conjectures in mind, we label the cultural characteristics of Patna as 'Patronizing'.

Lucknow   People are perceived to value relationship. They visit each other without prior intimation. Indiscipline is tolerated for the sake of maintaining social relationship. People might have a desire to get rich, but they do it in a desirable way and not at the cost of others (moderate score in quick-rich disposition and face keeping). Though they value relationship, they seem not to neglect work unlike the people of Patna. The organizations here are perceived to be entrepreneurial, growth oriented, familial,

patronizing and parochial in nature. They are neither exploitative nor professional. As the people are perceived to value relationship and organizations are perceived to be of the familial type, without neglecting work, we label Lucknow as 'Familial Professional'.

Kolkata and Kharagpur   People from Kharagpur are perceived to value family heritage. They are formal and do not entertain uninvited guests. They do not believe in caste hierarchy. They value achievement. Kolkata people are perceived to give more importance to family and social obligations than work obligations (non-work orientation is the highest). Organizations are perceived to be relatively low on entrepreneurship and growth orientation, while being high on familial, bureaucratic, patronizing and parochial aspects.

Kolkata and Kharagpur are clubbed together for labelling simply because of their close physical proximity as well as similarity in language (Bengali) and lifestyle. Considering the importance they attach to family, family heritage, besides being formal and conventional, we label both the locations 'Familial Bureaucratic'.

Jamshedpur   People from Jamshedpur have moderate respect for status and power (higher than Ahmedabad, but lower than Patna). Family and social obligations are given moderate importance (higher than Ahmedabad, but lower than Patna). They are concerned about what others think of them (face keeping is high). Because of their respect for power and status, they want to get rich by hook or by crook, even at the cost of others, quite similar to people from Patna. Family and social obligations are valued more than work obligations.

The work climate of organizations located here is neither as work centric and caring as organizations in Ahmedabad nor as personalized and boss-oriented as organizations in Patna. Organizations are perceived to be relatively more exploitative, patronizing, bureaucratic (highest) and parochial. Considering the general cultural characteristics of the people and organizations of Jamshedpur, we label it 'Patronizing Bureaucratic'.

NCR (National Capital Region)   People of NCR are perceived to be quite high on quick-rich disposition and face keeping. They want to acquire status and power by hook or by crook, even at the cost of others. They do not practise what they preach. The organizations in NCR are perceived to be high on parochial and patronizing aspects and people tend to behave with individualistic motives. In general, the people are perceived to be hypocrites, individualistic and patronage seekers. The location is labelled 'Mercenary'.

Explaining Locational Variation

Sinha and his associates, in order to explain locational variation in cultural characteristics, have invariably resorted to differential levels of infrastructure, which they call 'infrastructural adequacy'. Higher the level of infrastructural base, less traditional the value preferences would be. In order to explain the behavioural dispositions of people from five locations, they argue that:

[a]ffluence and infrastructural adequacy induced respondents to shift towards combining individualistic and collectivistic orientations, employing to a lesser extent of collectivist behaviour to serve

individualist interests, and opting in a few situations (sic) individualistic responses intended to serve individualistic purposes (Sinha et al. 2002: 18).

Again, Sinha et al. (2001: 45) in their study of four locations on societal beliefs, organizational climate and managers' self-perceptions argue that

[t]he level of development of the state and the city in which organisations are located have an impact on managers' perception of societal beliefs, organisational climate and the rating of their own task and relationship orientation as well as their feelings of insecurity.

They further elaborate

It seems that a relatively higher level of development of a state induces a shift in people's traditional beliefs, enables the organisations in the area to cultivate work-centric and caring work climate, and renders managers in these organisations more task and relationship oriented. On the other hand, a less developed place perpetuates traditional beliefs leading to boss-oriented, personalised climate, and the two, taken together, cause insecurity in the mind of managers (ibid.: 46).

Again in their latest study (Sinha et al. 2003: 23), they reiterate that

[p]laces that are advantaged in infrastructural facilities foster positive worldviews that colour that way people see the society, their organisations as well as themselves. There exists probably a bi-directional reciprocally influencing relationships between

infrastructural adequacy on one hand and people's views about the society, the organisations and themselves, on the other.

Interestingly, it seems Sinha and his associates have based their arguments on two assumptions which are generally adopted by convergence/modernization theorists: (*a*) as a location modernizes with better infrastructural facilities, people's perceptions shift from traditional worldviews to progressive worldviews; and (*b*) locations with similar level of infrastructural facilities would have similar cultural characteristics.

Convergence and modernization theorists argue that as national culture is related to other societal factors such as political, legal, educational, and labour relations systems, rapid economic and technological development around the world (characteristic of globalization) will have a homegenizing effect on culture (Dunphy 1987; Webber 1969). Proponents of the convergence perspective suggest that this modernization results from a common economic orientation (Eisenhardt 1973) and eventually leads to a common society where differences in values will cease to exist (Kerr et al. 1960). Some support for the convergence hypothesis is provided by Inglehart's (1977, 1990) survey of values in Europe.

The perceived assumptions of Sinha and his associates might be partly correct because, as Inglehart and Baker (2000: 49) argue, cultural change may be path dependent. Though economic development (with modern infrastructural facilities) tends to bring pervasive cultural changes, one cannot ignore the historically evolved cultural heritage, which has enduring effects. India is a multilingual and multi-ethnic society. Different locations have different historical and cultural legacies, which have shaped the worldviews of the people living there. Historically, the impact of Moghul rule in India has been different in different parts of India. The same can be argued about the impact of British rule during the colonization period in India. For instance, as revealed through the findings of these studies, though Ahmedabad and New Delhi have more or less similar levels of infrastructural facilities, cultural characteristics of both the locations are different.

Second, in case of a large and diversified country like India, the location from which samples are collected may influence the findings of the study. Location-region-specific cultural characteristics tend to get interpreted as cultural characteristics of the nation. For instance, 'harmony and tolerance' as a cultural facet seems not to have been subscribed by any other studies as a distinct pan-Indian cultural facet. On the other hand, Sinha et al. (1994) discovered it to be a unique characteristic of Patna. In fact, Sinha et al. (1994: 146) admitted that 'what Sinha (1990) has been calling Indian values are predominantly the operative values of the North'. Gupta et al. (2002: 17) argue:

> Culture as an outcome of the interplay between religious, historical, political, social, economic forces consists of a coherent system of representation, a *weltanschauung*, or a worldview that distinguishes the citizens of a country [location].

Sometimes commonly held beliefs about people of a culture are not captured through a framework based on an *etic* approach. For instance, though Indians are believed to be fatalist, religious and spiritualistic in their orientation, none of the studies could capture those orientations despite the presence of

such items in the questionnaire (Sinha et al. 2003).

Keeping these arguments, the inherent limitations of the *etic* approach and Gupta et al.'s (2002) definition in mind, it is safe to conjecture that cultural shift in any of the locations would be context specific. There is a need to investigate further the location-region-specific cultural characteristics within India, keeping in mind the cultural diversity. There is a need to adopt evolutionary–*emic* approach to study cultural diversity within India rather than depending upon *a priori* frameworks alone.

Summary and Conclusion

Review of four empirical studies conducted by Sinha and his associates revealed seven pan-Indian cultural characteristics that are subscribed to by people irrespective of locations. These seven cultural characteristics are: (*a*) collectivist orientation; (*b*) respect for status and power; (*c*) primacy of personalized relationship; (*d*) desire to be embedded in an in-group; (*e*) familism; (*f*) context-sensitive (situational) behaviour; and (*g*) cynical view about others. It also provided empirical evidence for the commonly held belief of the existence of cultural diversity within India. Sinha and his associates have chosen to seek explanation of cultural diversity in the varied levels of infrastructural facilities available in various locations. This explanation is similar to the arguments generally posited by convergence and modernization theorists. The authors, however, are more inclined towards seeking context-specific *emic* explanations for cultural diversity within India. Their suggestion is guided by Inglehart and Baker's (2000) argument that cultural change is path dependent and non-linear.

There is a need for researchers to adopt an evolutionary–*emic* approach along with an *etic* approach to explore regional variation of culture within India as well as between India and other countries. This article is an attempt in the direction of setting such an agenda for future research across the globe.

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