

# **Cultural Enclaves: the interplay between Indian cultural values and Western ways of working in an Indian IT Organisation**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The phenomenon of globalisation has been implicated in the increased movement of knowledge work from higher-income, industrialised countries to lower-income, newly industrialising economies. Globalisation has also been associated with opportunities for economic development through the establishment and growth of IT-related industries in developing countries, even if such development exhibits a skewed trajectory (Heeks 1999). This phenomenon is most evident in the increasing use of so-called offshored services in IT and IT-enabled business processes.

One of the most significant players in this area is India, long held to be a dominant exporter of software and IT-related services (Carmel 2003, Sahay et al 2007b, Arora et al 2001). Recent figures estimate an increase in 2009 of 16-17% in India's software and services exports to USD 47.3 billion and a corresponding increase in direct employment to about 2.0 million people from 1.5 million in 2007 (NASSCOM 2008, NASSCOM 2009). The study of this developing global industry in India provides a rich source of data on a plethora of organisational issues relevant to developing country contexts. One such issue is that this industry tends to produce uneven economic development resulting in IT "enclaves" where the standard of living and access to other amenities differs from that of the overall population (Heeks 1999, Sinha et al 2004, Chatterjee and Pearson 2000a, Upadhyaya, and Vasavi 2006). Within these enclaves, it has been suggested that a shift in customary values that traditionally underpin Indian society may be taking place due to influence from Western ways of working (Pradhan and Abraham 2005, Upadhyaya, and Vasavi 2006). The nature and extent of these changes, however, remains under-researched.

This paper will explore the extent to which cultural norms are affected by, and affect the working environment of Indian employees within these cultural enclaves by use of an in-depth case study of an Indian IT outsourcing company located in Mumbai whose major clients are located in the US. The contribution of the paper, therefore, is twofold; first, it allows an exploration of changing cultural and social values being experienced in the Indian IT workplace and second, it provides insight into the ways in which compromise cultural positions help to shape these changes. The rest of the paper is organised as follows: section 2 introduces the concept of an IT cultural enclave and associated notions of working or negotiated culture; section 3 reviews literature on the influences of Indian social and cultural values in Indian workplace settings; section 4 presents the research methodology applied; section 5 describes the case study; section 6 discusses the findings in relation to concepts introduced in sections 2 and 3 and finally, section 7 concludes the paper.

## **IT CULTURAL "ENCLAVES" AND WORKING CULTURE**

*"Due to its concentration on outsourced and offshore software and IT-enabled services, the Indian IT industry has developed largely as an enclave, one that is closely linked to the global economy but has few substantial connections to*

*local, regional, and national economies.” (Upadhya, and Vasavi 2006, pp. 156)*

The meaning of culture as used in literature about information systems (IS) and organisations is often contested (Myers and Tan 2002; Leidner and Kayworth 2006), but one way of understanding this concept has been to differentiate between culture at the national/ethnic level and culture at the organizational/group level (Leidner and Kayworth 2006). One interesting viewpoint suggests that coherent groups (sub-units, collectives) tend to have similar norms of behaviour based on shared values and meaning systems and that the behavioural norms of those groups may differ from those conventionally associated with their predominant ethnic origin (Walsham 2002). Such notions give rise to the emergence of concepts such as negotiated culture (Pauleen 2003; Brannen and Salk 2000; Gregory et al. 2009) and working culture (Krishna et al 2004) where the compromise of norms, values and meaning systems provides unique cross-cultural working environments in IT-dominated organisations.

Cultural issues in offshore work arrangements involving the Indian subcontinent have tended to concentrate mainly on issues related to these cross-cultural collaborations (Krishna et al. 2004; Walsham 2002; Nicholson and Sahay 2001, Sahay et al 2007b, Heeks et al 2001). Two interesting themes that emerge from these studies are (a) the mutual interplay between global forces and local norms and (b) the possibility of the accommodation of various cultural norms to produce new ways of working based on negotiated or working culture compromise positions. This notion of mutually interacting local and global forces at the level of cultural practices is a theme often discussed in the literature on globalisation (Robertson 1992, Appadurai 1996).

Free-trade areas, hi-tech zones and software parks are industry-based clusters constructed so as to provide investment opportunities in technology-related industry and are very common in the establishment of software export industries in developing countries. They are generally governed by conventions that differ from locally-based industry in similar fields; examples are preferential tax incentives, turn-key lifestyles with many amenities provided and access to long-term overseas assignments with foreign client contact. The cultural norms that become established in these types of workplaces tend to be very different from those predominant in the wider working environment. They also tend to create reinforcing behaviours of their own construction (see for example the behavioural norms adopted by Barbadian IT workers in Freeman 2000).

Heeks (1999) associates these IT export enclaves with skewed development profiles in developing countries where benefits thought to accrue from such investments often do not filter out to communities outside of these protected zones. Not only do these enclaves develop their own economic individuality apart from the communities in which they are situated, however, it is also thought that they develop their own cultural identities through global influences inherent in their adopted working practices (Upadhyaya, and Vasavi 2006, Krishna et al 2004, Sinha et al 2004, Chatterjee and Pearson, 2000a, Freeman 2000). In this paper, we explore these views and the associated notions of culture through the concept of “IT cultural enclaves”. We define these as collectives comprising workers in IT-based organisations in developing country contexts that exhibit coherence in behavioural norms which may be based on values and meaning systems that emerge from their working environments. These cultural norms are, however, not necessarily consistent with those of the ethnic origin of the communities in which these working environments are based.

## **INDIAN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL VALUES IN THE WORKPLACE**

This section introduces and explains various concepts in relation to Indian social and cultural values and their effect on the workplace. Before moving further we quote Hofstede’s (1985, pp. 347) definition of values:

*“...broad preferences for one state of affairs over others. They direct our feelings of good and evil. They are opinions on how things should be. Indirectly they also affect our perceptions of how things are and they affect our behaviour”.*

This definition of values indicates how one’s preferences, feelings, opinions, perceptions and behaviour are affected by the values one holds. It remarkably offers an enormous opportunity to explore the effect values can have on many aspects of the code of conduct of people both socially and professionally.

### **Coexisting western and non – western values**

Tripathi (1990) argues that values help minimize the variability in behaviour of members of Indian organisations. The author further claims that both social and work values in India are a set

of mixed values comprising both Western and non-Western influences. Sinha and Kanungo (1997) and Sinha et al (2004) also agree that Indians have these two sets of Western and non-Western influences which are seen as appropriate for both social and work values in Indians. Jain (1991) identifies a clash between Western management practices with existing Indian social values in Indian organisations. Fusilier and Durlabhji (2001) further claim that Indians form an understanding of Indian culture from their upbringing, but when they get educated under Western management practices with Western theories then an element of contradiction and complexity emerges in managing the relationship between Indian cultural values and their work behaviour and goals.

It is argued, however, that there has always been a coexistence of beliefs in India, such as detachment with materialistic orientation, collectivism with individualism and humanism with power orientation (Tripathi1990). Such values appear to share both the Western and non-western origins. Sinha and Kanungo (1997, pp. 94) quoted *“the top men in Indian organisations maintain high power distance and yet always keep their doors open even to the lowest level workers, should they want to knock at it for out-of-line favour or redressal of grievances...”*.

This belief system has been found to be influenced by myriad factors – level of professional education, family’s exposure to work organisation, organisation expectation of universalism, peer leadership, length of service, participation in decision making, support from boss, and team work and control (Tripathi, 1990). Sinha and Kanungo (1997) also conclude that the interaction between the traditional Hindu<sup>1</sup> religion (including the caste system in India) with foreign culture, especially during British rule in India, has resulted in this seemingly contradictory behaviour of Indians.

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<sup>1</sup> India is one of the most diverse lands with people from different ethnic backgrounds including - Aryans, Arabs, Malay, Tibetans, Burmese, Mizo, Naga, Jews, Portuguese Indians (or popularly known as Goans), other European Indians, Siddhis, African descendents, etc. There are 18 Scheduled Languages with 112 official mother tongues . Also, it is a host of many religions of which 80% population is Hindu and also home of one of the largest Muslim populations of about 120 million. The caste system is also another important aspect of the Indian society with four basic castes of Brahmins is the highest and Dalits (earlier untouchables) as the lowest. It doesn’t end here as there also exists thousands of sub – castes (Social Overview, 2008). The authors note that despite such diversity our sample case study comprises of over 95% population as Hindus so we have tried to focus our research on their primary culture and values. This nowhere claims that such a case is universal with all Indian IT companies.

### **Influence of social and religious systems**

Some of research studies of Indian employees at managerial and other levels suggest different values in Indian workers (Sinha et al, 2004). The social dimensions found in this Indian study of 600 mid – level managers were – hypocrisy, corruption, inaction and respect to power and the organisation dimensions found were – entrepreneurial, exploitative, familial, bureaucratic, growth – oriented, patronizing, professional and parochial. The impact of societal factors was found to be significant on organisational factors (Sinha et al, 2004; DiBella, 1993). Some other research explains this to be a result of the religious and historical impact in India (Sinha et al, 2004; Sinha and Kanungo, 1997; Fusilier and Durlabhji, 2001). The dimensions such as familial, respect for power, inaction, bureaucratic and parochial were found to be an element of the Hindu traditional values (Kanungo, 1990; Sinha and Sinha, 1990).

Indian managers are described as members of different social systems which emerge from both the work and non-work related arrangements – caste communities, religious groups, family and intellectual groups (Sahay and Walsham, 1997). It can be inferred that such social systems can sometimes be conflicting. For example, the intellectual system advocates for professional work efficiency while the family system would advise helping a relative in need, which may involve compromising on work efficiency. Almost every aspect of living is guided by religion in some way or the other, such as beliefs of Karma, contentment, non-attachment and tolerance (Sinha and Sinha, 1990). The Hindu theory of Karma explains that every pain in life is thought to be something which cannot be reversed and that human nature is unchangeable so that all that happens today in life is a result of the previous life's actions and deeds (Gopalan and Rivera, 1997).

Kanungo (1990) agrees with Fusilier and Durlabhji (2001) that social factors such as family, education and religion influence the individual's belief system. These influences are explained as “(a) a personal ethic of helplessness, (b) an organisational ethic of personalized relationships, and (c) an idealized, family centred work ethic” (for details see Kanungo, 1990, pp. 802). These beliefs as found by Kanungo (1990) are to be generated by four key elements – authoritarian practices in the family, the reward systems (broken promises by leaders, both organisational and political), religious traditions (focus on past rather than present) and joint family systems (promoting dependency).

Sahay et al (2007b) found that Indian employees working abroad at client sites for Indian IT organisations demonstrated a very submissive attitude in their conduct. They were found to be fearful to participate in discussions and expected superiors to offer guidance. They accepted the workload optimistically even if it was unrealistic and could not be completed on time or required extra hours of work (Gregory et al 2009, Krishna et al 2004, Nicholson and Sahay 2001, Upadhy and Vasavi, 2006). Such behaviour derives from the Indian belief that failure to achieve a goal would bring shame on not just self but also family (Sinha and Sinha, 1990). Further, this submissive attitude has been found to emerge mainly from Hindu/traditional social values in India which prescribe to be contented and accepting the status quo and not be too ambitious (Sinha and Sinha, 1990, Krishna et al 2004).

### **Authoritative superior – subordinate relationship**

*“The family system in India is based on the values of respect to a parental authority and compliance with his wishes. The head of a family in return is expected to extend paternal care, support, and nurturance. The executives are like children who need to depend on the boss and would work hard in return for his affection and protection....” (Sinha 1973, pp. 58)*

The caste system and child-rearing practices in joint families strongly influence the social life of Indians. The hierarchical relationships in the family and society act as determinants of an individual's social status and identity (Gopalan and Rivera, 1997, Sahay and Walsham, 1997). The role of parents is significant in choosing spouses for their children and this would involve taking into account the caste and status of the spouse (Gopalan and Rivera, 1997).

The influence of paternalism and authoritative superiors has been noted as an important part of the superior – subordinate relationship (Jain and Dwivedi, 1990). Kakar (1971), in reviewing literature on Indian patterns of authority within Indian organisations, still holds significance with other recent literature (Kanungo 1990, Upadhy and Vasavi, 2006), in that the parental authoritative command at home heavily contributes to the authoritative relationships in Indian workplaces. The nurturance of children in Indian homes makes them dependent on the guidance by superiors which is later reflected in the work organisations where Indian employees expect orders from superiors.

At least three kinds of superiors theoretically exist in Indian organisations – assertive, nurturant and fraternal, but fraternal superiors are believed to be more successful because of their emotional quotient (Kakar, 1971). They are always in a helping mode to the subordinates which is in direct relation to the paternal attitude at home. The subordinates also do not want to accept responsibility and hence expect their superiors to give directions. The superiors also do not want junior participation in decision making as it may be thought a sign of weakness in management practice (Tripathi, 1990, Upadhyaya and Vasavi, 2006).

The fear of employees of anyhow making the management unhappy has been identified as an important reason why employees are scared to be authentic with seniors. They would rather suffer in distress than discuss any problems they are having with work (Sinha, 1973). A number of recent studies authenticate such behaviour by Indians especially in cross cultural collaborations (Gopalan and Rivera 1997, Gregory et al 2009, Nicholson and Sahay 2001, Sahay and Walsham 1997, Sinha and Kanungo 1997, Walsham 2002, Walsham and Sahay 1999, Upadhyaya and Vasavi 2006). Moreover, the education system of India was also established as one of the contributors to high power distance, as it is known to discourage questioning of the so called facts of Western education taught in India (Singh, 1990). Employees with a high level of education were found to resist authoritative attitudes of superiors, while lower-level educated employees expect and accept authority and guidance (Singh 1990, Upadhyaya 2007, Upadhyaya and Vasavi 2006).

### **India a Collectivist society?**

Indians have been found to be collectivists (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, 1985) but as identified above, the results were not convincing. The Hindu religious values hold the beliefs of hierarchy (e.g. the caste system in humans) and group – embeddedness (collectivism). Sinha and Kanungo (1997) noted that Indians sometimes leave career development to go back to their family home and take care of their parents. Such major decisions exhibit the sense of duty and the need for collectivism. Amusingly, a survey of senior managers belonging to joint families shows that the want for building and maintaining social relationships with peers and seniors comes only at fifth degree of importance, out of 12 (Chatterjee and Pearson, 2000b). This goes in conflict with the popular perception of India as a collectivist society (Hofstede, 1980).

This complexity in recognizing the behaviour of Indians as collectivist or individualist has already been identified (Kanungo, 1990). Sinha et al (2001) argues that Indians exhibit both collectivist and individualist behaviour patterns depending on their intentions. Their study found that the most accepted behaviour of Indians was a mixture of collectivist and individualist behaviour and intention, while purely collectivist behaviour was the second most popular. Individuals behave collectively sometimes just to realize their individual goals and personal needs. Purely individualistic behaviour may not be welcome in the Indian society which pushes individuals to mix behaviour adaptation (Sinha et al, 2001). This is generally attributed to socio-economic conditions which compel individuals to work in collectivist ways in order to achieve individual goals. As and when such conditions improve, individualistic behaviour is expected to rise (Sinha et al, 2002).

Some literature raised the issue of high context sensitivity among Indians due to the coexistence of collectivist and individualist notions (Sinha and Kanungo, 1997, Sinha, 2002). The notions of sensitivity of Indians to the current context and the need of having a balanced life, which are claimed to be a by-product of Indian culture, have also been recognized (Sinha and Kanungo, 1997). The latter also examined these two concepts of context sensitivity and balancing. Context sensitivity implies that individuals can behave differently in similar situations at different times or with different people in similar situations. Balancing suggests accommodation to life situations and never following extreme behaviour. "The ideal person is the one who does not get euphoric in success or despondent in misfortunes, but remains clam, composed and detached from what is happening to him or her" (Sinha and Kanungo, 1997, pp. 98).

### **Changing values**

There also have been reports of changing Indian values with the economic rise of India making market-oriented goals the latest norms (Chatterjee and Pearson 2000a, Upadhya 2007, Upadhya and Vasavi 2006). Another study supplies evidence for changing work relationships between the senior and junior (Fusilier and Durlabhji, 2001). Furthermore empirical investigation shows that the difference in human generations contributes to the disparity in managerial values and practices among young and old managers (Mellahi and Guermat, 2004). However, the extent to which these changing values are evident in workplace settings is still under-researched.

The literature discussed above gives an insight about the relationship between the Indian social and cultural values and management within Indian IT organisations. The following case study will explore the effects of current social values on Indian IT organisations to gain an insight into how these enclave-like establishments may be implicated in emergent cultural influences on work practices.

## **METHODOLOGY: EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY**

### **Research Approach**

The research is based on an interpretive case study conducted in a single Indian organisation engaged in Information Technology (IT) outsourcing to global clients. The case study research strategy is useful for investigating phenomena that are under-researched, complex or difficult to extract from their underlying contexts (Yin 1994). We have adopted an interpretive approach (Walsham 1993, Walsham 2006) since it is through the multiple, inter-subjective views of actors working within the IT cultural enclave environments that concepts, theories, and rich insights about the phenomena can emerge. The study was exploratory in nature (Yin 1994) with the aim to learn from the case study participants about the context of the phenomenon. This context-dependent knowledge can prove useful in gaining expertise of understanding a practical Indian setting, an outcome relevant to the research objectives (Flyvberg, 2006).

### **Research Methods**

Several methods were employed in data collection including (a) semi-structured interviews, (b) document analysis and (c) observations (Yin 1994; Bryman and Bell 2007). Nine face-to-face in-depth interviews in English were conducted at various levels of the organisation, each lasting approximately one hour, over a two – three week period, during which the research visit was conducted. The interviews were recorded after written consents by participants. The interviewees included the VP, Strategist, Project Managers, Tech Engineers and Team Leaders. The idea to choose different levels of personnel was to note the difference in perception of reality for management and employees. The interplay of power at different levels had to be evaluated so as to produce more authentic results. The questioning style used was exploratory allowing the participants to reveal their own perceptions through their own narratives (Bryman and Bell,

2007). This ensured that all participants' points of view of events in the organisation were distinctly noted and were not restricted to any specific answers. The questions were open-ended and largely oriented towards human behaviour and its causes and effects, covering areas such as career development, religious and general beliefs and values, codes of conduct, working behaviour and practices, and so forth. The documents gathered included government reports, newspapers and Internet reports. Observations were conducted at the research site during the field visit.

### **Data Analysis**

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Careful reading and re-reading of the interview transcripts allowed for classification of similar material and for insights to be captured (Bryman and Bell 2007; Klein and Myers 1999). After these initial impressions were gained of the material, themes in relation to the concepts developed in the literature review were coded from the data (Klein and Myers 1999). The documents were analysed with a view to discovering underlying cultural and social values that could be emerging in organisations such as the research setting and also looking at background data on the organisation. The field notes obtained from observations were analysed using the same codes as for the interviews. Results of the analyses are presented in the following section. In presenting our results we rely on a coherent, internally consistent argument which serves to discuss the findings of the case in the light of broader social constructs relevant to the case study situation (Walsham 1993).

## **CASE DESCRIPTION**

### **The city – Mumbai**

While my flight to Mumbai was landing I could notice large scattered parts of the city covered with blue coloured plastic sheets. These were the slum areas which are home to the poor of Mumbai. I am a resident of India and Mumbai was not new to me, I have been visiting Mumbai since long when one of my uncles has shifted his base to Mumbai to get involved into stock exchange of India which is also located in Mumbai. This is one of the reasons why Mumbai is known as the financial capital of India.

I have seen this city change within the last 10 – 12 years, but the changes in the past 3 – 4 years are tremendous. The new complete glass buildings with many under construction signify the rising economy and the SEEPZ (Santacruz Electronics Export Processing Zone) area being home to many IT companies shows the strength of the Indian IT industry. Moreover, after the economic reforms in 1991 there has been a rapid increase in IT production house and also the IT educational institutes. This rise up has majorly contributed to the incoming of large youth population in Mumbai from across the country to gain employment in Mumbai's IT sector (D' Mello and Sahay, 2007).

### **The Company**

FlameTech Ltd. was founded in 1997, with the mission to provide state-of-the-art IT solutions to different businesses by facilitating partnerships with them. FlameTech is an India based company with offices and clients in Singapore, Malaysia, USA, Australia and headquartered in Mumbai, India. The company has a huge clientele including many Fortune 500 companies. It offers IT services including distributed development of turn – key software projects to its partners. The major services of FlameTech include remote management of client's servers across the globe while sitting in their Mumbai headquarters. The support staff of 600+ is located in the USA and India which is responsible for providing services to its customers. FlameTech covers nearly 400,000 devices throughout the globe for more than 15,000 customers. The company has a distribution network of over 1,500 resellers/channel partners to distribute and sell its services. FlameTech had revenues of INR800.5 million (approximately US\$17.7 million) with net profit as INR257.7 million (approximately US\$5.7 million).for the year 2007..

The employees at FlameTech originated from small or underdeveloped towns and cities with limited exposure to the fast moving lives that people live in the economic hubs of India. They are from poor financial backgrounds where they were dependent on family support from personal expenses through to higher education; this has led to deep ties to family roots. And as culture and religion have always been an important part of Indian life so they showed a lot of respect for the same and were found to live their daily lives with such integration. As such, these employees fit the profile for traditional "Indian" workers as discussed previously.

## Working in Indian IT industry

The Indian IT industry invites a lot of competition in jobs despite the huge requirement of manpower. FlameTech has to recruit employees from across the country to fulfil its manpower needs. A senior official explained that their new recruits from outside Mumbai had trouble in getting suitable accommodation and so they have now started providing company accommodation to them. An NOC engineer confirmed this:

*“... (I) live in a company accommodation, a 2 bedroom flat which I share with 4-6 employees.”*

The Mumbai city culture offers an independent and fast life. This may be a shock to someone coming from a different part of the country especially from smaller (i.e. backward) cities. An employee coming from another part of the country shares a thought:

*“...the environment is good here, a bit of homesickness is there but fast life has a different style...”*

FlameTech is a 24 hours and 7 days working company. This is no different from any other IT and software services provider company. This work culture requires people to work night shifts on a rotational basis. An employee working on night shifts gives his view on the transition:

*“...routine gets changed (while working in night shifts)... (there is) no time for friends, even for the family. But my family is concentrating on my work performance, they are overall happy...this is because of our financial condition...”*

The working environment in FlameTech can sometimes force an employee to work for more than 15 hours in crisis situations. An engineering team leader explains the scenario:

*“I normally work in a general shift...9-6pm....sometimes I get at 9 am and then go back at 2-3 (am) in the morning...if there is an issue then one has to clear it out first...I am actually available 24x7 on phone...that’s a part of being a TL...I have got calls like 3 o clock in the morning that there is an issue and I have rushed here at 4.30(am)...”*

The current circumstances in terms of competition in Indian IT industry indicate towards the individual’s need of getting a stable job. As an employee comments:

*“I am coming from a call centre, I studied to get in IT so did MCSE, but couldn’t get a job in IT... actually went to Gulf in 2002 as my brother was there...10months effectively jobless..so when I got back , I needed to get whatever...”*

## **Employees' perception of CEO**

The employees of FlameTech describe the founder CEO of FlameTech as a strict boss. He is seen to be keenly involved in the daily activities of the company and employees often see him in the office building. A manager who joined only a few months back, previously working in an MNC could spot the major difference in leadership. She said:

*“Ya, he is always there in the office... (about) many CEOs we do not know who is the CEO (in person), we do not see their faces at all, but here we can see him actually working in this office...”*

Another employee found the CEO's work style to be disturbing due to his excessive supervision. He commented:

*“actually it is a very unsettling environment...because you cannot expect the CEO coming down regularly... you can lose count of the times that he comes down...he'll walk around the place... (then) you are not free to do what you want to do...”*

## **Authority & decision making**

FlameTech being a family business was reflected in the way decision making was handled through mainly the founder with a few key executives. Although one would agree that it is not possible for everyone in the organisation to contribute to decision making, however no such efforts were realized by the management. There was no evidence of process improvement forums or important strategic decision feedback mechanism.

The questions on decision making received mixed responses from employees at managerial level and others at supervisory or lower level. One of the employees was not happy with the way everything needs to go through the management or many times even the CEO. He said:

*“at the best I can go to the seniors and convey these things...but ultimately it is with the CEO to decide...so that is like a little downside...it is more of like a family business...”*

Another employee expressed his views on the authority in the organisation. He was also not very pleased with how even small things need permission to carry out, but agreed that this is the way it is done here. He commented:

*“the decision making is always from top, even small decisions again have to go via senior management including the CEO and sometimes you feel like okay that’s not right, but this is the kind of culture we have here...”*

Nevertheless, FlameTech boasts of a very open communicative culture in the organisation. Employees at all levels are expected to call their juniors or seniors by their names with no special reference to work titles or a suffix of “sir/madam”. In practice, however, that is not always the case because employees at junior levels with no education in management feel shy to call their superiors by their first names. When a senior official was queried on the participation level in decision making within FlameTech he gave an altogether different version of response, stating:

*“ it’s always a group decision. Even if he’s (CEO) got some idea, it is usually floated. In fact all managers constantly take ideas from floor...we all sit together and come to a conclusion ...it’s never a one man decision.”*

Amusingly, despite such an outlook from a senior official about their attempt to invite participation, still one of the employees working as a team leader raised the issue of a need for change:

*“There is! (need for change)...actually there is...but if there is going to be an outcome then it is okay...only if they seriously think of what we said...but (if) we are just going to sit there and discuss but nothing is going to happen and they are just going to go by what they feel...then it’s just a waste of time...”*

### **Need of supervision & superior – subordinate relationship**

FlameTech management employees seem to lack trust in their employees’ commitment. They do not expect responsible behaviour from their junior employees. A team leader explains a situation of his team member asking for a leave:

*“in certain cases I may ask that why you want a leave... if (it is) just for sake of leave, I don’t approve it...once a guy came and asked me for leave that I didn’t approved of...he had to travel to Gujarat for 2 days and stay there for one day...I said does it makes sense?...maybe you don’t reach on time and then you call and inform that you’ll be late...”*

Similar notions were shared by another employee working as a team leader. He described:

*“...if I need to get work done...then we need to be strict about it...at the same time I allow them to have their own fun... I may not be looking at them continuously...but I am aware of what Is happening...they are not allowed to talk on cell phone...or listen to music...”*

This lack of indulgence in work by employees raises the need to monitor them as confirmed by a comment from a manager who said:

*“...everybody is mean today like they’ll say ‘chod yaar’ (forget about it), I am getting salary for this much I’ll do this much, they won’t do anything extra...”*

### **Personalized relationships and preference for accommodation**

The FlameTech employees valued relationships as one of the most significant parts of their lives. One of the employees on being questioned about his value for relationships replied:

*“like yesterday one of my friends called up for a technical help and I was available at 3am...so that’s the value for my relationships...”*

The FlameTech employees also share a highly personalized relationship with their peers instead of a purely professional relationship. While discussing the relationship between team members, an employee commented:

*“(I know) some employees’ family...last month there was a party at our colleagues place and we enjoyed it very much.”*

An HR employee claimed that family upbringing has given her the values she has today. She said:

*“...my mother brought me up in difficult conditions and I was made a responsible person, not much into play...those upbringing values brought me up.”*

Another employee described his/her experience:

*“...the experience is (going) good, the teammates and peers are cooperative...”*

As discussed previously, the effect of family values and upbringing is enormous on Indian employees’ work values. Family commitments are very important for Indians. An employee explains how he had to take a break from work to fulfil his family commitments:

*“...like if you are attached to your family, like my uncle coming around from Gulf...I had an emergency break...as I had to fulfil my family functions and all...”*

These personalized relationships also had an impact on the recruitment procedures. It is a common practice by FlameTech employees to refer candidates for recruitments at FlameTech. A manager explained:

*“ya, I have referred 7-8 persons in the company...the company needed people, and I knew people who needed jobs... so I referenced them here and they were interviewed by recruitment teams which found them good enough and took them and today the same people are like team leaders now.”*

### **Different perspective: need for change**

During the interviews, an unexpected theme emerged: the lack of loyalty among employees. An employee made a comment on the culture of FlameTech being responsible for new employees not staying long enough in the company. He explained:

*“(Me) coming from an MNC, the culture over there was like wearing a shorts today and a t-shirt, a very casual approach to the office, here it’s not the same...over the period of three years I have got into this kind of culture...and lot of people coming from other firms, are not actually adjusting into this culture also... so what I feel here is that people come here because we have good pool of (product) support...so a lot of people think that okay in this company we can learn something on products...so they can make a jump in one year or six months...they do that!... and here we have many people like these, so any company wants to pick our people...it is difficult for us to retain people in the NOC...here we have to give full appraisals, yearly basis...some of them I have seen who wait for the appraisals, take the appraisals and run...”*

Another team leader explained that the concept of an MNC is to provide an excellent work environment with immense facilities, organizing parties and picnics, etc. He quotes:

*“see everybody today wants a big name, the kind of facilities you get in MNCs like lunch and dinner, you get your home drops and once in a month you have a picnic and regular parties... ’woh bolte hain na jungle mein jaa ke picnic manaa ke aao’ (go to the jungle and enjoy a picnic)...”*

An HR employee talks about the scenario where employees no longer attach any values of attachment or job security with a company. They are more interested in the raise they can get in their pay packages. He describes:

*“see people are not getting a good job, or say you have worked in ABC Infotech, and what I have seen that they don’t give good raise to existing employees...so normally IT (information technology) guys just start applying for a job...make a hop..again make a hop...so you make two hops and you double your salary...so that is one situation, while interviewing people I have to understand that this guy will stay here for long enough or not...he is just coming for learning a product and wants to have a feel of NOC,”*

The following section contains in – depth analysis and discussion of the case described above. Various themes will be associated with the reviewed literature to better understand the effect of Indian social and cultural values in Indian IT organisations. This will enable to uncover future useful research which can be done using this work as a base.

## **DISCUSSION**

In this discussion, we will detail how the findings illustrate, on the one hand, compatibility with expected norms of behaviour in Indian organisations and, on the other hand, departures from traditional Indian values. The case illustrates, for example, continuance of the paternalistic culture of the traditional Indian work setting (Jain and Dwivedi, 1990) as seen in the way in which the employees are closely supervised, in fact monitored. FlameTech managers felt that it was important to monitor and guide employees in order to ensure proper and on time work. The literature discusses the need for supervision of Indian employees low in hierarchy by their superiors (Sinha and Kanungo, 1997; Sahay et al, 2007a). Juniors are not expected to take responsibility for their work and regular monitoring makes them work only due to fear. Such an attitude makes for a paternal relationship between subordinates and their superiors. It relates to the literature which comments notably on the habit of Indian employees to expect directions and guidance from their superiors (Tripathi, 1990). Moreover, it can be traced back to the familial and religious influences where Indians look up to people like fatherly (or God like) figures to help them solve their problems (Fusilier and Durlabhji, 2001; Sinha and Sinha, 1990). Also, a number of case studies between Indian IT vendors and western clients such as Gregory et al 2009, Upadhya and Vasavi 2006, Nicholson and Sahay 2001, Heeks et al 2001 again validate our finding.

Management at FlameTech preferred referenced employees sometimes over merit in order to have trustworthy rather loyal people working in the organisation. This can be seen as an example of personalized relationships impacting recruitment procedures and partiality in behaviour with different employees, a finding already noted in previous literature on Indian IT organisations (Jain 1991, Nicholson and Sahay 2001, Upadhya and Vasavi 2006, Upadhya 2007). Upadhya and Vasavi (2006) notes that although management claims to recruit candidates

only on merit but employees commit to face differentiated behavior depending on backgrounds, their organization network and English speaking skills apart from others.

On the other hand, the data also reflects the notion that the attitude of employees towards organisations seems now more influenced by the Western education they receive and also the interaction with Western clients. Upadhyia (2005) and Upadhyia and Vasavi (2006) reassert this finding that employees receiving western education and especially employees visiting onsite clients abroad show some line of difference in behaviour than already discussed traditional behaviour. Cultural imbalance appears predominant now. Employees are more focussed on their professional growth irrespective of the organisations', implying the rise of individualism among Indian workers (Sinha et al 2001, Upadhyia and Vasavi 2006, Upadhyia 2007). Individualism in combination with materialism is overtaking the values of detachment and humanism in Indians (Fusilier and Durlabhji, 2001; Sinha and Kanungo, 1997). The data suggests that there are changing values in Indians and with the rise in economic status, materialism has surfaced. The new value system adhere no more to religious values of *karma* and balancing behaviour in Indian employees (Kanungo, 1990). Family togetherness and values are easily overlooked with the need to achieve personal success which brings its own set of issues – effect on both physical and mental health due to excessive and irregular working hours in addition to living without personal companionship.

The city itself is the perfect backdrop for examining these changes given its ability to juxtapose two extreme situations, opulent, gleaming, high-tech glamour with abject poverty and destitution. The city emblemises the concept of enclaves. The findings of the case study demonstrate a tension between norms of behaviour broadly based on traditional Indian social and cultural values and behaviours brought about by the need to accommodate different ways of working. Accommodation and assimilation are themes discussed often in the literature on information systems and development (Walsham and Sahay 1999; Westrup et al. 2000). We see three forms of accommodation taking place here: (1) making room within current practices for new modes of behaviour; (2) changing the current mode of behaviour to adopt a new one; and (3) attempts to make sense of a mode of behaviour from the viewpoint of another. From the case study, for example, we see that paternalism is still practiced in this mainly family-based organisation with its close supervisory style and high-level decision-making, but this is seen to be at odds with how a CEO in an IT-based organisation (i.e. MNC) is expected to behave.

Nevertheless, despite the autocratic management style, attempts were being made to accommodate group decision making and the familiarity of using superior's first names, thus demonstrating to some extent the first accommodation behaviour. Clear contradictions arise in the comparisons between MNC (mostly Western influenced) culture and that of FlameTech, demonstrating a desire to replace old modes of behaviour with new ones, e.g. a more casual type of working atmosphere as opposed to the more formal, a CEO who is hardly present as opposed to one who is always visible, perks such as organised staff bonding events as opposed to a less organised, more organic professional/personal identity development. This further demonstrates the first mode of accommodation. Transience seems to be the result of this tension, with the value of personal marketability superseding that of loyalty to one's organisation.

The second form of accommodation is demonstrated with the close ties to family and friendship being eroded by the working lifestyle of night-shift and overtime work. The software engineer becomes tied to a way of working dominated by time availability rather than one that privileges the building of personal or family relations in a context-sensitive way. This represents for the employee something of a disrupted pattern of living. At the same time, underscoring that tension, the new behaviour also reflects the need to demonstrate loyalty and a strong work ethic which reflects enduring ties to traditional Indian social and cultural values. The impetus for the change is unclear as is our understanding of how social and cultural values change over time, whether this happens as a result of accommodating foreign value systems or whether it is emergent behaviour based on the economics of the current situation. FlameTech's approach to employee relations was the strict monitoring of their time at work as opposed to a more indulgent attitude of leniency which would have accorded with the paternalistic and balancing norms of a more a traditional values-based organisation. The result was again the de-emphasising of human relationships and an increase in dependence on external disembedded value mechanisms like money and time. The objective of earning a salary or meeting a time-driven target thus becomes the end goal. The result is disenchantment and disengagement with the company as the surrogate for the family unit and a consequent focus on the individual. It occurs however in the context of the third accommodation type since one value system (paternalism, balance in life) is being seen in the light of the foreign-based one (time and money of critical importance) and employers and employees alike struggle to make sense of the unwelcome feelings encountered.

The tensions discussed in the ways in which accommodation is taking place in the cultural enclave described in the case study give insight into how a negotiated (Pauleen 2003) or working (Krishna et al. 2004) culture may arise from such situations. The decisions as to what aspects of traditional values would play a part in the emerging working culture seem to relate to the exigencies of the working situation (practical responses to what needs to be done to carry out the work) and to the ascendancy of new values (the earning of an income becoming a primary necessity). The current study gives insights into how these compromise cultural positions may develop within organisations where such cultural tensions exist. The case study also gives insight into how unique organisational identities that privilege similarity (compromise and accommodation to accord to an accepted IT-organisational type) rather than difference (behaviour which in these contexts, although traditionally Indian appear foreign) can develop, thus reflecting again on Griswold's (2008) ideas on the development of cultural enclaves.

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper has made several contributions to research and practice. Its primary contribution has been providing insight into how current social and cultural values in India affect and are affected by work practices adopted in Indian IT organisations. Secondly, the paper has promoted a concept of a cultural enclave embedded within outward-facing externally-focused organisations within developing countries, such as these IT companies, and has demonstrated the capacity for development of unique cultural behaviour therein. Some insight has also been given into how these behaviours develop in practice. The implications for management are two-fold: (a) learning how to recognise assimilation and accommodating behaviour at the individual level and the likely effect these adopted behaviours may have on work ethic and morale and (b) learning how organisational culture may be influenced by contending value systems and how to make this a benefit rather than an encumbrance. Understanding the nature of cultural enclaves and how they may cultivate these behaviours would be advantageous to such an objective.

The study was limited in that only a single focused case study was undertaken under severe time limitations, however, there is scope for undertaking a longitudinal study on the basis of current results to further examine the nature of changing norms and behaviours in IT cultural enclaves

and their interaction with work practices. The findings cannot be generalised, however, the concepts can be developed further and explored in similar research settings.

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