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Preface

This book is about how Indians think, feel and behave and why they do so differently than many other nationalities. Unlike other books, this one neither seamlessly adulates nor outrightly denigrates India or Indians. It neither takes a journalistic approach feasting the reader on "interesting" surface behaviour and sensational events nor does it get the reader lost in the intricacies of ancient philosophical abyss. Rather, it places Indians in the contemporary societal frame and profiles the major facets of their thought and behaviour, then goes back to trace their roots into the ancient past with a purpose to see how the past predisposes and the present guides Indians in their everyday life. Indians are deeply anchored in their ancient thoughts and habits that are still resilient and helpful to understand, cope with and excel in the globalizing world. The most salient feature of the primordial mindset is a pluralistic worldview that allows adding new ideas and influences to the old ones. Indians neither get rid of the old nor reject the new. Thus, they accumulate paradoxical beliefs, values, norms and practices. They smoothly navigate back and forth between them, often inviting the comment that Indians are elusive, hypocritical and unreliable. But in reality, they are highly sensitive and responsive to contextual factors in organizing their thoughts and behaviour in order to serve their individual and collective interests and goals. They have radar-like sensitivity to threats and opportunities and the agility to shuffle paradoxes and keep reorganizing their mindset to get the best in a particular situation. In adverse situations, they lay low and wait hoping that the bad will soon pass, or adopt defensive, selfish, quick fix and desperate measures to survive. As new opportunities open up, they get instantly energized and hugely entrepreneurial, and move quickly to cash them through fair or foul means depending on the rules of the game or the crevices in the opportunity structure. By the same token, they coil back and run for cover at the slightest ominous signs. They are, however, incorrigible optimists, and spring up as soon as the weather clears. It explains how the "India Story" builds up quickly, seems like over, and is kicked start again. The book presents a process analysis of the underlying dynamics of this story.

The book starts with a conceptual framework showing how the pluralistic worldview has encompassed and enveloped a variety of ideas and influences from divergent sources, which were superimposed on the foundation of the primordial mindset. As a result, Indians are both collectivists and individualists, hierarchically

oriented while recognizing merit and quality, or resisting dominance, religious as well as secular and sexually indulgent, spiritual as well as materialists, excessively dependent but remarkably entrepreneurial, nonviolent by professed values but violent in behaviour, and comfortable in taking analytical, synthetic as well as intuitive approaches to reality. Such a coexistence of opposites often causes inaction, perfunctory action, feuds and infightings, but also equips them to be creative and *jugaru* (improvisers) through continuously aligning their thought and behaviour to the demands of a milieu. The milieu has an inner layer consisting of *desha* (place), *kaala* (time) and *paatra* (person), which are embedded in the larger societal contexts consisting of caste, poverty, corruption, fragmenting politics and conflicts and violence. A window of opportunities has been opened in the milieu by liberalizing the economy that led to global influences from food and fashion to lifestyle and worldview. But then Indians are always conscious of their cultural heritage. Thus, Indians live in the existential reality of their socio-economic and political conditions, aspire to achieve and excel globally by imbibing modern values, beliefs and lifestyle, and yet yearn for realizing their cultural ideals centred on spirituality and personal growth. The Indian mindset oscillates in this complex dynamic two tired multi-factors space.

The various intellectual traditions have sliced this complex space differently highlighting the divides and the overlaps between colonial, nationalist, subaltern, elitist, Brahmanic, dalit, orientalist, global, cultural, institutional, and other narratives. The book bypasses their breaches and ignores their intricacies in order to explore Indians' culturally tempered unifying cognitive algebra in the service of a context bound inclusive mindset that is much more adaptable and agile than the mindset of many other nationalities. In order to support this conceptualization, evidence from the national and international research is added to present the state-of-the-science on the concepts and issues at hand. However, there is no hesitation to indulge in anecdotal evidence, cases and speculative ideas based on personal experiences in order to complete the picture. The book has been written in a jargon-free language. Scientific studies have been summarized to make sense and fit with lived experiences. I hope the book will interest national and international academics, Indian policy makers, change agents, businessmen and all those who are interested in understanding and dealing with Indians. I am highly thankful to Ms. Shinjini Chatterjee and Ms. Nupoor Singh of Springer to help and encourage me to revise the manuscript and to Ms. P. Kavitha of the Scientific Publishing Services to prepare it for publication. My wife, Gita, has been a constant source of strength and persistence. Without her, I would not have been able to complete this work. The members of ASSERT have directly and indirectly contributed many ideas contained in the book. I am thankful to them.

Jai B.P. Sinha

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Abbreviations

ADR	Association for Democratic Reforms
BCE	Before Common (Christian) Era
C&I	Mix of collectivist and individualist intention and behaviour
CBI	Central Bureau of Investigation
CC	Collectivist behaviour with collectivist intention
CE	Common (Christian) Era
CI	Collectivist behaviour with individualist intention
EPI	Environmental performance index
FDI	Foreign direct investment
GAIL	Gas Authority of India Limited
GDP	Gross domestic product
GHI	Global hunger index
HDI	Human development index
IAS	Indian Administrative Services
IC	Individualist behaviour with collectivist purpose
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IHDI	Human development index adjusted for inequality
II	Individualist behaviour with individualist intention
IIM	Indian Institutes of Management
IITs	Indian Institutes of Technology
IT	Information Technology
ITES	Information Technology enabled Services
MBBS	Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery
MD	Managing Director
MD	(Medical) Doctor of Medicine
MLA	Member of the (State) Legislative Assembly
MP	Member of the (National) Parliament
MPI	Multiple poverty index
NALCO	National Aluminium Limited Company
NTPC	National Thermal Power Corporation
ONGC	Oil and Natural Gas Commission
Ph.D.	Doctorate of Philosophy
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity

R&D	Research and Development
RTI	Right to Information Act
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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About the Author

Jai B.P. Sinha is Professor of Psychology and Management at the ASSERT Institute of Management Studies, Patna, India. Prof. Sinha completed his post-graduation in India and received his Ph.D. from Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA. He has been a visiting professor at Hunter College of City University of New York, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem (USA), McGill University, Montreal (Canada) and Copenhagen Business School (Denmark). He has been a National Fellow of the Indian Council of Social Science Research; a National Lecturer of the University Grants Commission, Government of India; and a Senior Fulbright Fellow. He was a member of the Executives of the International Association of Applied Psychology and International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology and a Vice President of the World Association for Dynamic Psychiatry. He is an Honorary Fellow of the World Association for Dynamic Psychiatry and of the National Academy of Psychology. Prof. Sinha's research focuses on the interface of Indian culture and Western forms of work organizations ranging from small and medium-size enterprises to leading national and foreign multinationals in India. He has published over 150 research articles in national and international journals and has written or co-authored a dozen of books. He has delivered invited addresses and given seminar lectures in most of the countries of North America, Western Europe, former Yugoslavia, the Far East and South-East Asia.

Chapter 1
Conceptual Framework

1.1 The Mindset and the Milieu

The Indian mindset refers to shared images that Indians have of themselves, which orient them to make sense of and react to their immediate milieu consisting of other persons, objects, ideas and events. The shared images could range from highly positive (e.g. being optimistic, confident, creative and superior) to largely negative (e.g. being pessimistic, self-abnegating, inferior and frustrated) or various shades in between the two. Positive images lead Indians to approach the milieu proactively, engaging it fruitfully, while negative ones turn people defensive, withdrawn, cynical, aggressive and so on. The images are composed of assumptions, beliefs, values, norms and practices that people acquire in the process of interacting with the milieu. Beliefs are the understanding of how things happen (e.g. God created this world) or are related to each other (e.g. spirituality brings peace of mind). Beliefs that are in the subconscious are assumptions that are taken for granted and are not proved or disproved (e.g. God exists). Values are the importance attached to or preference for persons (e.g. father), objects (e.g. money), ideas (spirituality) or events (e.g. festivals). Norms are standards to judge what is appropriate (e.g. politeness to seniors) or what most people do in a particular situation (stop at a red light traffic signal, respect one's father). They are overlapping and interrelated, constituting a mindset.

A milieu is the representation of a culture as perceived by its people. Kluckhohn (1951) defined culture as "… patterned ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting … the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values" (quoted by Hofstede 1980, p. 25). Thus, culture in this view is the collective mindset. In the present work, however, culture is distinguished from the mindset by conceptualizing culture as the human-made part of the environment (Herskovits 1955). Whatever human beings create and modify are parts of a culture. Culture is a product of its ecology and the history of how people have been adapting to the ecology (Triandis 1994). Culture encompasses physical artefacts, social institutions, religion, language, art, literature, philosophy, myths and mythology, rituals,

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customs, traditions and many more things. Together they configure into unique ways in which people of a geographical area live and pass that style of living onto the next generation. The style of living reflects their beliefs, values and norms. Thus, there exists a dynamic, reciprocal relationship between a culture and the mindset of the people living in that culture. People construe their culture into a milieu by interpreting environmental features through their mindset, and behave accordingly. Culture provides the feed to help shape people's mindset. Both—culture and mindset—have a history. Indian culture has a long, documented history of over 4,000 years (Thapar 1972). As a result, the Indian mindset has been in the making since ancient times.

1.2 Continuity Amidst Continuous Change in Culture and Mindset

Both the history of a culture and its people's mindset maintain continuity while changing continuously. Continuity lies partly in the relatively lasting core features of the culture and partly in the inner layers of people's mindset that orients them to interpret the milieu and act to it in familiar ways. Continuity provides a basis for identity—recognizable characteristics that essentially remain the same, similar or consistent over time. People prefer continuity because they can recognize the milieu easily on the basis of their past experiences and fashion their reactions to it with less uncertainty and risk of going wrong. Continuity creates a comfort zone to carry on everyday transactions in habitual ways without expending much energy or wasting time or other resources.

However, cultures are also open to pressures to change either because of their inner contradictions, external forces impinging upon them or most often the joint impact of both. Cultures are engaged in active and continuous interactions with the surrounding physical environment, exposed to major contemporary events, vulnerable to emerging threats, receptive to unfolding opportunities and open to unanticipated internal compulsions. As the environment is attended to, the events are acted upon, threats are coped with, opportunities are availed of and internal contradictions are reconciled, people are compelled to doubt their assumptions and beliefs, set or add new norms or modify existing ones, reinterpret or replace their old values, and think and behave differently. In other words, the mindset keeps getting modified and restructured by rearranging the existing components as well as incorporating new ones in order to enable people to adapt, survive and prosper in a changing milieu. If changes in the milieu are enabling, people's mindsets ride on a positive trajectory by initiating progressive engagements. On the contrary, debilitating milieus dampen people's spirit and put their mindsets on a downslide. Thus, people's mindsets change as a function of their continuous interactions with the surrounding cultural milieu.

Over and above this universal nature of milieu–mindset relationship, there is an additional source of continuity and change in the Indian culture and mindset. The continuity is rooted in the belief that the ancient wisdom enshrined in the Vedas and Upanishads is valid for all time. The belief is that though the changes that are experienced in everyday life are realities, they are phenomenal (*maaya*). The essence beneath such realities does not change. It is the Ultimate Reality that permeates and appears in the changing manifestations.

In other words, the changing milieu is indeed an apparent reality that is experienced and has to be lived in, but with the realization that it is essentially the varied expressions of the unchanging core reality. That is why the oldest of the Indian scriptures, the *Rig Veda* (1,500 BCE), pronounced that wise men construe one and the same truth in different ways (*Rig Veda*, 1.164.46). The Upanishads repeated this belief that there are many paths to the truth, or as Lord Krishna preached in the *Bhagavad Gita*, "All paths lead to me".

Once this seeming contradiction between the core of an unchanging ultimate reality and its changing and varied manifestations is reconciled, it is not illogical to hold a pluralistic worldview in tandem with the validity of ancient wisdom soliciting new ideas and influences. The *Rig Veda* itself proclaimed: "Let noble thoughts come to us from all directions" (1.89.9). Historical evidence also suggested that Indians indeed recognized, received and accepted new ideas and influences arising out of internal sources such as political upheavals, social transformation and economic prosperity as well as external ones emanating from migrations, invasions and alien rules. The Indian subcontinent has subsumed most of them into indigenous cultural traditions.

As a result, the cultural traditions, though they became diverse, were retained over time. Thapar (2002) pointed out that "there are aspects of cultural traditions in India that can be traced to roots as far back as a few thousand years" (p. xxv). Basham (2007) further specified that the continuity in Indian traditions is unparalleled in the world, "In respect of the length of continuous tradition, China comes second to India, and Greece makes a poor third" (p. 3).

> Such remarkable continuity of tradition, as exemplified by these works [paintings and sketches] of nomadic tribesmen and cattle herders, is to be found in most of the rural culture of the sub-continent—endorsing the claim that Indians live in more centuries at the same time than most other peoples (Lannoy 1971/2008, p. 5).

Naturally, the mindset embodied from ancient time a variety of ideas and influences that were accommodated within the overarching indigenous pluralistic worldview. Lannoy further commented that "… the Indian way of borrowing while conserving, of juxtaposing the new and the old in hierarchical relations, would seem to originate in this great racial interaction nearly four thousand years ago" (p. 13).

There were four major psychic mechanisms that tended to maintain continuity from the ancient Indian thought while accommodating new ideas and influences under the impact of changing cultural milieu.

1.2.1 Adding New Ideas and Influences to the Old

Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, described India as "… an ancient palimpsest on which layer upon layer of thought and reverie had been inscribed, and yet no succeeding layer had completely hidden or erased what had been written previously" (Nehru 1946/2001, p. 59). Nehru further explained that there was invariably "a visible attempt to understand and adapt the new and harmonize it with the old, or at least with parts of the old, which were considered worth preserving" (p. 54). The new did not replace the old thoughts, but were allowed to coexist: Indians tend to borrow new ideas and at the same time conserve the outworn or outmoded ones (Lannoy 1971/2008, p. xvi).

The new thoughts and actions were considered to be essential for addressing to the contemporary threats and opportunities, but were interpreted and taken to be an elaboration of the already existing ways that were enshrined in the ancient wisdom. Thus, the new was not a substitute but a recreation of the old. Radhakrishnan and Moore (1954) observed:

> Indian philosophers have always been conscious of tradition … , the great system builders of later periods claimed to be merely commentators, explaining the traditional wisdom of the past. While the specific doctrines of the past may be changed by interpretation, the general spirit and frequently the basic concepts are retained from age to age (p. xxiv).

There were a series of annotations, commentaries on important texts and scriptures, and commentaries on commentaries culminating an intricate web of argumentations, disputations and logical sophistications. The word *shaastraartha* (English equivalent of dialogue and debate) literally means "explicating the meanings of a doctrine". One of the major schools of ancient thought, Nyaaya, provided a framework for argumentation and the rules for debate. There were public discussions and debates among the scholars of various religious affiliations for sorting out the profound issues of life and death and ways of escaping sufferings and attain happiness and immortality.

Such exercises in interpretations and elaborations of existing doctrines often added radically new, inconsistent and contradictory thoughts and ideas that diluted the original spirit and distorted the basic concepts of a particular text or scripture. Because there was a trend not to mention one's name or the time of contributions (Nakamura 1964), the authors simply added to the existing texts and in some instances even rearranged parts of them. As a result, the original and the interpolations became inseparable causing an amalgam of inconsistent and even contradictory thoughts in the same texts. Only recently, there have been attempts to disentangle some of them.

For example, of the various ancient texts, four among the most popular ones were reported to be full of interpolations. Sinha (1992) quoted Dasgupta (1932) and Hauser (1958) to report that while Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* had originally only 83 verses, 112 verses (over 57 %) were interpolated (pp. 56–57) subsequently. As a result, what was formulated as yoga science was rendered as a religious treatise and the concept of karma was interpreted as luck, fate and destiny. Sinha further

quoted MacDonell (1965): "Indeed the parts of [Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*] dealing with the person of God are not only unconnected with the other parts of the treatise, but even contradict the foundations of the system" (Sinha 1992, p. 57).

One of the two most popular epics, the *Mahabharata,* was reported to be composed in stages: from 8,800 verses of Jaya, through 24,000 verses of the Bharata, to the present day of 100,000 verses over a considerable period of time (Gupta and Ramchandran 1976). As a result, "The complexities and inconsistencies of the epic [the *Mahabharata*] arise from the fact that underlying its plot is the hidden drama of a social transformation from the heroic ideals of the tribe to a more religious and Brahman-dominated caste society" (Lannoy 1971/2008, p. 298).

Sinha (1987) also reviewed the works of a number of scholars (including Khair 1969) who found that the original *Bhagavad Gita* had only certain portions of the first six chapters of the present one. The second interpolator added six more chapters. The third one recast the whole poem, added six entirely new chapters, inserted them in the body of the poem and shifted the chapters (p. 125). Consequently, the *Bhagavad Gita* is found to be "full of contradictions" (Shankar 2009, p. 14). It affirms, for example, that everything in the world is predestined, yet recommends doing one's duty, *karma-yoga,* that is advocated as superior to all other methods of self-realization. However, the path of *jnaana* (or knowledge) is later posited to be superior; then *dhyaana (*or meditation) is said to be superior to *jnaana,* and finally a total and unconditional surrender to the God Krishna is said to waive all other requirements for self-realization.

The *Manusmriti* is one of the most quoted and controversial among the ancient Indian texts. It prescribed a number of human values such as patience, forgiveness, self-control, honesty, sanctity, control of senses, reason, knowledge, truthfulness, absence of anger, non-violence and so on. Simultaneously, it also legitimized a highly unequal and unjust social code of conduct. It was overtly positive towards Brahmins in terms of concessions made in fines and punishments while being extremely harsh for Sudras and women. However, only 1,214 out of the total of 2,685 verses (about 45 %) were found to be authentic, leaving the other 1,471 (about 55 %) verses as subsequent interpolations (Kumar 2007). Kumar further detected that while certain verses (III—55, 56, 57, 59, 62) glorified the position of women, others (IX—3, 17) denied them any right of freedom and equitable social position. Certain verses discouraged (IX—18) but others (II—240) allowed women to read Vedic scriptures. Similar contradictory positions were taken regarding child marriage (IX—90 and 94).

Such interpolations reflect ancient Indians' willingness to change their thought and action under compulsion to cope with the changing socio-economic and political conditions without giving up their moorings in the unchanging ancient beliefs and practices. Interpolations indeed created inconsistent and contradictory sets of ideas that enhanced the complexity of their mindset. They allowed Indians the possibility to selectively evoke them not only to win a debate but also to act so as to suit their purpose while rationalizing and legitimizing their behaviour.

1.2.2 Tolerance of Differences

New and old ideas cannot coexist unless there is a reasonable degree of tolerance of differences in the people's mindset. The evidence of this tolerance lies in how diverse ideas from different cultural sources were accepted into indigenous traditions. For example, many religious practices, beliefs and rituals from the Indus valley civilization were added to the Vedic religion (Thapar 1972, p. 132), which was later on labelled as Hinduism. Buddhism that grew up as a reformist religion incorporated many ideas from the Vedic religion. Lord Buddha, according to many orthodox Indians, is believed to be an incarnation of Vishnu. *Mazars* were and still are considered to be as sacred as temples and monasteries. Sufi fakirs are as respected as Hindu saints.

Emperor Ashoka, who converted to Buddhism, too advocated *dhamma* (religion) as the tolerance for other persons and their views:

> [O]n each occasion one should honour another man's sect, for by doing so one increases the influence of one's own sect and benefit that of the other man, while by doing otherwise, one diminishes the influence of one's own sect and harm the other man's … (Rock Edict xii, translated by Thapar 1961, p. 255).

It was this idealistic essence of the ancient Indian religious perspective that led Vivekananda to pronounce the following:

> I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. *We believe not only in universal toleration, but accept all religions as true* (Address to the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago on September 11, 1893), [Italics added].

What Vivekananda claimed does not seem to be totally true in present-day India. There are recurring instances of religious intolerance. However, the multireligious secularity, no matter how shaky, still holds the ground (see Chap. 5). It is difficult to ascertain how genuine is the tolerance of differences in common Indians' everyday life. Probably, daily hassles and compulsions turn tolerance into compromises for convenience. Thus, Indians indeed tolerate or compromise with persons who hold contradictory beliefs, preferences and practices at various places ranging from family and neighbourhood to coalition politics.

1.2.3 Metonymic Thinking

Metonymic thinking is another way to keep the ancient alive in the present. Metonymic thinking means referring to divine and mythological characters and events of ancient constructions for interpreting and seeking guidance in day-to-day social transactions. Unlike people in the West, Indians are generally named after Gods, Goddesses, saints, and religious objects and symbols, probably because of a wishful thinking that it would help them inherit part of the divine and religious attributes. They are the referents of how Hindus should behave. So, if someone

behaves in a way that is unworthy of his ego ideal, he or she is scolded, "Why [for example] you being Rama (Vishnu's incarnation) are behaving like Ravana (the demon king vanquished by Rama)". A person who is vicious is called Kansh *Maama* (maternal uncle), a person who is over self-sacrificing is called Daddhichi or King Shivi, and so on. There is a parable from the *Bhagavatam* (Skanda 6, Chap. 1) about a man, Ajamila, who kept calling his son Naraayana at the time of his death, and thereby was taken by the God Vishnu (who is also called Naraayana) to heaven.

Similarly, the events of the present are explained in terms of those of the past. The fight between the good and evil today is as if the *Mahabharata* is being enacted again. The *Lakshman*[1] *rekha* (line) means the limit, the red line, which is not to be crossed, lest something ominous happen. Roland (1988) observed:

> [Indian adults] have deeply incorporated into their preconscious powerful emotional-cognitive images of the vitally alive, richly complex mythology told by various mothering figure during their childhood. The plethora of mythic models and relationships are not only suitable for ego-ideal identifications, but also give norms for correct reciprocal behaviour in the complex hierarchical relationships, where the *dharma* of each is elaborated in the myth (p. 253).

Roland also reported that on certain occasions Indians assume mythic characters for a while, behaving accordingly, and then switching back to their social role. An old lady in a family, for example, may enter into the mode of one of the mother Goddesses in a trance like state, bless or rebuke or give directions to the family members for their wellbeing, and then return to the social role being totally oblivious of what she did or said in her divine role. Similarly, household objects are attributed sacred significance during a religious ceremony and thereafter used for regular household purposes.

Metonymic thinking not only keeps the ancient mythological characters alive, but also provides a wide range of characters to choose from in order to justify what a person thinks or feels, and how he or she behaves. Importantly, even the most pious characters are found to possess demonic strands letting them to behave selfishly. Similarly, the chronic villains manifest at times flashes of idealistic and altruistic inclinations. They go out of the way and do something laudable. Thus, mythology supports the pluralistic worldview in providing a rich source to rationalize one's selfish behaviour or to expect idealistic stance from others.

1.2.4 Oral Tradition

The oral tradition sustains both the pluralistic worldview as well as complex mythology. It is rooted in the Vedic period and still casts its shadow on how Indians organize their routines now. The first of the Vedas, the *Rig Veda*, had

[1] Younger brother of Rama in the *Ramayana*.

10,589 verses that were precisely preserved with the help of elaborate techniques of recitation for over 1,000 years before they could be scripted. The Vedas were transmitted from generation to generation with inordinate fidelity. For example, there were up to 11 forms of recitation of the same text. The texts were subsequently "proof-read" by comparing the different recited versions. Forms of recitation included the "mesh recitation" in which every two adjacent words in the text were first recited in their original order, then repeated in the reverse order and finally repeated again in the original order. There are painstaking instructions in the *Sama Veda* about how particular hymns must be sung, with a great deal of emphasis on the sounds of the words in mantras and the effect the sounds have on the environment and on the person reciting them.

The extraordinary concern for precise recitation flowed from the belief that the exact pronunciation of prayers could compel Gods and Goddesses to appear, bless and grant boons to the worshipper. Lannoy (1971/2008) reported that

> It [Indian culture] is so totally an oral culture that the *Vedic Aryans* believed that a deity could be compelled by utterances of the correct verbal formula to do exactly what the worshipper desired. … *[T]he magical power of word at no stage in the cultural evolution of India has been wholly abandoned* (p. 271, italics added).

There was a belief that the divine and the cosmos are all represented in the sound of *Aum* (ॐ). *Aum* (ॐ), the correct pronunciation of which manifests the cosmic vibration that is the source of all creation. The *Katha Upanishad* (1.2.15) proclaimed that "The goal, which all Vedas declare, which all austerities aim at, and which humans desire when they live a life of continence [chaste, self-control], I will tell you briefly, it is *Aum*" (ॐ).

There are still many faith healers who claim to cure sick persons by reciting mantras (Kakar 1982). The elaborate *mrityunjaya* chant by priests, for example, is promised to assure not only long life but also the wellbeing of a person. Many Indians regularly pray, recite Vedic mantras (e.g. *gaayatri),* or other mantras either for getting blessings of Gods and Goddesses or realizing the peace of mind or achieving success in life. From ancient times, saints and philosophers engaged each other over *shaastraartha* (dialogue and debate) for days exploring highly abstract philosophical issues pertaining to life. This initiated a strong verbal tradition that seems to have continued to the present time, turning Indians into an "argumentative" people (Sen 2006). Sen recorded substantive evidence to prove the argumentative nature of Indians. Furthermore, he believes that this argumentative orientation plays a significant role in promoting democracy, facilitating secularity and reducing inequality. Sen's belief seems to be somewhat misplaced. Indians more often than not indulge in argumentation, verbose and hair-splitting discussion in order to avoid confronting serious, real-life issues. In other words, argumentation often functions as a substitute for action or justification for inaction, or worse, drifts into unnecessary disputation.

Box 1.1. Indians' Inaction
A Swiss manager of a multinational company observed that "a sure way to inaction is to put two talented Indians on a global task force. They will never agree and brilliantly argue the proposal to death" (Das 2007, p. 149).

Many Indians have a habit of taking a real-life problem to an abstract, imaginative level and solving it through an elaborate web of arguments and formulations, and thus feel relieved as if the problem has been really solved (see Box 1.1). The plans for action are always well elaborated, but their implementations are poor. Chie (1964) compared Indians symbolically with the Japanese in terms of "logic and smile". She noted:

> The Indian, who loves talking in logic, takes up an opposing stand without hesitation and tries to impose oneself upon the other, regardless of the situation or the statuses of the two parties. … Most Japanese become irritated when they talk with Indians, because they [the Japanese] are not understood by them [Indians], and are not used to following Indian logic. In most cases, they [the Japanese] are defeated … and end up frustrated, while Indians remain perfectly unruffled (p. 435).

In sum, the four psychic mechanisms reinforce each other in sustaining the belief that the diversity in the Indian mindset has an underlying principle of unity that is basic, lasting and ancient in origin. Unity amidst diversity signifies that there are many forms in which a reality appears. Hence, new ones have to be added to, rather than replace, the old ones. Indian mythology supports the metonymic thinking by enacting the ancient into the present in order to understand and rationalize one's thoughts and behaviour. Oral tradition helps transmit these thoughts from elites to the common folks and from generation to generation. There are of course interpolations, modifications and distortions. But they are all culturally acquired normal modes of functioning of the Indian mindset.

1.3 Layers of the Indian Mindset

Belief in the validity of the ancient wisdom while conceding the need for incorporating new ideas and influences from the changing cultural milieu fashioned the main frame of the Indian mindset. The primordial mindset, hence, served as the foundation on which subsequent ideas and influences emanating from Islamic invasions and rule, colonial experiences, Western exposure and recent globalization were juxtaposed to result in a multilayered mindset. None of the layers or its constituents was totally destroyed. They were allowed to coexist, although their relative salience increased or decreased with socio-economic, political and cultural events and forces. The leading images and the worldview at each layer of the

mindset, its core components, along with its concomitant features and the causal events and forces will be identified separately in this chapter, and then put together in the composite multilayered mindset that Indians now have.

1.3.1 Primordial Mindset

The leading image of the primordial mindset radiated with a sense of cultural superiority of the Indian worldview with the confidence that it is veritable enough to incorporate new ideas and influences. The worldview consisted predominantly of the beliefs that everyone and everything—inanimate and animates—are interrelated (cosmic collectivism) and are hierarchically organized being superior to some and inferior to others (hierarchical order), every action has a corresponding effect spread over the cycle of births (the doctrine of karma), and social harmony is maintained when people do their duties and meet their obligations to each other (dharma). There are four major goals of life. People first must acquire wealth and power (*artha*) and indulge in the sensuous world, including sexual pleasures (*kaama*), to live life fully. They must also discharge their duties and meet social obligations (dharma). However, they should eventually gain spirituality to attain self-realization and freedom from worldly sufferings (*moksha*). Thus, it makes sense to live fully in the existential reality, but to pursue the ideal of eternal bliss "Pragmatism, realism, and idealism exist side by side [in the Indian mindset] … sometimes simultaneously …" (Cohen 2001, p. 53).

This ancient worldview, however, was hardly homogeneous and static. There were elaborations, modifications and rejection of the dominant beliefs and values as well as injection of the new ones. For example, despite the belief in cosmic collectivism, people have to realize spirituality through individual efforts. Hierarchical social order was taken as the reality, but the individual's merits and qualities were to be duly recognized. Buddhism and Jainism were known for rejecting not only caste hierarchy and Brahmanical superiority, but also for defying the temporal authority (Sen 2006, pp. 15, 189). Religiosity was considered to be central to the dominant worldview, but secularism too was well accepted. The *lokaayata* tradition of the *Caarvaaka*s rejected the belief in rebirth, ridiculed the value of spirituality and advocated extreme materialism. Vatsyayana's *Kamasutra* deals not only with a whole range of sexuality, but also with adultery (Kakar. and Kakar 2009, p. 72). Kautilya in his *Arthashastra* "was totally unscrupulous …" (Nehru 1946/2001, p. 124). He prescribed to use deception, divide and rules, spies and even *vish-kanyaa* (poisons girls) to serve the purpose. The *Mahabharata* has rich accounts of divine qualities and animal impulses of human beings, their laudable self-sacrifices and naked greed, open deceptions and subtle manipulations and so on. The *Shiva Purana* has vivid descriptions of the erotic conduct of the ascetic Lord Shiva (O'Flaherty 1971). There was a long tradition of logical and analytical thinking in the Upanishads and synthesizing of diverse views that were expected to prepare the ground for a deeper, intuitive understanding of reality that was recommended in

the *Rig Veda*. There are similar instances of deviations from the dominant values, beliefs, norms, and practices that are documented in the following chapters.

The mindset was bubbling with energy to adventure and explore far lands, formulate sophisticated philosophies of life as contained in 14 major and minor schools of thought,[2] create innovative forms of art, music and dances, assimilate immigrants and invaders into the overarching Indian worldview and above all develop science and technology that were far ahead of their time and that laid the foundation for their subsequent growth elsewhere in the world. A glorified account of the Indian cultural sophistication and magnanimity (see Box 1.2) is reinforced by a historical view (see Box 1.3).

Box 1.2. The Glorious Past

To know my country, one has to travel to that age, when she realized her soul and thus transcended her physical boundaries, when she revealed her being in a radiant magnanimity which illumined the Eastern horizon making her recognized as their own by those in alien shores who were awakened into a surprise of life

(Rabindranath Tagore quoted by Nehru 1946/2001, p. 200).

Box 1.3. The Glorious Past Revisited

For nearly fifteen hundred years, and down to a period when the Hindus had lost their independence in their own home, Hindu kings were ruling over Indo-China and the numerous islands of the Indian Archipelago, from Sumatra to New Guinea. Indian religion, Indian culture, Indian laws and Indian government moulded the lives of the primitive races all over this wide region, and they imbibed a more elevated moral spirit and a higher intellectual taste through the religion, art and literature of India. In short, the people were lifted to a higher plane of civilization

(Majumdar et al. 1960, pp. 222–223).

All these achievements were indeed spearheaded by individuals and thought leaders, but only because they were energized by the challenges and opportunities in the social milieu. Nehru (1946/2001) rightly observed,

> We must assume then that these momentous inventions were not just due to the momentary illumination of an erratic genius, much in advance of his time, but they were essentially the great product of the social milieu and that they answered—some insistent demand of the times. Genius of a high order was certainly necessary to find this out and fulfil the demand, but if the demand had not been there, the urge to find some way out would have been absent, and even if the invention had been made, it would have been forgotten or put aside till circumstances more propitious for its use arose (pp. 218–219).

[2] In the compendium, *Sarvadarshana-sangraha*, by Maódhavacharya in the fourteenth century.

The enabling milieu can be traced back to the Vedic age, where the rites and rituals, for example, initiated the growth of mathematics and anatomy. Elaborate calculations were necessary to establish the positions and configurations of the various objects on a *bedi* (sacrificial arena) for a religious *hom* (offering to fire) during *yajna* (elaborate and collective worship) and animal sacrifices. This resulted in an interest in anatomy (Thapar 1972, p. 45). The period from about 700 BCE to 700 CE saw the emergence of monarchies and republics that "replaced traditional-tribal patterns of governance with a system based on rules and regulations" (Cohen 2001, p. 12) that in turn provided much-needed stability in the life of people. Craft villages and urban guilds developed into towns from where trade and commerce spread to distant lands from the Mediterranean to South-East Asia. Voyage over high seas required the knowledge of astronomy. The wealth accumulated from trade and commerce resulted in the emergence of an affluent, non-Brahmin community that did not subscribe to the Brahmanical worldview. They supported Buddhism and Jainism. Royal patronage was lavishly available to both Brahmins and Buddhists who now had the time and means to engage in prolonged and intense *shaastraartha* (dialogue and debate) that led to the development of six orthodox schools and three heterodox schools of Indian philosophy,[3] besides other new areas of knowledge. They were the custodians of theoretical knowledge while the guilds imparted sophisticated technological knowledge and skills. Mathematics, being a bridge between the two, developed fast during the latter half of this period (Thapar 1972), leading to the concepts of zero, decimal system, position and values of numerals, and letters in algebra for unknown values and numerical order, etc.

The society was transformed too. Political stability and economic prosperity indeed played a major role. But this worldview facilitated the emergence of self-sufficient villages with multiple communities with a caste-based hierarchical structure. Each caste specialized in a particular trade or craft, had its own dharma (code of conduct) and had an elected leader who consulted the entire group before making major decisions. Immigrants, newcomers or dissidents were not enslaved, but were accommodated within the community by being assigned a sub-caste status. They were free, like other castes, to function autonomously without conflicting with other castes. Thus, village and caste became the basic social collectives, the former due to physical proximity and the latter for forming professional identity.

It was not, however, an egalitarian society. The castes were indeed hierarchically arranged, higher castes enjoying disproportionately greater privileges at the cost of the lower castes. The *Manusmriti* prescribed abysmally harsh punishments to Sudras for norm violations for which there was hardly any punishment to Brahmins or Kshatriyas. The *Garuda Purana* was conspicuous in showing how greedy priests exploited the grief of a mourning family by fabricating stories about how the family's *daana* (donation in cash and kind) to Brahmin priests would be

[3] Ancient Indian schools of philosophy are mainly identified as *aastika* (orthodox) or *naastika* (heterodox) depending on whether they regard the Vedas as the major source of knowledge. The orthodox schools are Nyaaya, Vaisesika, Saankhya, Yoga, Purva Mimaamsa and Vedanta. The heterodox schools are Jain, Buddhist and Caarvaaka.

transferred to the deceased in heaven, while failing to give a donation would land the deceased in hell. There existed gender discrimination too. The *Padma Purana* instructed how a wife should listen, obey and worship her husband, irrespective of howsoever unworthy and unfaithful he might be (Dubois 1821/1924).

Box 1.4. The *Sanatana* Inequality
Traditional Indian society … was based on the premise of inequality, and hierarchical values that permeated every spheres of collective life. The stress on hierarchy was particularly conspicuous in the legal order of the Hindu society. The Hindu *dharmashaastra*s are unparalleled among texts of their kind for the consistency with which they make the case for inequality. Discrimination, segregation and exclusion are carried to their outermost limits (Bèteille 1983, p. 18).

As time passed, caste and gender discriminations became intrinsic and perpetuating. Farmers and artisans created wealth, which was concentrated in Hindu temples and Buddhist monasteries, or was claimed by *saamant*s (feudal lords) and kings who lived affluently. Thus, farmers, the lower castes and women had lower status and remained relatively deprived, while Brahmins and Kshatriyas enjoyed spiritual and temporal power and affluence (see Box 1.4). The worldview was essentially Brahmanical, but people in villages, according to one view, despite inequality in the society "showed less disparity in the standard of living and, … were reasonably prosperous … . While the prosperous urban dwellers lived in comfort and ease with a variety of luxuries …" (Thapar 1972, p. 151).

In sum, in ancient Indian society, the common people, despite their relative deprivation, (a) formed their professional identity out of caste-based activities, (b) drew their sense of social unity from living in a self-sufficient, interdependent, multiple community, (c) enjoyed their cultural superiority in the deflected glory of the achievements of elites and thought leaders and (d) shared a somewhat common identity because, according to some, "… a strong and fairly successful attempt was made to create common national bond which would hold all these groups together—the sense of a common cultural tradition, common heroes and saints, and a common land to the four corners of which people went on pilgrimaging" (Nehru 1946/2001, p. 251).

1.3.2 Demoralized Mindset

This sense of superiority and confidence became eroded by the Islamic invasions and rules. There were invasions and immigrations earlier by the Greeks, the Scythians, the Kushans and the Huns, but those who settled down were gradually

assimilated into the traditional social fold and given caste nomenclatures. "Many of them became shaivites, and vaishnavas, and Buddhists. In some instances their first ruler had a foreign name. His son or grandson appeared with a Sanskrit name and was crowned according to the traditional rites meant for kshatriyas" (Nehru 1946/2001, p. 120). The indigenous, pluralistic worldview and the sense of superiority eventually prevailed upon them.

But Islamic invasions beginning from around the twelfth century were different in nature and consequences. The invaders were indeed attracted by the riches concentrated in temples and monasteries; they, however, were also driven by a zeal to spread Islam. Under attack, caste societies still believed in their cultural superiority, but lost vigour and vitality as well as their creative imagination. They adopted a number of regressive measures and superstitious beliefs as defensive devices. For example, *sati pratha* (wife burning on the pyre of husband), child marriage, female infanticide, *purdah* (veil) system and *devadaasi pratha* (girls dedicated to a temple), according to some, started during this period (Basham 2007, p. 65). Child marriage was prescribed in the *Manusmriti* as well as in the *Brahma Purana,* but it was now practised more widely. Further, many other rites and rituals and superstitions (e.g. against crossing a sea) were added in the hope of protecting cultural and religious identities. In these circumstances, Indians' creative imagination got a beating. A historian, Alberuni, who spent 10 years in India, was quoted as observing the following in *Tahqiq-i-Hind*:

> The Indians believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation like theirs, no king like theirs, no religion like theirs, no science like theirs … . They are by nature niggardly in communicating what they know, and they take the greatest possible care to withhold it from men of another caste from among their own people, still more of course from any foreigner. … They are in a state of utter confusion, devoid of any logical order and in the last instance always mixed up with silly notions of the crowd. I can only compare their mathematical and astrological knowledge to a mixture of pearls and sour dates, or of pearls and dung, or of costly crystals and common pebbles. Both kinds of things are equal in their eyes since they cannot raise themselves to the methods of strictly scientific deductions … . (Thapar 1972, p. 239).

They "were easily defeated, but were never fully subjugated. Their personal world, their culture and civilization, may have been mauled, but could not be destroyed" (Varma 2004, p. 34). Hindus, more so of lower castes, were converted, but "The fact that they (the converts) remained in minority indicated that the majority of Hindus were not so desperate to get converted" (Thapar 1972, p. 289). Many converts to Islam retained their endogamous and caste-based rites, rituals and practices. They were further influenced by the overwhelming majority of Hindus. The new converts were also somewhat disillusioned by the discrimination from the Muslim nobility of foreign extraction. Over time, through the twelfth to the sixteen centuries, Hindus and Indian Muslims were reconciled to accommodate each other's beliefs, values and preferences. Gradually, the threat perception somewhat decreased and social transactions were resumed as usual. Though religious practices remained distinctly different, particularly in temples and mosques (Aggarwal 1978; Joshi et al. 2003), the pattern of their living remained more

or less the same even after being converted. (Thapar 1972, p. 289). Gradually, there was rapprochement from both sides:

> Domestic ceremonies and rituals such as those connected with birth, marriage, and death became mingled. The converted Muslims were also heirs to long standing rituals practiced by the Hindus. New ceremonies which had come with Islam, and which were regarded as auspicious, crept into Hindu ritual (Thapar 1972, p. 300).

As day-to-day interactions increased, a new hybrid language—Urdu—developed by drawing on Persian and Arabic words mixed with local Hindi dialects and written in a modified Arabic script. Urdu played a crucial role not only in defining the Muslim identity of Indians but also a ground for sharing common thoughts, beliefs and practices (Moghni 1987). On the other hand, there was a long, ancient Indian tradition of actively encouraging all forms of liberal arts, including music, poetry, dance, dramatics, painting and sculpture. This Indian traditional "soporific sedativity" (Nandy 1983, p. 111) gradually started permeating into the Muslim art forms. Persian miniature paintings and Urdu poetry, for example, started absorbing Hindu mythological themes such as love drama and dances (*raasa lila)* of Radha and Krishna. Just like Urdu, Hindustani classical music developed as a complex and sonorous blend of Vedic notions of *raaga* and *taala* (notes and rhythm); *ghazal* singing became popular, and other musical instruments such as the sitar and santoor were invented. Although Muslim sculpture remained primarily Islamic in nature, there was much Hindu imagery (e.g. the lotus in the Taj Mahal) that found a place in it.

In the middle ages, religious revisionism in the form of the Bhakti (devotion) movement and Sufism also bridged the gap between Hindus and Muslims because of their striking common philosophy and practices. Similar to the Hindu belief that *aatma*s (individual souls) are separated from *Brahman* (the Supreme Being) and strive to get in union with Him, the Sufi belief was that "Verily we are for Allah, and verily unto Him we are returning" (*Surah* 2:156 reported by Rippin 1990, p. 119). Monism, which was a dominant school of Hindu thought, was the core of Sufism. The key Upanishadic phrase "*tat tvam asi*" (that thou art) was repeated by the Sufi saint, Mansur al-Hallaj when he said, "I saw my Lord with the eye of the heart". I asked, "Who art Thou?" He answered: "Thou" (quoted by Stoddart 1986, p. 83). The Vedic dictum that the Supreme is called by many names and the Upanishadic pronouncement that there are many paths to truth had a parallel when the Sufi saint, Jalal al-Din Rumi, said, "Though the many ways are various, the goal is one. Do you not see [that] there are many roads to the Kaba?" (Nasr 1972, p. 149). Not only the contents, but also Sufi practices were similar to those of Hindus, particularly of those in the Bhakti movement. Just like Hindu saints, they combined breathing exercises with meditation and contemplation to gain intuitive insights and intense spiritual experiences in order to induce altered states of consciousness (Miller 1986, p. 21). Sufi saints recited divine names like Hindus and their *qawwali* was quite similar to Hindu *kirtan* in its collective emotionality in praying to God. Hindus too started respecting Sufi saints like their own and, along with Muslims, started worshipping at *mazar*s (Sufi shrines).

However, the Muslim and Hindu nobilities tried to maintain their cultural differences while both became part of a new political and agrarian system where their opulence was based on exploiting those below them. They had an insatiable hunger for sensual pleasure and luxuries that they procured by giving costly bribes and appeasing their kings and overlords. They were invariably indulged in instant gratification and ostentations because they knew that whatever they possessed will be reverted to the royal treasury after or even before their death (Mayo 1927/1969, pp. 276–277). Unlike the earlier system where land was grated to priests, monks and religious institutions for providing social services, in the middle ages land was granted for providing military services and pleading impeccable loyalty to the overlord. Land grantees were entitled to collect taxes but were not the owners and hence were not interested in improving agriculture or taking care of farmers. They too granted land to officers under them. Thus, a chain of intermediaries was created, squeezing off whatever farmers and artisans produced beyond their subsistence.

In sum, despite the reconciliation of differences and convergence in lifestyles between common Hindus and Muslims, there was a sense of demoralization in the former and disillusion in the latter. Both common Hindus and Muslims were exploited and became increasingly impoverished. They became excessively dependent on religious practices and regressive rites and rituals. Above all, they were at the mercy of those Muslim and Hindu overlords who were indulging in power politics and corrupt practices, demanding personal loyalty and living lavishly by exploiting others without any guilt or shame. They were the role models for the rest of the society.

1.3.3 Colonized Mindset

The British denigrated the Indian mindset further by instilling an inferiority complex that still afflicts many Indians. At the time the British started dominating the Indian landscape (from the late eighteenth century), the farmers, although exploited, were productive and the artisans, although devoid of creative imagination, were skilful. They were generating wealth that amounted to the second highest GDP in world, only next to China (Robins 2006). "Indian methods of production and of industrial and commercial organization could stand in comparison with that vogue in any other part of the world" (Anstey 1929, quoted by Nehru 1946/2001, p. 284). And, "… there was almost nothing that England could export that the East wanted to buy" (Robins 2006, p. 7), except pay in gold and silver for Indian goods, particularly textiles. Hand-woven cotton had integrated agriculture with village-level industry, creating mutually supportive sources of income and hence an enormously viable economy. The British destroyed both crafts and agriculture turning farmers and artisans into a mass of landless labourers and created landed nobility that was interested in perpetuating the British *raj*. In the year 1600, Britain had only 1.80 % of the world's GDP while India had

22.54 %. By the year 1870, Britain increased its GDP by fivefold to 9.10 % while India lost almost half of it, getting reduced to 12.25 % (Maddison 2001).

There were a few individual British scholars (e.g., Adam Smith 1776/1994, p. 84) who were horrified by the way the British oppressed Indians. There were others who indulged in 'Orientalism' (Said 1978/1979) whereby ancient Sanskrit texts and scriptures were translated (for example, by the Royal Asiatic Society established by William Jones 1807/1993) to present an exotic image of Indians and the high civilization that they had inherited (see Sen 2006, pp. 151–153). However, orientalism was considered to be part of colonial narrative to present Indian society as 'textualized', static, and stagnant, and therefore in adire need of Western agency, rationality, and scientific knowledge (see Cohn 1988, 1996 and Chakravarty 2002, among others). There were still others who employed ethnographic surveys to show how Indian society was fragmented in castes and communities (see Dirks 2001) and how Indians were plagued by religious practices, rituals, and superstitions. Along this line, James Mill (1817/1958) wrote a history of India without knowing any Indian language or spending any time in India (Sen 2006), alleging that Indians were primitive with nothing to boast about. The British construed Indians as "new-caught sullen peoples, half-devil and half-child" (Kipling 1899, p. 371). The whole native literature of India and Arabia was worth a single shelf of a good European library. This cleared the ground to pass the English Education Act in 1835 justifying to replace the indigenous systems of education to "… to form a class who may be interpreters between us [British] and the millions [Indians] whom we [Indians] govern,—a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (Macaulay cited by Nilekani 2008, p. 85).

The "baboos" (Indian Civil Servants) indeed turned into "pliable" and "plastic" partly from "a servile wish to please the *shahib tongue*, and partly from a desire to obtain a government appointment" (Carter and Harlow 2003 cited by Nilekani 2008, p. 334). Sir Thomas Munro, Governor of Madras, wrote to Governor-General Lord Hastings in 1817:

> Foreign conquerors have treated the natives with violence, and often with great cruelty, but none treated them with so much scorn as we; none has stigmatized the whole people as unworthy of trust, as incapable of honesty, and as fit to be employed only where we cannot do without them. It seems to be not only ungenerous, but impolite, to debase the character of a people fallen under our dominion (Nehru 1946/2001, p. 323).

Disparaging observations were made by other foreign observers as well as many Indian scholars who had introjected the colonial perspective in the colonial period as well as in independent India (post-1947), characterizing Indians as authoritarian (Lewis 1962), and as narcissistic with weak super ego (Spratt 1966). That is, they were believed to be self-loving with a weak conscience that leads to "an inner sense of instability and insecurity" to the extent that "nothing and nobody can be relied upon, not even one's own self" (Carstairs 1971, p. 54), with a callousness towards others, especially those who were relatively less privileged and less powerful. Colonized Indians were believed to be lacking in self-control in

the face of strong emotions (Carstairs 1971, p. 46). They were accused of being fatalists (Weber 1958), and so on. Some Indian scholars (e.g. Chaudhury 1964) went even to the extreme:

> … a sense of Hindu solidarity with uncontrollable tendency towards disunity; authoritarianism with anarchic individualism; violence with non-violence; militarism with pacifism; possessiveness with carelessness about property owned; courage with cowardice; cleverness with stupidity (pp. 106–107).

Furthermore, their other worldliness was believed to deter any persistent pursuit of economic activities (Weber 1958), not enabling them to make and implement tough decisions (Myrdal 1968), and traditional Indian values were alleged to be antithetical to change and development (Lannoy 1971/2008). Nakamura (1964) reported that Indians do not separate the actual from the ideal and engage in fantasizing that is "… free, boundless, and extravagant, and often goes to extreme" (p. 142).

Narain (1957) in his own analysis listed the following attributes of Indians: (a) absence of commitment that at individual level expresses in freely made but unfulfilled promises and absence of sustained efforts for realizing collective objectives; (b) absence of masculine qualities as a result of Indians' identification with the mother; (c) dependence on and distrust of authority because of inconsistent rewards and punishments given during childhood; (d), inability to handle emotions that are either suppressed or expressed in uncontrolled temper tantrums; and above all (e) contradictory behaviours that manifest in "tremendous gap between ideals and performance": "Truth is extolled, but all kinds of falsehood are practiced; honesty is valued, but dishonesty is rampant; kindness is virtue, but Indians laugh at others' physical deformity or discomfiture; … Indians are spiritual, but their greed for material things in insatiable" (Narain 1957, p. 130). The values and behaviour which Indian and foreign scholars frequently attributed to Indians in the literature included fatalism, passivity, dependency, paranoid reaction, narcissism, insecurity, anxiety, authoritarianism, submission, indifference to contradictions and so on (Sinha 1988).

In sum, the deeply implanted inferiority complex in the Indian mindset reflected in the negative self-image as well as denigrating accounts by foreign observers that were echoed, and even overplayed, by many compatriots. There was, however, a difference. Foreigners were often outright negative, while Indians noticed their compatriots as having certain positive qualities such as nonviolence, pacifism, courage, cleverness, truth, honesty, kindness and spirituality, while behaving in opposite ways—revealing their hypocrisy. They did not realize that Indians differentiate between precepts and practices, and that denigration of Indians would trap them into a whole lot of negative and dysfunctional behaviour.

1.3.4 Multilayered Mindset

Independence was a critical landmark for India to retrieve the primordial layer of the Indian mindset, although efforts were initiated much earlier, during the colonial days. New infrastructure (e.g. railways, post and telegraph), Western institutions

(e.g. educational, administrative, judicial), English language and European liberalism created a ground from which Indian nationalism developed. But it was the nationalism that was spearheaded by the national elites. There was another variant of nationalism that manifested by peasants, tribal, and workers who rose spontaneously against the colonial exploitation. Their revolts and movements were local, sporadic, and autonomous of the elites' nationalism. The local nationalism often fed as well as fragmented the elites' nationalism. Together they presented a complex dynamics of the rise of a composite nationalism (Desai 1948). The elites, though anti-colonial in their stance, were convinced of Western superiority in science and technology, rationality, and statecraft, but statecraft was devoid of spiritual merit (Chatterjee 1993, p. 6). They were concerned about poverty and decay of a society that was afflicted by many social evils. Social reform movements began from the eighteenth century itself, but Indian leaders disagreed on how to go about reform. Vedantics tended to rely primarily on Vedic and Upanishadic traditions; the Brahmo Samaj advocated combining the ancient wisdom with Western rationality and lifestyle; the Arya Samaj focused mostly on reforming society in order to reinstate a truly Vedic society; and entrepreneurs tended to build up business and industry. Taken as a whole, the emphasis was to develop the country and modernize the people through Western science, technology and education as well as to revive the ancient wisdom and spirituality in order to cope with the constraints imposed during the medieval and colonial days. The result was a composite mindset with pervasive dark patches but also bright prospects.

Two sets of factors facilitated the making of this composite mindset: First consisted of the State policy decisions that changed the socio-economic and political milieu. Second was the various intellectual traditions that construed this milieu from different vantage points. National aspirations to catch up with the West led the government to establish industrial bases, centres of higher learning and democratic institutions. All these required a massive import of Western technology, capital and expertise. Due to various reasons, technology and capital came largely from the Soviet Bloc, but cultural influences emanated mostly from Anglo-American sources. Initially, Indians accepted them willingly, but then restricted them in order to boost up self-reliance and national pride. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (1970), for example, pronounced that "A nation's strength ultimately consists in what it can do on its own, and not in what it can borrow from others (p. 1)".

Three major streams of social scientists sliced this milieu differently. Those who continued with the elitistist nationalism and were recognized belonging to the Cambridge School of thought focused on the issues of power politics and class interests in social institutions (e.g. (Gallagher et al. 1973). On the contrary, the subaltern studies led by Ranjit Guha (1982–1989) documented revolts and rebellions by peasants, tribal, and workers during the British rule and their continuity in the post-Independence era in order to conceptualize the insurgent mindset of subalterns that resists dominance and tyranny of the State. Another major stream of social scientists tended to step out of the colonial shadows that influenced earlier Indian scholars' thinking, and to reconstruct the Indian mindset

by looking afresh at and retrieving the pieces of the primordial mindset that could restore Indians' sense of self-worth (see details in Rao et al. 2008).

Liberalization of the economy from the 1990s expedited economic growth. Economic growth transformed the image of the country from a land of snake charmers, elephants and maharajas to a global player with a massive economy. The country, which was condemned to the "Hindu rate of growth"[4] or the "elephant syndrome" (Smith 2008), recorded the second highest growth rate after China. There has been a corresponding surge in Indians' self-confidence and impulse to seek out new opportunities. The entrepreneurial spirit of ancient India (Kumar and Sethi 2005) seems like getting resurrected. Industrial activities are booming, Indian companies are getting global and some of them are picking up Western companies larger than their own size. Indians' creative imagination not only encompasses a whole range of business activities but also spills over a variety of spheres including nuclear and space research, medical tourism, technical education, arts, music, literature, movies and so on. The country claims to have the largest size of skilled personnel in the world, an expanding middle class that is larger than the population of many Western countries, a diaspora of millions of prosperous and professional Indians across the world, a significant size of Indian IT companies in the Silicon Valley and globally sought after thought leaders. The Harris Online Poll[5] of 4,251 adults in Singapore, Hong Kong, China and India (14 and 21 February 2011) and also in the US (17 and 24 January 2011) revealed that 63 % of Indians were optimistic about their economy and 80 % believed that India will be the most influential economy in the next 10 years. These percentages were much higher than those of Americans and Chinese in the mainland as well as in Hong Kong. Optimism and opportunism are the fronts of the Indian mindset.

There is, however, a third factor—the darker face of the country—that is still reflected in the major part of the Indian mindset. Millions of extremely poor people, inadequate infrastructure, miserable healthcare for the majority, high illiteracy rate, filth and garbage piling up at most places, unsafe drinking water, inhuman slums, conflicts and violence, religious fanaticism and a host of other social pathologies do exist. India is quite low on the human development index (see Chap. 9), very high on corruption, high on gender inequality, persisting bureaupathic (pathologically bureaucratic) administration and high on natural disaster proneness (see Chap. 9). The vast majority of Indians live in this dark milieu of centuries of exploitation by the powerful and privileged section of the society that have been enjoying an opulent life at the cost of the rest of society. They are the modern avatar of medieval kings and nawabs. The common people too dream to live like them and struggle hard, but their energy is sapped by their daily hassles. In the process, they are getting afflicted with petty selfishness, lack

[4] The term was coined in the mid-1970s by Indian economist Raj Krishna as a sarcastic comment on the disappointingly low rate of growth of the Indian economy in the 1960s and 1970s, attributed largely to fatalism and lack of ambition in the Hindu outlook.

[5] www.harrisinteractive.com, retrieved on April 16, 2013.

of sensitivity to others, shrinking empathy and decreasing trust of others. The boundaries of the trustworthy *apane* (own) are narrowing, putting a larger number of people as *paraye* (others).

1.4 Putting the Pieces Together

The Indian mindset has layers of ideas and influences from ancient, Islamic, colonial and modern periods. The influences are broadly organized into three segments: The ancient cultural heritage that is largely idealistic and spiritual as well as ritualistic in nature, the impoverished conditions of living and an inferiority complex that were caused by the medieval and colonial experiences, and the new opportunities and challenges arising out of the liberalization of economy and globalization of cultural exchanges. The Indian mindset oscillates as a function of the interplay of these forces. The leading images are that of optimism and opportunism amidst an apprehension of numerous constraints and impediments. People remain embedded to various collectives such as caste, class, religion, region and most importantly their family. Yet, individual aspirations are driving efforts towards self-development and self-promotion that feed entrepreneurship and economic growth. Hierarchical order is still deeply entrenched, although its defiance by subaltern and the aggrieved is equally conspicuous. Hierarchy and collectivism also breed excessive dependency that is sustained by the conditions of living and the strong devotional tradition (*bhakti parampara*). New opportunities are stimulating entrepreneurship to achieve and excel, but are also fuelling the fire to make quick money, surpass and exploit others, in many instances, by dubious means, and in many minds that are unequipped to do so. Yearning for spirituality persists beneath the overwhelming tide of earthly passions. Spirituality, combined with religiosity, assumes varied explicit and implicit forms across the divides of rich and poor, rural and urban, young and old, and men and women. Fanatic religiosity threatens secularity, but fails to give it any fatal blow. Sexuality is getting liberalized as a joint function of the exposure to the West and new assertiveness.

In sum, the Indian mindset is full of paradoxes consisting of too many pieces of white, black and grey matters. As a result, this complex repertoire promises unlimited possibilities and new challenges but also carries huge risks and poses many problems. It is fascinating to explore how Indians realize their possibilities, meet challenges, reduce risk and solve their problems or fail on many counts.

1.5 How Does the Indian Mindset Work?

There are two sets of factors that are universally recognized to jointly determine human decision-making and behaviour. They are the internal dispositions (ranging from biological through social to spiritual ones) and the external demands from physical, socio-economic, cultural and political conditions of living. Internal

dispositions of Indians are traditionally conceptualized to configure into three main clusters (*guna*s): *sattva* (light, purity, subtlety), *raajas* (passion, energy, physical vitality) and *taamas* (inaction, impurity, lethargy), predisposing them to selectively pick up the ideas and act accordingly. Those drawing on *sattva* may adopt a cognitive, composed and compassioned approach in their thought and behaviour. The *raajas* configuration is associated with emotional, assertive and action-oriented behaviour. *Taamas* dominated Indians are likely to be inactive, defensive in their thought and behaviour, and negative in construing the reality and acting on it. However, there is a catch, like in the most personality-oriented conceptualizations, that there is no pure type. Each individual has all three attributes, though their number and salience are unevenly distributed. Apart from the *guna*s, there are other paradoxical orientations acquired by Indians that are identified earlier in this chapter. The combinations of *guna*s and the presence of paradoxes allow external factors to selectively sensitize and reinforce some of them, and thereby impact people's thought or behaviour to a greater extent. Thus, the balance of influence tilts in favour of external factors that play a critical role in fashioning thought and acting on it.

External factors are parts of a context in which people function. There is evidence (Hall 1981; Roland 1988) that Indians are highly sensitive to their context. Unlike people in the West who apply abstract principles and generalized norms to decide how to behave in different situations, Indians organize their thoughts, feelings and behaviours in order to meet specific contextual demands (Sinha and Kanungo 1997). Because of their largely collectivist culture, they tend to remain embedded in various in-groups and collectives, tied up with ecology and continuously engaged with others. All these have a deep impact on their mindset. In instances where these demands are clear and strong, Indians are likely to think and behave accordingly by suppressing those habits, orientations and preferences that are not congruent with them. Contexts, however, are hardly homogeneous or static. They change over time and often make incongruent demands. So, Indians have scope to selectively respond to those contextual factors that are congruent with their beliefs, values and norms or to reinterpret, modify or change their beliefs, values and norms in order to align them with the demanding contextual factors. The values of objects, ideas, events and persons depend on how they are aligned with contextual factors. Nothing and nobody has any absolute values. It all depends on their varying combinations and alignments. Thus, the combinations and alignments of personal orientations and contextual demands lead to thought and behaviour ranging from indecision and inaction, through confusion and indifferent action, to carefully calibrated actions designed to serve individual or collective interests and goals. Let us take a look at these modes of thought and behaviour.

1.5.1 Mental Blocks and Disputations

Context sensitivity and relativism combine to allow Indians to grant greater flexibility and choice of ideas and actions to serve their purpose and interests. By the same token, they are also likely to experience chaos and confusion because of

the sheer overload. At least temporarily, they may get into a mental block and indecisiveness. There are also situations that appear to be too complex or fast changing with too many incompatible demands, high stakes or too many uncertainties. Indians in such situations cannot figure out what they should do, which way to go, which pressure to yield to or how to organize their thoughts, feelings and actions. One option by default is to keep searching the mind for a while and wait for the situation to change. They hope that a clear course of action would emerge on its own if they wait for a while.

An individual level mental block has parallels at collective levels. Two or more groups of persons may have conflicting interests. Or, they may not agree on the nature of a context, salience of various personal or contextual factors, or courses of action. In the absence of abiding abstract principles and norms (that guide people in the West), their rich repertoire of ideas and influences combined with their argumentative nature (Sen 2006) may lead them to disputations. They may enter into endless squabbles. They may even profess to subscribe to the same ideals or larger causes, but in reality counteract each other resulting in inaction, delayed action or backtracking of an action. There is evidence that Indians are very good at making elaborate plans and setting up laudable goals that can hardly be questioned but poor in implementing what they decide (Kumar 2004).

1.5.2 Shifting Mindset

At the individual level, a mental block is less frequent than a purposeful plan of actions. Indians construe a context as an episode in an on-going flow of interactive events of situations and responses to them in a long-time perspective. Both—situations and responses to them—are examined in terms of their potential to serve Indians' own interests, the interest of the relevant others and the salience of social norms at different times. Hence, Indians tend to fashion a strategy whereby they choose divergent tactics with reference to different people at different places, and with the same people and places, but at different times. In an adverse situation they lie low and wait till the situation changes, allowing them to make a quick move. They can also be manipulative should a situation so require. In a favourable one, they are amenable to drawing diverse ideas and to be creative as well as striving to realize cultural ideals. This shows their primordial capability to see the connectedness among diverse elements as a part of "… the unified field awareness of traditional Indian thought processes" (Lannoy 1971/2008, p. 420).

Thus, Indians can organize their thoughts and fashion their tactics holistically having a sequence, which may not be consistent to each other, but each of them may build upon and balance the previous ones, which thereby helps them advance towards an ultimate goal. They are creative and innovative in situations where they sense other's intentions and the demands of a milieu, pull out ideas from the different layers of their mindset, improvise and chalk out a clever action plan. The problem is that other Indians are doing the same. Thus, the transactions between

Indians are multilayered and long drawn. Individually, they are brilliant and are likely to be very successful in favourable situations, but may turn out to be counterproductive collectively.

1.6 Summary

The Indian mindset consists of Indians' self-image and worldview that orient them to react to their milieu, which is conceptualized as the perceived Indian culture. Indian culture is known for the continuity of its pluralistic traditions because of a strong belief in the validity of ancient wisdom coexisting with a willingness to accommodate new ideas and influences. Hence, the Indian mindset has a primordial foundation on which later ideas and influences have been superimposed. The foundation reflected a sense of superiority and the confidence to accommodate new ideas and influences. The middle ages eroded Indians' sense of superiority, created excessive dependency, led to conditions for regressive codes of social conduct and fostered a strong disposition to engage in power games and corrupt practices in order to acquire and enjoy wealth without any scruples. The British exploited the economy, denigrated the people, let them suffer from an inferiority complex. Independence and, later, the liberalization of the economy accelerated growth and development, revived optimism and entrepreneurship and turned many Indians into opportunists. The Indian mindset is therefore a composite of all these diverse and discrepant ideas and influences.

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Chapter 2
Collectivism and Individualism

2.1 Concepts of Collectivism and Individualism

Although the concepts of collectivism and individualism or themes pertaining to collectivism and individualism were floating in both Western (see Triandis 1995) and Indian literature (see Sinha 1988), it was Hofstede (1980), who established them as the most viable constructs to differentiate cultures. Later, Kim et al. (1994), Triandis (1995) and Hofstede (2001) related them to a variety of phenomena such as social systems, morality, religion, cognitive differentiations, economic development, modernity, social pathology, psychological wellbeing and so on. Most of the industrialized, wealthy and urbanized societies were reported to be individualistic while the traditional, poor and rural societies were found to be collectivistic in orientation. It was conceptualized that collectivism "pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty" while "individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose; everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family" (Hofstede 1991, p. 51). Collectivism and individualism are viewed as "cultural syndromes" that differentiate cultures in terms of beliefs, attitudes, norms, roles, values and behaviours (Triandis 1994, p. 50). Triandis identified four major attributes distinguishing collectivism from individualism. Majority of people in a collectivistic culture identify themselves in terms of their relationships with in-groups, aspire to achieve their in-groups' goals, conform to social norms and react emotionally. On the contrary, individualists consider themselves as "autonomous atoms" having their own personal goals, following their likes and dislikes, and carefully evaluating their gains and losses before acting. Bhawuk (2001) considered the first attribute, self, as the central one driving those having interdependent self to yield to in-group goals, relate with others emotionally and follow social norms with regard to the society at large. On the contrary, autonomous individuals strive to achieve their own individual goals, rationally relate with others calculating their gains and losses and do what they like to do.

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Collectivism and individualism are differentiated in being either vertical or horizontal, signifying hierarchal or egalitarian orientation in social relationships. Vertical cultures have a larger power distance and greater societal inequality than horizontal ones. The USA, for example, is vertically individualistic while Israel is horizontally collectivistic, Norway and Sweden are horizontally individualistic, and India is vertically collectivistic (Triandis and Bhawuk 1997). The cultural-level construct of collectivism–individualism has person-level counterparts in allocentrism–idiocentrism (Triandis 1985), although most studies use the constructs of collectivism–individualism for both cultural- and person-level discourses. Triandis (1995) admitted that there are as many forms of individualism and collectivism as there are cultures and the two may coexist in varying shades in certain cultures. A culture is labelled as individualistic or collectivistic depending on whether most of the people manifest either of the two at most of time and across most of situations (Triandis 1995). Collectivism is also differentiated into *relational* and *group-centred* collectivism. Relational collectivism refers to the network of interpersonal sharing, cooperation and obligations (e.g. relying, trusting and helping family members and friend, depending on a superior and supporting a subordinate). Group-centred collectivism manifests in common membership of a collective or a symbolic group (Brewer and Chen 2007) such as a particular village, caste, religion region, or a political party. Symbolic groups too have been further differentiated as having closer or distant boundaries. Gelfand et al. (2004), for example, distinguished familial from other institutional forms of collectivism at societal levels. Familial collectivism includes only family members and close ones who are considered virtually as family members. Institutional forms reflect generalized trust and interdependence in social transactions. There are also attempts to show the primacy of different levels of individualism and collectivism. According to O'Mara et al. (2007), for example, there is a hierarchy of primacy, where individualism is the most basic as people tend to prioritize their individual interests and goals over groups' goals and interests. The underlying assumption is that people are basically selfish as their concerns for survival and prosperity invariably assume the top priority. They opt to operate through collectives only when they think it to be the most expedient way to serve their interests. There are, however, counter arguments signifying that human survival and prosperity are also contingent on collective efforts. For example, Darwin, who gave the famous dictum that there is an on-going struggle for existence among living beings where the fittest survives, is cited as pronouncing the following in 1874:

> Advancement in the standard of morality will certainly give an immense advantage to one tribe over another. A tribe including many members who, from possessing in a high degree the spirit of patriotism, fidelity, obedience, courage and sympathy, were always ready to aid one another, and to sacrifice themselves for the common good, would be victorious over most other tribes; and this would be natural selection (quoted in Krebs 2011, p. 117).

2.1.1 The Indian Approach to Collectivism and Individualism

The understanding of collectivism and individualism in the Indian mindset has evolved differently. A number of studies (Bhawuk 2004; House et al. 2004; Sinha 1985; Sinha and Verma 1987; Triandis 1995; Triandis and Bhawuk 1997; Verma 1999; Verma and Triandis 1998 among others) confirmed Hofstede (1980) that Indians are by and large collectivists. Subsequent investigations, however, discovered that Indians are both collectivists and individualists depending on the situation (Mishra 1994; Sinha and Tripathi 1994; Tripathi 1988). Subsequent studies (Sinha et al. 2001, 2002) also revealed that collectivism and individualism constitute interchanging means and goals relationships—each facilitating the other. Further explorations traced a continuity of this means–goals relationship to the primordial belief in cosmic collectivism along with the recognition of individual efforts in realizing the major life goals. The rest of the chapter, hence, shows this continuity by first dwelling on ancient conceptualizations followed by their modern manifestations.

2.2 Cosmic Collectivism and Individualistic Striving

2.2.1 Cosmic Collectivism: One in All and All in One

Indians have believed that everything—animate and inanimate—is an expression of the one Supreme Being (*eko aham bahusvaami*) and hence constitutes one ordered and interconnected whole (cosmos). The Upanishads posited a universal spirit, the *Brahman*, and individual souls or selves, the *aatman*. The latter emerges from the former temporarily and merges with it ultimately: "living beings as individualized centres of awareness that are like distinct waves of the endless expanse of an oceanic single principle fundamentally characterized by consciousness" (Sankaracharya cited by Paranjpe 2010, p. 24). This understanding is essential to the existential reality of life. So the *Isha Upanishad* says: "Whoever sees all beings in the soul and the soul in all beings … . What delusion or sorrow is there for one who sees unity?" It means that every *aatman* is essentially the *Brahman*—the cosmos is a collective. One of the two mantras in Chap. 14 of the *Shankhayana Aranyaka* extolled, "I am *Brahman*". The key phrase of the Upanishads is "*tat tvam asi*" (that thou art). That is, you are the *Brahman!* This unity is the core of the cosmic collectivism.

Not only there is intrinsic union between the *aatman*s and *Brahman*, but in the same vein, the lower orders of the beings also have a fraction of the *Brahman* in terms of having an *aatman* of their own. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (1, 3, 22) affirmed:

> This *aatman* is the same in the ant, the same in gnat, the same in the elephant, the same in those three [animal, human, & divine] worlds … the same in the whole universe.

Thus, they are all interconnected, but there exists an order within them depending on their proximity to *Brahman.* Because of their shared entity, even Gods and Goddesses appear in human as well as animal forms. They were said to reside in trees and plants too. There are trees (e.g. *peepal*, or sacred fig) and plants (e.g. basil) that were considered to be pious and worshipped as abodes of Gods and Goddesses or are used in worshipping Gods and Goddesses (see box 2.1). The Hindu trinity—Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh—were believed to assume human appearance whenever they wished or the devotees prayed earnestly and sufficiently. Vishnu, for example, appeared in 10 forms: Three animals: *matsya* (fish), *kurma* (tortoise), *varaaha* (boar), seven humans: *vaamana* (dwarf), *Parasurama* (a sage who was the destroyer of the Kshatriyas), *Rama* and *Krishna* (and also *Buddha* who did not believe in either Self or *Brahman*), and *Kalki* (who is still to appear eventually to destroy the degenerated age, Kali-Yuga), and a man-lion (*Narasimha*). Two Gods, Hanumana (in monkey form) and Ganesh (with an elephant head), are among the most popular ones even today.

Indian mythology is full of instances of Gods and Goddesses who descended on the Earth in order to interact with human beings, and who shared almost all shades of human vices and virtues. Meritorious human beings too acquired divine qualities and a few of them gained access to heaven in their human body. The demarcation between the divine and human was so fuzzy that a human being might claim: "'O Sun of refulgent glory, I am the same person as makes thee what thou art!" (Nehru 1946/2001, p. 91). Furthermore, according to the *Aitareya Upanishad*, those who follow Vedic injunctions and perform sacrifices in appropriate and adequate ways become the God Fire (Agni), Sun (Surya) or Air (Vaayu). On the other hand, those who transgress the Vedic prescriptions are born into a lower order of beings such as birds and reptiles.

Box 2.1. Collectivistic Worldview
Indian sculptures, according to Thomas Mann, are an "all encompassing labyrinth flux of animal, human, and divine … visions of life in the flesh, all jumbled together … suffering and enjoying in thousand shapes, teeming, devouring, and turning into one another (Lannoy 1971/2008, p. 78)."

It was in this frame of the united universe that, according to the *Taittiriya Upanishad,* the human being was conceptualized having five layers, like concentric sheaths of onion, from outer physical to the innermost (pure, conscious) self. They are (a) the body (*annamaya*) created by food, embedding the person into the physical environment; (b) vital breath (*praanamaya*), or bodily functions; (c) sensory functions (*manomaya*) such as attending, perceiving, feeling, etc.; (d) cognitive sheath (*vijnaanamaya*) consisting of ideas and concepts that help one

understand the world; and (e) joyous core (*aanandamaya*), that is *aatman,* the true self (Paranjpe 1998, p. 163). The five sheaths are so enmeshed that cosmic influences spontaneously permeate into the sensory and mental functions and wrap the real self. According to the *Kaushitaki Upanishad,* the body inherits divine entities: *Agni* (fire) in speech, *vaayu* (air) in *praana* (vital breathing), the sun in the eyes, the moon in the mind, the directions in the ears and water in the potency. The constellation of planetary forces directly influences a person. She or he can wear stones and beads, keep *vrat* (fasting and pooja) and perform various rites and rituals, which are believed to enable the person to relate and regulate the inflow of influences from the planetary forces inorder to lead him to live a life of harmony with the physical world and hence enjoy health and happiness.

2.2.2 Individualistic Striving for Self-Realization

While being enmeshed into the collectives of inanimate, animate and divine, human beings still suffer from a sense of separation from *Brahman*, and hence strive to get union with Him—*moksha* (salvation), which is the terminal goal of life. This journey for the union is essentially individualistic in nature. The journey starts with what the human beings are and heads towards what they should become; that is, from biological being to the spiritual one. The *chitta,* the dispositional mind, sits at the core of biological being. It consists of impulses and desires and is unstable, restless and turbulent.[1] However, the *chitta* is also inherently oriented to attain *moksha* (salvation) by passing through a number of major milestones. The milestones are marked as the life goals of *artha* (earning money and acquiring material things), dharma (discharging personal duties and obligations according to the age, gender and caste-based roles) and *kaama* (seeking sensuous including sexual pleasure). Hindus were prescribed to earn money so that, according to the *Arthashastra,* they can achieve other goals or most ideally give *daana* (charity) and collect religious merit. They have to discharge social obligations irrespective of how others reciprocate and allow themselves to indulge in sensuous pleasure before striving for the terminal goal of *moksha.* All these goals have to be realized through individualistic efforts. There is no emphasis, nor even a mention in the Hindu texts, that this progression from biological to spiritual can be a collective endeavour. Even gurus, who had the moral obligation to uplift a mortal soul, were expected only to enlightened the latter's self, which then is expected to start transforming on its own. There was no cultural belief in the transfer of one's good conduct to others or riding on other's good conduct, except in the case of father–son relationship.[2] In other words, collectivism is an existential reality, but individuals must put in efforts to achieve the goals of

[1] *Pratyaahara* and *dhaarana*: Swami Vivekananda on *Rija Yoga*.

[2] *Putra* (son) means "he who protects a man from going to hell" by performing good conduct.

life. In the process they transcend the narrowness of their individual self and expand it to include not only the near and dear ones in the family, but also the larger collectives and in fact for the whole universe. The whole universe becomes the family (*basudhaiva kutumbakam*):

> One begins with concern for oneself and gradually expands one's ego to encompass one's community and ultimately the entire world. Similarly in one of the verses of the *Mahabharata* it is stated that for the sake of the clan one gives up the individual (person), for the sake of the village one gives up the clans, for the sake of the country (*janapada*) one gives up the village, and for the highest good one gives up the earth. Concern for others has been given the highest place and the target is the larger group (Sinha 1998, p. 20).

2.3 New Avatar of Collectivism and Individualism

Despite this backdrop of collectivism and individualism in the Indian mindset, the scientific interest in them was initiated by the seminal work of Hofstede (1980). There were indeed some writings, even before and independent of Hofstede, pertaining to collectivistic themes. Indians, for example, were observed being submerged in their in-groups (Kapp 1963, p. 60). They were found to be so embedded in their in-groups that Marriot (1976) preferred to label them as "dividuals" within collectives rather than individuals separated from each other. Within their in-groups, the self-other boundary was reported to be blurred by "affective reciprocity", "strong mutual caring", "emotional connectedness" and inhibition of "disruptive" feelings and thoughts (Roland 1980). Lapierre (1986) contended: "Every individual in India is always linked to the rest of the social body by a network of incredibly diversified ties, with the result that no one in this gigantic country of 700 and 50 million [now above 1 billion] inhabitants could ever be completely abandoned" (p. 56). This embeddedness led Indians "to emphasize protection and caring [of those below in hierarchy] in their social (and political) relations" (Kakar 1982, p. 272). Further, the "Hindu's experienced self is structured more around *we*, *ours*, and *us* than around *I, mine* or *me*. There is a preference to belong to a collective and to undermine autonomy, initiative, and individualism" (Sinha 1982, p. 153). Sinha (1985) posited that collectives have overwhelming influence on Indians because of the milieu in which they live and function:

> A number of socio-economic factors have created a situation of interdependence in India which makes Indians behave in collective fashion. Within the narrowly demarcated in-groups of nuclear and extended family and friends, the collective behaviours are accompanied by shared needs and values, sensitivity to each other, and desire to maintain reciprocal affectivity. For outsiders, Indians are callous and exploitative. In between the two, there is a twilight zone where Indians maintain varied forms of dyadic social network relationships with a view to safeguard the interest of the in-group(s) as well as their own. These social networks are often nurtured with subtle ingratiation and manipulations. And yet, Indians invest most of their energy in maintaining these in-groups and networks, at times at the cost of public interests (Sinha 1985, p. 115).

These were, however, largely observations of social scientists. Empirical verifications started only after Hofstede (1980) provided an empirical benchmark showing that the Indian culture is moderately collectivistic scoring 48 on the scale ranging from collectivism (1) to individualism (100). He asked a sample of IBM managers from 40 countries what they valued at the workplace. Some of the items were worded to measure individualism while others measured collectivism. The ratings on the collectivistic items were reversed to compute a total of individualism score of each of the respondents. Their scores were averaged to derive a country's score on the collectivism–individualism scale. Some examples individualistic items were as follows:

How important is it for you to:

- do challenging work from which you can get a personal sense of accomplishment (challenge)
- have an opportunity for high earning (earning)
- have good fringe benefits (benefits)
- have an opportunity to advancement to higher level jobs (advancement).

Two examples of collectivistic items were the following:
How important is it for you to:

- work with people who cooperate well with one another (cooperation)
- have a good working relationship with your managers (relationship).

2.3.1 Collectivism, Allocentrism and In-Group Influence

Following Hofstede (1980), Triandis (1983) too found that Indian culture is collectivistic and that Indians are mostly allocentrics. Sinha and Verma (1987) checked whether the Indian culture is indeed collectivistic and whether Indians at their personal level are allocentrics. They had several reservations about the studies conducted by Hofstede and Triandis. IBM managers, for example, are hardly representative of the Indian population. They are high-earning employees of a multinational organization. So, Sinha and Verma sampled 109 adult Indians from diverse backgrounds. They further argued that cultural-level constructs (collectivism–individualism) and their personal level counterparts (allocentrism–idiocentrism) have to be measured independently. They drew the personal level measure from a cross-cultural pool of items created by a team of international psychologists that included the first author too (Triandis et al. 1986). But not all items in the pool were applicable to Indians. So, 14 items, which made sense to Indians, were selected. Two examples of the items measuring idiocentrism were the following:

- As much as possible, one should live one's life independently of others
- I tend to do my own things independently of my family members.

Two examples of allocentric items were the following:

- I like to live close to my good friends
- When my family is not around, I feel lonely.

A new measure was developed for assessing cultural-level collectivism–individualism. The investigators did not ask respondents about what they value or how much importance they attach to doing certain things. They thought that people generally give socially desirable response when they rate the importance of something positive. Indians, for example, claim to value honesty and consider it very important, but in actual practice, they may not remain honest and they might believe that that the most other people (not they themselves) are corrupt. So, the new measure included items measuring beliefs and practices in addition preferences (that are equivalent to values). Further, the investigators did not ask the respondents to rate themselves; rather, to predict "what other people living around them believe, prefer, and practice". This put the respondents in informants' role. This had two advantages. First, they were likely to give a more accurate description of others than they gave about themselves. People generally present themselves in more positive fashion that they really are. They are, on the other hand, likely to be more objective in rating others. For example, those who do not accept that they are corrupt may report that other people around them are corrupt. A second advantage accrues from this objective nature of the ratings. Because they were rating something out there, fewer informants are needed to get a fairly accurate picture of the reality. Self-ratings vary more than the ratings of others. So, a large sample is generally required to draw firm conclusions from self-ratings. The sample for the self-ratings also has to be representative of the population. It is always problematic to get a really representative sample. On the other hand, even a small sample of informants is likely to yield convergent views leading to a fairly accurate account of a reality.

Twenty-six items that were considered to be highly applicable to Indians were selected to constitute the individualism–collectivism scale. The examples collectivistic items were the following:

- Old parents live with their grown-up children
- People do no mind guests and visitors dropping in at odd hours
- People take time off their work to visit ailing friends and relatives.

The respondents were given both—allocentrism–idiocentrism and collectivism–individualism—scales to rate themselves as well as other people around them. The findings revealed that respondents rated themselves as largely allocentrics and perceived other people as mostly collectivists. Personal- and cultural-level collectivism was found to be moderately interrelated, confirming the findings of Hofstede (1980) and Triandis (1983) that Indian culture is by and large collectivistic and Indians at their personal level are mostly allocentrics.

There was another issue that Sinha and Verma (1987) explored. As allocentrics are embedded in their in-groups, they are likely to be influenced by their members (Gelfand et al. 2004). Hence, Sinha and Verma wanted to know which of their collectives had greater impact on Indians' decision making. The members that were

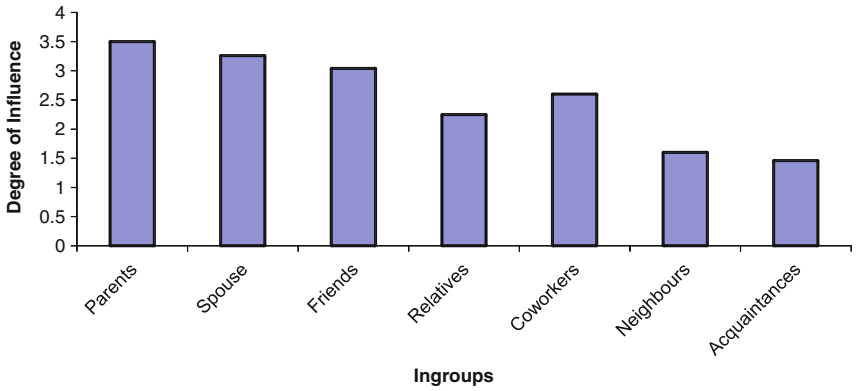

Fig. 2.1 In-groups influences. *Source* Sinha and Verma (1987)

compared were the parents, relatives, spouse, friends, neighbours, co-workers and acquaintances. The decisions on which their influence was assessed pertained to voting in an election, accepting a person as an intimate friend, preference for taking a job, importance given to own or collective's desires and feelings, distribution of lottery money, making social calls and entertaining the members of the collective at busy hours. The average magnitude of collectives' influences is displayed in Fig. 2.1. This figure shows that the parents, spouse and friends exerted the maximum but decreasing order of influence. Co-workers followed them in the order, relatives and neighbours were less influential, and acquaintances were the least influential collectives. Parents' primacy over even that of the spouse in influencing adult Indians to make important decisions is particularly worth noting.

Having established close association between allocentrism and collectives' influence, the investigators further explored two issues: First, whether the collective's influence was more closely related with personal-level allocentrism than with cultural level collectivism? Second, whether the relationships were stronger in the cases of more (such as parents and spouse) than in less (such as relatives and acquaintances) influential collectives? In order to address the issues, collectives' influences were correlated with allocentrism and collectivism, and compared across the in-groups (Fig. 2.2).

Indeed, allocentrism, compared to collectivism, was more closely related with collectives' influence in all groups. That is, respondents' self-perception of personal level collectivism was more strongly associated with collectives' influence. Furthermore, the parents' and friend's influences were the most strongly related with both allocentrism and collectivism. Surprisingly, correlations were relatively low in case of spouse. The influence of acquaintances was the weakest and insignificantly related to either allocentrism or collectivism. Finally, the allocentrics perceived that co-workers and neighbours influenced them more than their relatives. Relatives are generally more dispersed than co-workers and neighbours and, like Japanese, Indians probably believe that "you can live ignoring relatives but not co-workers and neighbours".

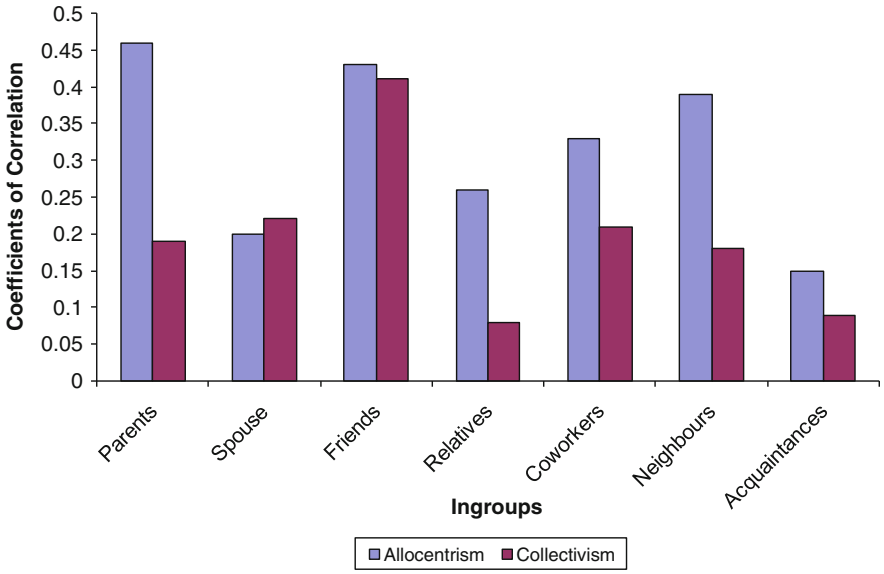

Fig. 2.2 Relationship of in-group influence with allocentrism and collectivism. *Source* Sinha and Verma (1987)

Sinha and Verma (1994) went further to explore whether allocentrism is also related with social support and wellbeing. The issue arose out of an earlier study (Triandis et al. 1988) reporting that allocentrics are less alienated and hence less lonely because they enjoy greater social support than idiocentrics. Social support means that a person has available one or more persons who are willing to listen empathetically, bail out of trouble and help solve a difficult problem. Naturally, the people having greater social support will be less vulnerable to the stresses and strains of life. Social supports acts as a buffer (Cohen and Syme 1985). As a result, such persons have a greater sense of wellbeing. Wellbeing in the Western context generally signifies a mental state characterized by optimism, cheerfulness and playfulness (Tellegen 1979).

The Indian conceptualization of wellbeing, however, is more inclusive. It ties wellbeing with self-realization that corresponds to rising in spiritual merit manifesting in composed mindset and freedom from emotional upheavals. Self-realization, as discussed in Chap. 1, is a process of start living *appropriately* and *adequately* by earning wealth, enjoying sensuous pleasures, discharging social obligations and then transcending them to live on a higher level of spirituality. This developmental sequence requires self-control and a sense of detachment that hedge the person from the frustrations of falling into a vicious trap of unending desires (Bhawuk 2008). There exists evidence to suggest that detached persons experience less stress and cope more effectively with whatever stresses they experience (Pande and Naidu 1992). Therefore, Sinha and Verma (1994) included both sets of the measures of wellbeing (optimism, cheerfulness and playfulness as well as self-control, detachment and freedom from frustrations and anxiety) in their study.

Because collectivism[3] was of focal interest, they planned to measure it in a more comprehensive way than they did in their previous study. In the previous study, it was measured through statements of attitude and opinion that the respondents had to agree or disagree in varying degrees. This time they added three more measures. The second was a "Who Am I" test in which the respondents were asked to express themselves freely. They were required to complete 20 sentences that started with "I …" in Hindi. The sentences were analysed to see the extent to which the respondents identified themselves with their in-groups. Thus, it was a test of their "embedded self"—an indication of their collectivism. The third was a force-choice measure that asked respondents to opt for their own or collectives' preferences. For example, the respondents were asked whether they preferred to:

- spend their leisure hours alone or with friends
- make decisions on their own or go by the opinion of their friends
- entertain or avoid friends dropping in unannounced while they are busy working.

Collectivists were those who preferred friends' over their own considerations. The fourth measure required the respondents to judge "How far they will go by their own versus friends' and relatives' desires, opinions, and behaviour" by making a cross mark on a five-inch graphic scale, the one end of which had "Own" and the other end had either "Friends" or "Relatives". The distance from own end to the cross mark indicated the degree of priority attached to friends' and relatives' desires, opinion and behaviour.

Social support was measured by the scale developed by Sarason et al. (1983) that asked respondents to place themselves in three situations provided to them: (a) having a difficult problem, (b) having a need to express inner thoughts and feelings to someone and (c) falling into a serious trouble. Respondents were to list the initials of persons who could be approached for support, the closeness of their relationship and the extent to which they were available to extend the support. The support persons were listed to be father, mother, spouse, siblings, close and distant relatives. The extent of support was the product of their closeness and availability. Wellbeing was measured by the scale developed by Tellegen (1979) having 24 items pertaining to cheerfulness, optimism and playfulness. The authors added items that tapped self-control, sense of detachment, freedom from frustrations, anxiety and loneliness.

Unlike the respondents in the previous study, the respondents this time rated themselves as more individualists than collectivists. The difference probably was because the respondents in this study consisted of master's level students in the age range of 20–23 while the previous study had adults in the age range of 25–50 years. Demographic factors have been reported to affect collectivism and individualism in a study (Mishra 1994) that showed that younger, urbanized and better educated persons are relatively more individualists than older, rural and less educated Indians. Similarly, the GLOBE study (House et al. 2004) also reported

[3] From now on, collectivism and individualism also stand for allocentrism and idiocentrism (respectively) unless otherwise indicated.

that Indian managers are becoming individualists because they are now younger and face tough competition every day at work where they are pressed more to perform than to build relationships.

Probably because the respondents were more individualists than collectivists, they were not concerned about seeking social support. Sinha and Verma still wondered whether those who were collectivists and had the privilege of high social support experienced a stronger sense of wellbeing. So they selected those respondents who were relatively more collectivists and examined the joint impact of their collectivistic orientation and social support on their wellbeing. Collectivists having greater social support were indeed more optimistic, cheerful, playful and had lesser feelings of frustrations, anxiety and loneliness. This makes sense. Optimists are those who believe that their efforts will bear fruit. Naturally, they are less anxious and frustrated. As they are cheerful, they tend to engage with others and joyfully explore various possibilities. However, collectivists with high social support were not the ones who admitted to have stronger self-control or a greater sense of detachment from material things. Those who perceived themselves as having greater self-control and a sense of detachment were actually indifferent to sharing their leisure time with friends and relatives or consulting them in making decisions. They did not attach greater priority to them over their own desires, opinion or behaviour. Self-control and detachment signify inner transformation that requires turning progressively to one's inside, which is what collectivists do not prefer, believe or practise. They identify with their in-groups, and emphasize maintaining relationships and prioritizing friends' and relatives' desires, opinions and acts. Naturally, self-control and detachment were unrelated to the combined impact of collectivism and social support.

2.3.2 The Coexistence of Opposites

The studies by Sinha and Verma (1987, 1994) were conducted under a Western perspective that assumed a dichotomy in human thought and behaviour. Cultures in the Western perspective were differentiated on the bipolar dimension of collectivism–individualism (Hofstede 1980), although later Hofstede (2001), among others, realized that persons within a culture can be both collectivists and individualists. Triandis (1994), for example, observed the following:

> … the two [allocentrism and idiocentrism] can coexist and are simply emphasized more or less in each culture, depending on the situation. All of us carry both individualist and collectivist tendencies, the difference is that in some cultures the possibility that individualist selves, attitudes, norms, values, and behaviour will be sampled or used is higher than in others (p. 42).

Subsequent studies (Triandis 1995; Triandis and Bhawuk 1997; Verma 1999; Verma and Triandis 1998) indeed confirmed that Indian culture is more collectivistic than individualistic. A study that was conducted by a team of eight Indian scholars (Sinha et al. 1994) at seven distant locations in the country indeed confirmed the dominance of collectivism in the Indian mindset. The main features consisted of

familism, personalized relationship and hierarchical orientation. The features were manifested in the following beliefs, preferences and practices (see Box 2.2):

Box 2.2. A Measure of Indian Collectivism

1. In case of arguments people side with their friends and relatives.
2. People let a common cause suffer for the sake of their family or friends.
3. People ask friends to find jobs for their children.
4. People are concerned about what their own people think of them.
5. People justify their conduct according to time and opportunity.
6. People still acknowledge the differences between high and low caste, between rich and poor.
7. People trust their caste men more than others.
8. People maintain good relationship even at the cost of work.
9. People prefer to remain quiet instead of getting into differences.
10. People speak against their colleagues in a stealthy manner.

The GLOBE study (House et al. 2004), which was conducted in 64 countries, reported that Indian culture had a very high score on collectivism, placing it at third rank from the top (Chhokar 2013). Another cross-cultural study of 10 cultures again confirmed that, compared to people of other cultures, Indians were primarily collectivists as they had the highest score on dependence, second lowest on the value of emotional separation of the family and the third lowest on independence (Triandis et al. 1993). The underlying assumption in all these studies was that of a stable inclination towards the predominance of an "either-or" in a culture. That is, collectivists will be collectivists and individualists will be individualists across most situations. Neither persons nor cultures can be both—collectivists and individualists—in the same situation and at the same time.

A growing uneasiness started cropping up by the 1980s about consistency in Indian thought and behaviour. An increasingly large number of studies reported that Indians were starkly inconsistent, inviting at times comments that they are hypocritical, or have split personalities, or "unresolved dualism" (Kapp 1963, p. 18). Details of inconsistent beliefs, values, norms and practices appear in Chap. 1. Mishra (1994) noted this inconsistency specifically in the domain of collectivism–individualism:

> Individualistic values such as personal happiness, economic gain, and personal benefits can coexist with collectivist values such as salvation, enduring relationships, and altruism among people. The Indian psyche is generally reported to be full of paradoxes and juxtaposition of opposites (p. 236).

Sinha and Tripathi (1994) documented a number of instances of opposites coexisting simultaneously in Indian mythology, ethics, the concept of wellbeing, music, Indian personality, social values, inter-group relationships and so on. Having

laid the foundation that opposites coexist in the Indian psyche and systems, they empirically showed that Indians more often adopt a mix of both collectivistic and individualistic thoughts and behaviour in dealing with important life events. They sampled 22 important life events and goals. Some of them pertained to health care and medical treatment, voting behaviour, choice of a career, living with parents, accommodating guests, serious personal problems, running after success or being helpful, choice of cooperation or competition in important transactions, etc.

Over 86 % of the respondents opted for a response that was a mix of both collectivism and individualism. Among the rest, 12.2 % opted for predominantly individualistic and only 1.2 % for purely collectivistic responses. The mixed response reflected "a position in which the subject [respondent] could have something of both the orientations [collectivism and individualism] at the same time, but the nature of two elements were often conflicting, so that one could not always have both at the same time" (Sinha and Tripathi 1994, p. 133). For example, their first life event raised the issue of how Indians generally decide which doctor to approach for a serious medical treatment. They want to go to the best available. But they also want to consult family members and friends. So, they select a doctor who is the best available in the views of family and friends. That is, group dynamics of the family and friends have a determining role in decisions that are pertinent to the individual. Among group members, the more assertive, senior or powerful members have a greater say in decision making. This helps maintain social cohesiveness. Other collectives too have a role. For example, the doctor being proximately or distantly related (belonging to the same caste, neighbourhood, or being a friend of a friend of a friend, or a relative of a relative of a relative) may be preferred over those who may be a shade better professionally. The expectations in such cases are that the doctor would take greater interest in treating the patient and may even discount his or her fees (Sinha et al. 1993). Thus, both individualistic (best available doctor and discounted fees) and collectivistic considerations (cohesiveness, belief in personalized treatment) enter into the decision. It was this nature of the reality that had led Tripathi (1988) to make the following proposition:

> Indian form of collectivism also contains streaks of strong individualism. The Indian model of man … places strong emphasis on realization of the self, although one is also asked to transcend it in the interest of the larger society. In Indian society, individualism and collectivism act like figure and ground. Depending on the situations, one rises to form the figure while the other recedes into the background (Tripathi 1988, pp 324–325).

2.3.3 Means-End Relationship

The study by Sinha and Tripathi (1994) was an improvement over the one by Sinha and Verma (1994). It showed collectivism–individualism coexisting and changing their salience as a function of the nature of situations. It, however, missed another crucial point, namely, that they may also function as a means–end chain in which one leads to other in an on-going process of making decisions and acting on them. For example, the most frequent self-descriptions in the "Who Am I" test (Sinha and Verma 1994) were, "I want to be self-reliant" (65.50 %), "I want a job"

(59.10 %), "I am dedicated to my education" (59.10 %)—all reflective of individualism. But they were closely followed by the concern, "I do not want to be a burden on my family" (41.80 %), as if their individualistic orientation was driven by a collectivistic concern for the interests of the family. Much later, Sinha (2011, p. 286) reinforced this view when he reported that the importance of self-reliance was indeed part of the collectivistic preference to put it in the service of the family. His sample of Indians aspired to excel in whatever they did, preferred to be rational rather than sentimental, and valued independence of mind, but all these were invested in efforts directed to enhance the wellbeing of the family, for which the respondents were willing to make sacrifices. They believed themselves to be so embedded in their family that their success in life was gauged by the success of the family in improving its socio-economic status in the community. Earlier, Mishra (1994) had reviewed the literature to conclude that "wellbeing of family" was "a dominant concern of Indian people" (p. 237). Family integrity came out to be strongest value in India in the earlier referred 10-nations cross-cultural study (Triandis et al. 1993). Of course, the wellbeing of a family also enables its members to get better education, find and retain a suitable job, earn more money, and most importantly, provide a sanctuary for safety, security and emotional support. Thus, an individualistic endeavours to improve available family resources to further expedite individualistic strivings. Familial collectivism and individualistic endeavours of family members feed on each other.

A closer view of the earlier reported process of selecting the best suited doctor highlights this means–end relationship between collectivism and individualism. Getting the best treatment is an obvious interest for the patient. But managing a discounted fee of the doctor could be another. Getting personalized attention could still be another. An implicit, though most enduring, interest probably could be to maintain cohesiveness among friends and family that would serve as a platform to cater to other individualistic interests and goals in future. The doctor once brought into the network of the extended family, caste or friendship, can also gain by attracting other patients from the network. Thus, a doctor's collectivistic gesture to patients has a built-in individualistic interest to make more money.

The source of this means–end relationship between collectivism and individualism lies in the complex way Indians construe a context and act on it (Sinha et al. 2001, 2002). As indicated in Chap. 1, Indians view their context as consisting of an on-going flow of events of interactive situations and responses to them in a long-term perspective. The aim is to serve their own as well as the interests and goals of their in-groups within the framework of constraints and opportunities. Because Indians are both collectivists and individualists, they would tend to achieve individualistic interests and goals through individualistic and collectivistic interests and goals through collectivistic behaviour. They may do so simultaneously. For example, a boy or a girl would marry a person of his or her choice, live in the joint family even when they are grown up in order to enjoy its support, take a high paying job ideally in the town where his or her family is located, see a specialist doctor who is a family friend and so on. Similarly, villagers would claim maximum amount of relief during a disaster and allocate it according to their needs

and influence in the village; they would participate in the village level functions but would carefully calculate how little they must contribute and how much mileage they can extract; and so on.

However, there are instances where their collectivistic and individualistic interests and goals clash. They have to adopt a strategy to serve both, but sequentially as means and end on the basis of their expectancy of what can work at which time, with whom and at what place. What cannot work is kept as secret intentions that can wait for an opportune time, place and person. Till then, Indians would do what works and helps create a ground to reach their intended goal and serve interests. Thus, they would adopt often a circuitous route to get what they want. Alternatively, they can go ahead and do what they strongly want or should do, but then engage in damage control by doing something that can balance or counteract what they did earlier. They can behave collectively to serve individualistic interests and goals and individualistically to serve collectivistic interests and goals. For example, suppose a young man wants to marry a girl of his choice while his parents have chosen a different girl that they think will suit the family best. He has two options. He may keep pleading with the parents or go on a fast unto death till his parents yield to let him marry the girl of his choice. Pleading and fasting in protest are measures that keep the family milieu collectivistic, but also create a condition in which collectivistic moves are made to serve individualistic interests. If his individualistic interest is stronger than his collectivistic concern, he may go ahead and marry the girl of his choice (individualistic behaviour) but then the two may start behaving like ideal collectivists by being submissive and obedient youngsters of the family, depending on the elders and seeking their emotional support in order to restore the collectivistic ethos in the family milieu. It is also possible, as Sinha and Tripathi (1994) reported, to have a mix of both individualistic and collectivistic elements in his behaviour. For example, the young man will not marry till he and his parents come to a consensus about the girl that he likes and the parents approve. In such cases, the behaviour manifests the mix of both collectivistic and individualistic intentions. Thus, there are five possible ways in which Indians blend their intentions and behaviours in order to serve their collectivistic and individualistic interests and goals:

1. Collectivistic behaviour with collectivistic intention (*CC*).
2. Individualistic behaviour with individualistic intention (*II*).
3. Collectivistic behaviour despite individualistic intention to behave subsequently in individualistic way in order to serve individualistic intention (*CI*).
4. Individualistic behaviour despite collectivistic intention to behave subsequently in collectivistic way in order to serve a collectivistic purpose (*IC*).
5. A mix of collectivistic and individualistic intention and behaviour (*C&I*).

Which of the five options Indians choose in a particular situation depends partly on the relative strength of collectivistic and individualistic interests and goals and partly on contextual demands. Sinha and Tripathi (1994), for example, reported that, although in 17 out of 23 situations Indians opted for a mix of both collectivistic and individualistic elements in their responses, in five, where the interests

and goals were strongly individualistic, they opted more often for individualistic responses. Individualistic interests and goals pertained to deciding important issues of life, serious health problems, voting for meritorious rather than own caste candidates, etc. Sinha et al. (2001) found that family as an institution and family members as an in-group led Indians to behave in a collectivistic way to serve collectivistic interests and goals. On the other hand, compelling personal needs and goals, if juxtaposed on the interests of family or friends, caused only a shift towards individualistic behaviour or intentions, resulting in various combinations of collectivistic and individualistic behaviours and intentions.

The disagreement in the findings of two studies was probably caused by the way the scenarios were constructed. The scenarios as well as the response alternatives of Sinha and his associates were more specific and detailed. This was probably the reason that selecting a doctor evoked a mixed response in the study by Sinha and Tripathi, but an individualistic response in the study by Sinha and his associates.

A follow-up study (Sinha et al. 2002) had 20 scenarios with a person or a collective (e.g. villagers) facing a dilemma of choosing among one of the five alternatives that had a different mix of individualistic or collectivistic intentions/behaviours. Three of the five alternatives had either collectivistic options followed by individualistic behaviour, or vice versa (CI, IC & C&I). One had collectivistic intentions leading to collectivistic behaviour (CC), and another, individualistic intentions resulting in individualistic behaviour (II). Out of 20 scenarios, 10 contrasted personal versus family and friends' interests, four had individual versus collective actions, two had personalized versus contractual relationship, and four tapped gender differences. The main interest was to see the modal (most frequent) combination of intention-response for each of the 20 scenarios clustered in four groups. Appendix 2.1 shows that collectivistic intention that leads to collectivistic behaviour (CC) was the most frequently reported combination, followed closely by the mix of both collectivistic and individualistic intention and behaviour (C&I), and the collectivistic behaviour to serve individualistic interest and goals. Individualistic intention/behaviour to serve either individualistic (II) or collectivistic interest and goals (IC) was only one each. Thus, collectivistic concerns seemed to dominate the mindset, particularly with regard to the family.

Specifically, the most important goal of life for a person was to work for the prosperity and happiness of the family. Retired parents were most likely to be invited to live with their son. Family was to be banked upon if a person had a dilemma to appear at an interview for an attractive job while his or her injured friend needed a blood donation. Similarly, a person had to take care of the family, despite the urgency of preparing for an examination that could have led to an attractive job. Family thus was a provider as well as recipient of support while the members served their individualistic interests (e.g. getting a job) that too were likely to serve the family's interests eventually. Similarly, both individualistic and collectivistic interests were served by sharing marriage expenses between brothers or dinner expenses between friends. Such sharing reinforced family ties. Children's study during exams was much more crucial than guests' convenience, and hence was given the priority, although the latter too was accommodated. Children were

essentially part of the family concern. Selling a computer or practising birth control are individualistic interests, but they too were better served by taking a collectivistic route. Consulting a doctor for a serious medical problem is such an individualistic concern that it was reported to evoke purely individualistic behaviour. This was in disagreement with those by Sinha and Tripathi (1994) and Sinha et al. (1993), who found a mixed effect of both collectivistic and individualistic considerations.

There was a difference between the importance of familial and contractual relationships. Unjustified reprimand by the father did not evoke any retort but one by a boss could not be fully digested. The subordinate did not retort in public, as it might be considered impertinent, but waited for an opportune time to vent his feeling of being hurt. Villagers served in most cases their collectivistic interests through collectivistic behaviour. However, a young boy or girl did not surrender to his or parents' choice of the spouse; nor he or she would not ignore the parents. Rather, they would persuade the parents to let him or her marry the person of his or her choice. But taking a job is a different matter. The young man would take a job at a far-off place from the family, but keep trying to get a similar job near home in order to attend to his collectivistic concern. However, a young unmarried girl would take even an inferior job in the same town to live in the safe sanctuary of the family. Probably, males are more independent than females.

Another purpose of the study was to examine whether places having better infrastructure and affluence are less likely to constrain people to depend on each other, and thereby increase the probability of opting for individualistic means to achieve individualistic goals and interests. The study drew samples from five distant locations, which were varied in having the most to the least adequate infrastructure and affluence: New Delhi in the north (most adequate), Ahmedabad in the west, Bhubaneswar in the east, Tirupati in the south and Samastipur (least adequate) in the north-east parts of the country. Findings are plotted in Fig. 2.3 on the next page.

Compared to a less developed place such as Samastipur, the most developed New Delhi recorded a higher frequency of individualistic behaviours motivated by individualistic intentions (II) and a corresponding decrease in fully collectivistic choice (CC), but the latter still dominated the former. Individualistic intentions to serve collectivistic goals and interests (IC) were conspicuously missing. The most frequent response sequence had a mix of collectivistic and individualistic intentions and behaviours (C&I), vindicating the position taken by Sinha and Tripathi (1994).

2.4 A Reflective Note

Collectivism comes out as a dominant feature of the Indian mindset. People seem to own the cultural heritage of cosmic collectivism that has led to a pervasive belief in the interdependence of everything and everyone in the world. The same cultural heritage also prescribed that people should strive to acquire wealth and enjoy sensuous, including sexual, pleasures, and meet their social obligations before they strive to rise on spiritual scale. Once they are able to do so, their individualistic

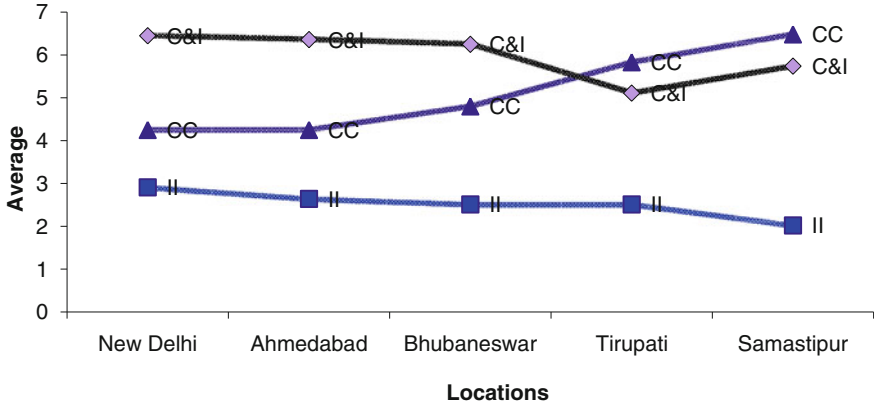

Fig. 2.3 Locational differences in collectivistic–individualistic options. *Source* Sinha et al. 2002, p. 317

"self" seeking wealth and pleasure would naturally expand into a larger and larger altruistic "Self" that would subsume others' small selves. In other words, the existential reality of the pervasive collectivism allows individualism that should lead to the rise of an all-subsuming Self—an ideal that at best can be aspired.

However, majority of people are not able to reach the ideal. They are more likely to get stuck running after wealth, seeking sensuous pleasures, and meeting social obligations, particularly to family and friends. As a result, collectivism becomes primarily family-centric. Individualistic interests and goals have to be pursued keeping the family's interests and concerns in mind. For example, a typical attribute of individualism, self-reliance, is placed in the service of the family's wellbeing and individual's success is believed to reflect the family's success. The status of a person is generally judged by the family he or she belongs to. Most people retain their family surname. In certain parts of the country, people keep father's name as the middle name (e.g. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi). There is also anecdotal evidence from public domains that Indians trust their family members and depend on them most and in many instances they rely only on them. In politics, immediate family members reign over the party despite their inability to do so. In business, sons and daughters occupy top positions irrespective of their business acumen. In films, they promote at any cost their sons and daughters. A similar trend is conspicuous in almost all domains of life.

In a larger collective of a village, villagers, too are reported to be collectivists. They are interdependent in many ways, and strive to attain common goals and interests primarily through collective efforts even at some personal costs. They often rally around their neighbours during an exigency, accompany an ailing person to a city hospital while their farming suffers, and freely volunteer help each other on special occasions (e.g. marriages, death rituals, festivals). Of course, they are mindful of their own interests and gains even during their collective efforts, and engage in feuds and fights that they manage through their family or by forming

smaller groups and cliques. Compared to villages, towns and cities have inhabitants who are less interdependent and hence less collectivistic and more individualistic. Affluent cities with adequate infrastructure do stimulate individualistic orientations, but do not quite replace the need for collectivistic indulgence. Some (e.g. Sahir Ludhianvi, Majrooh Sultanpuri, Firaq Gorakhpuri), for example, are nostalgic about their city or town and take it as part of their identity.

Of the larger collectives, castes, and religion have been deeply entrenched in the Indian societal structure from the ancient time. Initially, they were enmeshed with each other and reflected the core of Indian culture and the mindset. Over time they have evolved as complex and distinct collectives that have served a range of positive to negative purposes. They facilitated movements that built-up as well as fractured the efforts toward national building. They were high jacked by fanatics and trapped in political power game to seek power and privileges, deny social justice to others, and cause conflicts and violence (see Chap. 9). They still serve as natural sanctuaries for many Indians to seek social support and emotional anchorage. For many others, they are the means to serve individual and sectarian interests. And, for the most, they serve both—selfish and altruistic purposes.

2.5 Summary

Indians are both collectivists and individualists, inclined more towards the former than the latter. The cultural milieu is largely collectivistic having its source in the ancient belief that the Supreme *Brahman* expressed in all inanimate and animate including human beings and the divine. Thus, everything in the cosmos is interconnected and interdependent sharing the same elements (*aatman*) that the Supreme *Brahman* has. This, however, does not negate that the major goals of life such as *artha (*earning money and acquiring material affluence), dharma (discharging personal duties and social obligations to others), kaama (seeking physical, including sexual, pleasure) and *moksha* (salvation) have to be achieved through individualistic efforts. However, they are more likely to be achieved through collectivistic ways. Thus, individualism and collectivism coexist in the Indian mindset as part of ongoing interactive and interchanging means–ends relationships. Family and friends are most important considerations for Indians that generally evoke collectivistic responses. Even individualistic efforts are put to their service. Collectives such as villages too tend to address their issues in collectivistic ways. Compelling personal needs and interests such as making a career choice, medical treatments, and marrying a person of one's choice require individualistic initiatives. However, people generally find it more expedient to realize them through collectivistic means, because the latter are found to be more acceptable to others. Decreasing interdependence arising out of better infrastructure and economic affluence stimulates individualism, but do not necessarily cause a total break from collectivism. Among the larger collectives, the most salient and historically rooted are castes and religion serving a host of positive to negative interests and goals of individuals and groups.

Appendix 2.1: Modal Responses Combining Collectivism and Individualism

1. *Personal versus Family and friend's Interests*

1. Situation: A man wants to buy a computer. He does not know anything about the prices and qualities of computers. He goes to a shopkeeper who is personally known to him. What will the shopkeeper do? Modal Response (CI): He will sell at a lower price because he is a friend, expecting that the man will buy more and more and thereby benefit him in the long run.
2. Situation: The parents of a person, who is in service, live in another town. The father has just retired from his job. What will the son do? Modal Response (CC): He will get his parents to his place so that they all can live together.
3. Situation: A person has serious stomach problem. He is searching for a doctor. What will he do? Modal Response (II): He will consult an expert doctor and will get treated by him.
4. Situation: A young man is going to appear at an interview for a job which is quite attractive. He is likely to be selected. On his way, however, he gets the information that one of his friends has met an accident and needs blood immediately. What will he do? Modal Response (C&I): He will appear at the interview but arrange blood from one of his family members.
5. Situation: What should be the most important aim in a person's life? Modal Response (CC): To work for the prosperity and happiness of the family.
6. Situation: One of the two brothers in a joint family is getting his daughter married. How will the expenses be met? Modal Response (C&I): They will jointly meet the expenses so that the other brother can also take similar advantages of the joint family.
7. Situation: A young man has just been married. His parents want to have a grandchild at the earliest, but he and his wife want to delay it. What will they do? Modal Response (CI): They will persuade the parents to let them delay having a child so that they can fully enjoy their marital life.
8. Situation: A distant relative has come over to a person's house with his wife's treatment. The treatment may take days or weeks. The house is small and the children's study may suffer. Their examinations are due shortly. What will the person do? Modal Response (IC): He will arrange their accommodation near the hospital and extend full help in the treatment.

9. Situation: Two friends are taking dinner in an expensive restaurant. How will they pay the bill? Modal Response (C&I): They will share the bill equally.
10. Situation: A young man is preparing for a competitive examination for a top class job. He is hopeful to succeed if he prepares well. Suddenly his father dies. His mother is sick and two younger brothers are going to a college. There is no one else to manage the family business. What will he do? Modal Response (C&I): He will take care of the family and the business, but will also prepare for the examination.

2. *Personalized versus Contractual Relationship*

11. Situation: A newly imported expensive machine in a factory has broken down. The manager reprimands a supervisor in the presence of others, although the latter is not responsible for the breakdown. What will the supervisor do? Modal Response: (CI): He will not say a word in the presence of others; but later on will express his resentment to the manager in private.
12. Situation: A young man has been running around for a job. One evening, while he is watching TV, his father returns from his office, and starts rebuking him for watching TV instead of searching for a job. What will the young man do? Modal Response (CC): He will not say a word, lest his father feels insulted.

3. *Individual versus Collective Action*

13. Situation: A group of people in a community has formed a society for community development. What could be the mostly likely reason? Modal Response: (CC): They intend to develop the community.
14. Situation: An old man in a poor class locality has died. The bereaved family needs money for the rituals. What will the people of the locality do? Modal Response (CC): They will help the family and participate in all rituals from cremation to *shradha* [final ritual], disregarding their own work.
15. Situation: People of a locality have to decide whom to vote in the forthcoming election. Whom will they vote? Modal Response (C&I): To one who deserves on merit and will work for the benefit of the community.
16. Situation: A village has been badly flooded. Government has sent relief to the village. What will the villagers do? Modal Response (CC): They will share the relief according to their needs.

4. *Gender Difference*

17. Situation: A young man wants to marry a girl of his choice while his parents have chosen a different girl for him. What will he do?
    Modal Response: (CI): He will persuade his parents to let him marry the girl of his choice.
18. Situation: A girl wants to marry a boy of her choice while her parents have chosen a different boy for her. What will she do? Modal Response (CI): She will persuade her parents to let her marry the boy of her choice.
19. Situation: A young man has two job offers: An ordinary in his own town where his parents live; and another one, a much better one, in a distant town. Which one will he take? Modal Response (C&I): The one in the distant town, although he will keep looking for an equally good job in his own town.
20. Situation: A young unmarried woman has two job offers: An ordinary in her own town where her parents live; and another one, a much better one, in a distant town. Which one will she take? Modal Response (CC): The one in her own town so that she can live with her parents.

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Chapter 3
Hierarchy and Power Process

3.1 The Cultural Conditioning of Hierarchy

3.1.1 Genesis of Hierarchy

One of the most pressing needs that we all have is to feel positive about ourselves, though we are not quite sure how we really are. So, we look around and compare with others. We compare our physical prowess, social skills, intellectual capability, roles and positions, wealth, achievements, background, rights and entitlements and all other conceivable as well as inconceivable attributes, possessions and experiences. We prefer to look for relevant others who are around us and about whom we know. They are the similar others who are living around us and have similar demographics and records of success and failures. So they are readily comparable. However, we also find ourselves comparing even with those who are distantly located, dissimilar or vaguely known. We look for benchmarks and ideal referents to find out where we stand. If we find ourselves as better off than most of them, we feel positive with a sense of superiority. Otherwise we feel bad and strive to do whatever we can to overcome our inferiority, catch up with them and hopefully excel them. We even invent unusual criteria to feel one notch above them who are otherwise better off. We feel worse if we fail to do anything about our inferior position and may even engage in dubious means or fantasize to compensate in order to feel better at least in temporary or vicarious ways.

As we derive a major part of our identity from the collectives we belong to, we also compare our collectives—family, friends, community, caste, religion, language, region and country—with their counterparts in order to find out where they stand. As we are part of them, we tend to claim credit for their superiority and introject blame for their inferiority. When India shines or the Indian diaspora excels, we feel great! But when India loses, say, in cricket in international ratings, we feel depressed. In other words, social comparison is a pervasive and basic human function, which arranges individuals and collectives into various hierarchical orders and strata on the basis of their actual or perceived attributes, success and failures. Hierarchy is a basic frame that people develop and evoke to organize their thoughts and acts.

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3.1.2 Cultural Mediation

Cultures mediate and condition the process of social comparison and the resultant nature of the hierarchical order. Cultures differ in how they view and handle inequality in a society. The American culture, for example, posits that individuals are essentially equal and hold the positions of a superior and subordinate as a part of contractual agreement about their roles and responsibilities (Roland 1988, p. 101). So, people in such cultures evaluate and allocate status and power to individuals and collectives on the basis of their capabilities and responsibilities to discharge their roles. They compare their capabilities and responsibilities with those of others to see whether power and status has been distributed justifiably. The justice in allocating resources, in this case power and status, is called distributive justice (Adams 1965; Baldwin 1966; Krishnan 2011). But they also want to be sure that the procedures of comparison of capabilities as well as the allocation of power and status are fair and transparent. That is, procedural justice has been maintained. A janitor, for example, is justifiably at the bottom in organizational hierarchy while the director is at the top because of their different levels of skills, expertise and span of responsibilities that are appraised diligently. However, as soon as they step out of their roles and run into each other, say in a nightclub, the hierarchy dissolves and a different one emerges in which the janitor may even have an edge over the director in case he dances more skilfully or is better in attracting partners. In all modern societies that Inkeles (1960) surveyed, the status of individuals was based on their occupation, income and education. Surgeons, businessmen, executives and professors enjoy higher status, but only in their specific domains. In other words, positions in an egalitarian society are based on one's achievements, are confined to the domain of his or her expertise and remain intact only till he or she competently discharges the responsibilities.

On the contrary, cultures, which assume that human beings are inherently unequal, place individuals and collectives in pre-determined categories that are hierarchically arranged; not because of their effort or ability (or lack of it) or roles and responsibilities, but because people are either born or destined to fall in such categories. The categories themselves are ranked arbitrarily, according to historical traditions, or certain natural advantages. For example, hierarchy in races, castes, gender and classes is human made. Others are created jointly by human conduct and whims of nature. The higher status assigned to people from an advanced region or country compared to those from a backward one is such an example. Cultures believing in the inherent inequality of human beings are called "vertical" (Triandis and Bhawuk 1997). In vertical cultures, irrespective of their locations at remotely distant places on the globe, a common emphasis is on steeply hierarchical relationship: "In parent-child relations, husband-wife relations, politics, religion and economics, the same super-ordinate-subordinate pattern of unconditional submission [of the underdog] applies" (Albert 1968, p. 289).

3.2 Indian Hierarchical Orientation

Indian culture is reported to be vertical collectivist (Triandis and Bhawuk 1997) where most of the relationships are hierarchically structured. About 70 % of people live in rural areas where almost all people are stratified in terms of caste, religion, gender, age, family background, kinship and so on. A bit less but urban Indians too subscribe to these ascribed bases of hierarchy. Because the culture is collectivist, the ascribed indicators of status are consolidated across domains. A lower caste person is generally looked down upon by the higher people, irrespective of his or her other qualities. A janitor remains subservient to his or her director wherever they run into each other. Similarly, a born-rich person (e.g. maharaja) or those from famous families (e.g. Nehrus, Gandhis, Tatas and Birlas) would enjoy a higher status and would claim superiority in even those domains where he or she is not necessarily superior. Similarly, super-rich businessmen, politicians in power, chief executives, famous scientists, artists and athletes are also deemed to be elites across a number of domains, irrespective of the specificity of their expertise and achievement. They carry a sense of superiority wherever they go and feel uncomfortable whenever their superiority is undermined (see Box 3.1).

Box 3.1. A Cultural Shock
It was indeed a shock! I had invited a very senior Indian professor to give a seminar to my American undergraduate students in Hunter College of the City University of New York. After the seminar, while we were having a chat with the students, I most politely offered my professor another cup of coffee. Lo and behold, one of the students asked me, 'Jai, please bring some coffee for me too'. How could a student, instead of volunteering to bring coffee for both me and my professor, ask me to do so! And that in front of my own professor!! I had been stretching myself to behave like American professors; I was indeed informal with them. But that was outlandish! (Personal experience of the author).

The most deep rooted source of hierarchy in India is the caste system. The genesis of the caste hierarchy goes back to the *Rig Veda*. Initially, it was conceived as the mainframe of the social order of by fostering mutual responsibility, inter-dependence, and spiritual authority. However, *dharmashaastras* turned it into an unjust hierarchy (Bèteille 1983, p. 18). The colonial narratives petrified it as all pervasive, totalizing, and uniform religious order that was supposed to define Indian culture, society, and traditions (Dirks 2001). As a result, the caste system became so formidably enduring that countless of legal, social, religious, and political assaults have been able to at best dent it here and there. Caste hierarchy has been further reinforced by class differences. Poverty in India is not only acute and pervasive, it is also differentially distributed along the caste hierarchy. Lower castes are generally

poorer and deprived. Hence, the combined effects of class and caste ("claste") have rendered a whole lot of people quite vulnerable. They are not only lower in status but are over-dependent on those who are relatively better off. According to Srinivas (1988/1977), a sociologist, they not only suffer status loss, but willingly prostrate before the affluent ones and inflate the latters' sense of superiority in order to establish a *maai-baap* (paternalistic) relationship. The *maai-baap* is supposed to take care of them in turn for total surrender and complete acceptance of their superiority by openly engaging in flattery of them. He observed the following:

> Individuals who were economically and socially inferior seemed only too eager to agree with their superior, and flatter him when an opportunity presented itself. Agreeing with a superior and flattering him were approved if not prescribed ways of getting on, and every patron attracted one or more flatterers (Srinivas 1988/1997, p. 266).

The claste (class + caste) hierarchy over the years has fostered a super-ordination—subordination relationship that has permeated in almost all Indian institutions. A psycho-analytically oriented scholar observed the following:

> In India, this automatic reverence for superior is a nearly universal psycho-social fact (p. 138). … The principle of hierarchal ordering of social dependencies extends beyond home base in the extended family to every other institution in Indian life, from the *jajmani* system to corporate business, from *guru-chela* relationship in religious education to departmental staffing in an Indian university, from village *panchayat* to highest reaches of government bureaucracy (Kakar 1978, p. 119).

Claste fosters hierarchically structured forms of social transactions that in turn shape a hierarchical mindset where accepting, obeying, surrendering and respecting a superior or person in authority comes handy. A superior is expected to reciprocate by patronizing, helping, guiding and inspiring the subordinate. Naturally, a vertical team headed by a superior is better than the one where all members are treated as equal for participating and making decisions. In a vertical team the leader listens to all, but takes and owns the decision and its outcome. It spares the team members from the stress of making decisions as well as the risk of getting wrong. Furthermore, Indians know from their childhood how to behave with seniors and juniors in the family. According to a political scientist, it is easier to work in superior-subordinate relationship than as equals (Kothari 1970).

Perceiving as equals in the social comparison process causes uncertainty about one's position in the hierarchy and confusion about how to behave. In a culture with deeply entrenched inequality, it is not unusual to find oneself one notch up on one attribute, but two notches down on others or vice versa. That causes envy in either case: "Envy was a familiar phenomenon … A well-to-do person expected others to envy him and feared such envy … . All this resulted in an ambivalent attitude towards inmates and equals—there was need for wariness" (Srinivas 1988/1997, pp. 281–283). Envy in seeing others as superiors tends a person to do whatever he or she can do to catch up with them or to pull them down. On the other hand, the fear of envy from those below keeps one on the toe to guard against them. Such a mindset requires constant scanning of those who are not either irreversibly superior or inferior. Even friends are compared on real or imagined attributes and are placed in

a subtle hierarchy for the ease of behaving appropriately. By the same token, even those who perceive themselves as superiors can never be too sure that they can retain their superiority. There is always a fear that someone might outwit and usurp the superiority. So, a constant vigilance is called for. Those who are higher ups must keep on pushing up by collecting whatever resources they can while guarding against those who seem like overtaking them. This is the Lord Indra syndrome. Mighty Indra, the lord of Gods and Goddesses, should not have any fear, particularly from a mortal soul. But his throne used to start wobbling whenever a *rishi* (sage) continued with his *tapasya* (ascetic practices) for a while; for Indra apprehended that the *rishi* might be up to supersede and dethrone him. He would send the *apsaraa* (divine dancer) Rambha to distract the *rishi* from his *tapasya*. There are numerous parallels in modern India. There are also numerous examples of individuals and collectives toppling the pre-existing hierarchy and setting up a new one in their favour.

3.2.1 The Emerging Trend of Discordance

Despite the hierarchical worldview that is framed in social institutions and claste (caste + class) structure, there are individuals who break the barriers and ride quite high in the pyramid. There always have been such individuals—right from ancient times. Exceptionally bright, gifted or ambitious individuals, despite their humble origin or low caste, have been able to command respect and reverence in the Indian society. Those individuals who exceedingly succeeded in achieving any of the major life goals (*artha*, dharma, kaama and *moksha*) were able to rise in the social hierarchy. Both kings and fakirs were held in high esteem in the society; kings because of their wealth and power, particularly if they used them judiciously, and fakirs because they renounced the material world, wished well for others and were closer to the divine. Even now, saints who are believed to be completely realized are called *bhagavan*' (God). If a person helps someone out of big trouble, he is considered to be a saviour like *bhagavan.* Similarly, those who are honest, truthful, affectionate and helpful command high respect. Not that the formal hierarchy is forgotten or undermined, but genuine respect is reserved for them. They are considered to be superior beings notwithstanding how high or low they stand in a formal hierarchy. Roland (1988), for example, reported that there are institutions in India that

> ···have changed their system of authority from usual structural hierarchy of unquestioned subordination and loyalty to the superior to one in which there is a benevolent leader in a hierarchy by quality, and in which the subordinates deeply respect him and profoundly need the reciprocal relationship to function well. In turn, the leader encourages maximum individual participation and initiative, with minimum of structural hierarchy (p. 102).

However, things have changed drastically in the present time (see Chap. 8 for details). After Independence, caste and religious discriminations were legally banned. Reservations in jobs for erstwhile untouchable castes and tribes (now called Scheduled Castes and Tribes) enabled many individuals from them to bypass the societal hierarchy and occupy positions of authority and power in

various public domains. Universal franchise toppled the political hegemony of higher castes in politics. Because of their numerical superiority, the backward castes displaced higher castes from positions of power in many instances. So did, to a limited extent, Scheduled Castes and Tribes wherever they could manage to gain an edge over others.

People's values have changed too. Liberalization of the economy since the 1990s, adoption of a capitalist mode of development, and global influences on the culture have turned money into a meta-value that overwhelms all other values. New opportunities are created and there is a surge of optimism. Most people aspire to exploit opportunities, accumulate wealth and power and gain clout in the public domain, which can help them rise in societal hierarchy. There is a fast-expanding middle class of over 300 million people—many of who belong to the traditionally lower strata of society. Interestingly, the new rich and the new achievers, once they get to a high pedestal, start behaving like traditional elites. They emulate the lavish lifestyle and, more importantly, disdain those amidst whom they used to live till yesterday. The same steeply hierarchical mindset with built-in individualistic impulses takes hold of them, maybe because it has deep roots in ancient thought.

Let us take a look at the roots.

3.3 Ancient Hierarchical Worldview

Ancient Indians conceptualized the cosmos as hierarchical. All inanimate and animates are arranged in a hierarchical order on the basis of their proximity to the *Brahman.* There are four major strata, each having a finer hierarchy within itself. Inanimate objects fall at the bottom of the hierarchy. Among animates, human beings are superior to animals, birds and insects. Divine characters are superior to human beings and closest to the *Brahman.* All inanimate and animates have to follow the law of karma to climb the hierarchy through the cycle of 8.4 million births before they can get free from the cycle (i.e. *moksha*) and fused with the *Brahman.* Good conduct helps progress while bad ones can cause to regress. Most beings keep progressing and regressing within infinite number of births without ever attaining the union with the *Brahman.*

Varna was the main frame to hold the hierarchical order among human beings. There were four segments among them: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras. The *Purusasukta* hymn of the *Rig Veda* had the metaphor of body to designate the *varna*s: Brahmins are the head, Kshatriyas the arms, Vaishyas the trunk and Sudras are the feet. They were ranked from top down signifying the decreasing order of superiority. *Varna* was originally the basis for division of labour that itself was ranked—descending from intellectual and spiritual practices to fighting and protecting people to business and farming, and finally to serving the superior castes. *Varna* gradually got associated with varying degrees of purity–impurity and sacredness that were used as a primary basis for granting disproportionately huge social privileges to Brahmins and Kshatriyas and imposing harsh sanctions on Sudras.

Later on, *varna*s were replaced by *jati*s having many more variants. Now, we have thousands of castes and sub-castes that are vying for superiority over each other within the overarching hierarchy of higher, intermediate and lower level castes. Within a caste, superiority depends on gender, age and seniority in relationships. Older persons, males and seniors in relationships are considered superiors to younger, females and juniors respectively. The various combinations of the three determine a fine-grained hierarchy of a number of vertical and horizontal positions that Indians occupy in the social network.

There are two features of the caste hierarchy that need a closer review. First, the collectivistic nature of the cosmos signified inter-connectedness, and hence interdependence among the different constituents of the caste hierarchy. The body image of caste hierarchy, for example, indicated that it was an organismic conception having interdependence as the essential feature where "no part of the whole may claim exclusive importance and superiority over others; collaboration and exchange of services are the essence" (Lannoy 1971/2008, p. 143). This was illustrated in part by the fact that "While the Brahman is spiritually or absolutely superior, he is materially dependent [on the king]; whilst the king is materially master, he is spiritually subordinate [to Brahmin]" (Dumont and Pocock 1961, p. 35). Brahmins are dependent not only on a king but also on the people of other castes, who utilize their services in performing religious rituals. Brahmins are believed to be the intermediaries in approaching Gods and Goddesses. But their material sustenance comes mostly from their non-Brahmin clients who often make Brahmins realize their economic dependence on them. Even a *chandaal,* belonging to the lowest caste, has supremacy over higher castes when a dead body from the latter is to be cremated. The *chandaal* demands a tax that has to be paid before the cremation can take place. All Hindu social and religious rituals involve persons of multiple castes who gain temporary supremacy during rituals. However, it is also a reality that the higher castes wield greater power and influence to extend their superiority over other domains of social transactions. Caste hierarchy in India has generally been reinforced by a broad corresponding class and social hierarchy. Lower and even intermediate caste people are also on the whole poorer and socially deprived. Here lies a paradox. There definitely exists a firmly held caste hierarchy that spills over a number of domains, but still carries an ethos that different castes are at least occasionally interdependent within the largely collectivist culture of India.

The second feature of the caste hierarchy presents another paradox right from ancient times. That is, the culture recognizes merit and qualities and allows exemplary achieving individuals to transcend their caste-based constraints and rise higher in the hierarchy. Indian mythology is full of the instances where sages and saints were respected, worshiped and obeyed by kings and other rich and powerful persons. Similarly, Bhawuk (2008) reported numerous instances where caste hierarchy was reversed by changing the caste-based roles, for example, a Brahmin learning from a Kshatriya (in the *Chhandogya Upanishad*), a monk from a butcher

and housewife (in the *Mahabharata*) and the old from the young (e.g. Sanat Kumars, Sukhadeva, Prahalad, Dhruva and so on). Lannoy (1971/2008, p. 122) listed the following instances where non-Kshatriyas assumed Kshatriyas' role by becoming king:

- The founder of the Nanda dynasty was the son of a Sudra's mother.
- The Mauryas probably were Vaisyas.
- The Sungas were Brahmins.
- Chandragupta Maurya married a princess from the great tribe of the Lichhavis.
- The Pallavas were probably of aboriginal origin.
- The Pratiharas were descendants of the Gurjar tribe.
- The Pala king, Gopala, was probably an aboriginal.
- Some of the rajputs who claimed to be the s*urya-vansi* (descendants of the sun) were the descendants of Huns (e.g. Sisodias) or aboriginals (e.g. Rathors).

Box 3.2. The Story Satyakama
Satyakama wanted to become a student of the Sage Gautama (not Buddha). Before leaving home, he asked his mother what *gotra* (family lineage) he belonged to. His mother said to him, 'I do not know my child, of what family thou art. In my youth when I had to move about much as a servant (waiting on the guests in my father's house), I conceived thee. I do not know what family thou art. I was Jabala by name, thou art Satyakama. So, thou art Satyakama Jabala'. When Satyakama said these words to Gautama, the teacher said, 'No one but a true *Brahman* would thus speak out. Go and fetch fuel, friend. I shall initiate you. You have not swerved from the truth (from the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, cited by Nehru 1946/2001, pp. 177–178).

Assigning the status of the highest caste to a young man of illegitimate parenthood, thus, did not negate caste hierarchy, but used another virtue of Brahminism to re-define his eligibility (see Box 3.2). That is, hierarchy is the reality within which all inanimate, animate and divine characters rise and fall as a result of their good or bad conducts. Even the divine characters were not exceptions. Some of them descended on Earth in human and animal forms in order to serve higher purposes or alleviate the miseries of their devotees. But others were cursed to take human forms or even turned into stone. For example, the Hindu trinity—Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh—assumed human and animal forms and had to experience human pains and pleasures. But Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Vishnu once had a quarrel and cursed each other to turn into *Shaligram shila*. The wife of

Rishi Gautama, Ahilya, though a pious woman, was attracted to Indra at first sight. Gautama got angry and cursed Indra to become a eunuch and Ahilya to turn into a stone. The *apsaraa* (divine dancer) Rambha was unrivalled in the arts of dancing, music and lovemaking. Lord Indra deputed her to disturb the *tapasya* (ascetic meditation) of Rishi Vishwamitra, who cursed her into stone for 10,000 years. On the other hand, there are instances where human beings rose on the scale of merit to enter heaven in their human body. According to the *Aitareya Upanishad*, those who follow Vedic injunctions and perform sacrifices in appropriate and adequate ways become the God Fire (Agni), Sun (Surya) or Air (Vaayu). On the contrary, those who transgress Vedic prescriptions are born into a lower order of being, such as birds and reptiles.

The sum and substance is that the Indian mindset is predominantly hierarchical with a built-in provision to recognize qualities that propel individuals to transcend their ascribed status. This principle holds for everyone and everything. The three *gunas* of *sattva* (light, purity, subtlety), *raajas* (passion, energy, physical vitality) and *taamas* (inaction, impurity, lethargy) were ranked and attributed to Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Sudras, respectively (Bose 1975, p. 91; Bèteille 1977, p. 31). The five sheaths (*koshas*) of the Self are ranked from the gross to the subtle. As we look around, almost everything and everyone is ranked as being superior to some and inferior to other persons and entities.

And yet, there are instances in mythology where individual entities were pure or sacred or close enough to Gods and Goddesses to gain a superior position. *Shaligram shila* among stones, Kailash among mountains, Ganga among rivers, basil among herbs, banyan, sacred fig, mango and *neem* (margosa) among trees (Dagar 1995; Gupta 1991) and so on are some examples of exemplar superiority. The same principle of accommodating individuals' qualities while arranging everything and everyone in a hierarchical order guides the Indian mindset today.

3.4 Power Distance and Hierarchical Order

The construct of power distance was introduced by Mulder (1976) and was used to assess the extent of hierarchical order in a culture (Hofstede 1980), although power does not necessarily flows from a hierarchy. Power distance is the difference in the power of individuals or collectives. For example, the power of A over B means the capacity of A to make B do what B would not do on her or his own. Because of the Western value of the autonomy of individuals, it is assumed that B would not do what she or he does not like to do unless she or he is unable to resist the pressure from A. So, B will resist the power of A. How much she or he can resist would depend on her or his power over A. If B has less power over A than A has over B, then B will yield to the extent she or he has less power. That is the power

distance between A and B. Because B yields to A, the latter is perceived to have a higher status in this interpersonal hierarchy. Thus, power is the basis of one's status in a hierarchy, and therefore, is much sought after in the society.

Mulder (1977, p. 92) suggested four major trends in how power distance works on the basis of his finding that the mere exercise of power gives satisfaction to a person:

1. The more powerful individual strives to maintain, if not increase, the power distance from a less powerful person, probably because the greater the distance, the more she or he will be sure of her or his superiority and feel greater satisfaction.
2. The greater the power distance, the greater is the capability of the more powerful person to make the less powerful person yield more and more, and thus would increase the power distance further.
3. This imbalance in power will not be of liking to the less powerful person. So, he or she would try to reduce the power distance in order to lessen the pressure on him or her to yield and thereby reduce his or her feeling of being inferior.
4. However, the irony is that the greater the power distance, the less room the less powerful person would have to manoeuvre to reduce it. By the same token, the lesser the distance, the greater is the chance that the less powerful person can push to reduce it further. That is, a larger power distances reduces the expectancy to reduce it further while a smaller power distances increases the expectancy to reduce the distance.

Thus, power distance tends to increase further if it is already large and to decrease if it is small. In situations of a large power distance, the less powerful person does not try to reduce it because she or he is afraid of retaliation from the more powerful person, who feels rather less restraint to wield her or his power. If the two agree over the power distance, their vertical positions in the hierarchy are confirmed and the less powerful person is even afraid to disagree with the more powerful one. Hofstede (1980) cited studies in the USA, Venezuela and India regarding how subordinates are afraid to disagree with their superiors. For example, an Indian executive having a Ph.D degree from a prestigious American university was quoted as reporting the following:

> What is most important for me and my department is not what I do or achieve for the company, but whether the Master's (i.e. an owner of the firm) favour is bestowed on me … . This I have achieved by saying 'yes' to everything the Master says or does … . To contradict him is to look for another job. … I left my freedom of thought in Boston (Nagandhi and Prasad 1971, p. 128 cited by Hofstede 1980 p. 74).

Earlier, Srinivas (1988/1997) was quoted reporting the same tendency of socio-economically weak people agreeing with powerful persons by way of flattering them. This is how the caste hierarchy in India is so entrenched that even constitutional measures to erase it have not been quite successful. Sinha (2004) found the same trend in Indian managers in five foreign multinationals. He observed the following:

> They [Indian managers] were not in the habit of saying "no" to a boss even for something that they were not in a position to do, nor did the boss relish hearing "no" from them. This was particularly because of the hierarchical superior-subordinates relationships. Indian bosses were generally status conscious. Most of them did not feel comfortable walking over to their subordinates' desk nor did they like their subordinates to disagree with them openly (Sinha 2004, pp. 252–253).

Hofstede (1980, p. 75) used this fear of subordinates to disagree with their superiors as a measure of power distance between them. He added two more items in his power distance measure: Subordinates' (a) perception of how autocratic rather than persuasive or paternalistic their boss was and (b) the degree of preference for an autocratic over a consultative or democratic boss. He reported that Indians had much higher scores on power distance (average of 77 out of 100) than on collectivism (52 out of 100). As a result, Indian culture was ranked fourth on power distance among 40 cultures. Higher power distance in Indian culture has also been confirmed in the GLOBE study (House et al. 2004) that disclosed that Indian society stood at the rank of 15 among 62 societies.

In sum, the observations of various Indian social scientists as well as the accounts from ancient texts on the hierarchical nature of Indian culture were substantiated by the empirical evidence of high power distance between subordinates and superiors in Indian organizations.

3.5 The Power Process in Indian Culture

Indian culture is indeed hierarchical where the magnitude of power differentials determines the position of individuals and collectives in the societal hierarchy as well as how they relate with each other. However, the magnitude of power is not sufficient to capture the complexity of power dynamics affecting interpersonal and intergroup relationships. There are two other factors that render power dynamics in the Indian culture more complex than we find in the West.

3.5.1 Cultural Construction of Power

Western conceptualization of power (the capacity of A to overcome the resistance put forth by B, forcing B do what B would not do on his own) subscribes essentially to a conflict model that is based on the individualist assumption that A and B are autonomous individuals who do want to influence and control others, but do not like themselves to be pressed to do what that they do not like. Own autonomy and mastery over others (including environment) are the basics of the Western mindset. Mastery is the most basic motive in the Western formulation of human functioning (White 1959).

Neither the assumption of autonomy of individuals nor of the centrality of the mastery motive is quite applicable to Indians who are more "dividuals" than individuals (Marriot 1976). Chapter 2 discusses how they are embedded in their collectives, an important concern of which is to maintain harmony. Because of the primacy of the mastery motive, Western culture values primary control by changing others, systems and the environment (Azuma 1984). Primary control also remains a dominant trend in Indian culture. For example, Kautilya in the fourth century BCE posited that "Power is [possession of] strength" that "changes [other's] mind" (*Arthashastra*, 6.2.31: 319 and 7.14.2: 366). Power, according to Kautilya, lies in the use of increasingly aggressive ways: *saama* (conciliation), *daama* (reward, bribe), *bheda* (causing dissension in adversary) and *danda* (coercive ways). However, there exists another stream of thought that idealized and preferred secondary control in changing oneself in order to adjust and maintain harmony with others, systems and environment (Sinha and Kanungo 1997). Preference for both primary and secondary controls coexists in the Indian mindset. Earlier, we have noted that Indians do not disagree with a more powerful person even if he is wrong. They refrain from saying "no" to a superior even if they are asked for something they cannot do. The underlying concern is that the superior would lose face causing disharmony between them. An extreme example of changing the other's thinking by engaging in self-directed measures is the practice of resorting to fast-unto-death for a right cause that Mahatma Gandhi popularized. The person resorting to fast goes through self-suffering in order to evoke a good sense in others who are believed to experience part of the suffering, and thereby see the merit of the cause through the lens of empathy.

Because of these cultural differences, the power dynamics is expected to operate differently and power relationships are likely to assume a different pattern. For example, if A and B are not keen on their autonomy and individual freedom, the flow of influence between them would not imply violation of their individual volition, and hence would not be subjected to any resistance. Rather, the influence may flow freely in both directions, reinforcing their sense of harmony. A less powerful person might need and in fact seek influence from the more powerful person who senses the former's needs and expectations and meets them without being asked for. The power relationship in such instances is essentially complementary rather than conflicting.

McClelland (1975) observed that power in the traditional Indian mode is expressed through "giving" important resources to others. "Giving" away important resources is part of a central theme in Indian thought. It is called *daana* that includes not only giving charity to needy ones and cash and kind to Brahmins, but giving the most valued things such as one's daughter to the groom in marriage (*kanyaadaana*), a cow to a Brahmin (*godaana*), a piece of land to a landless (*bhoodaana*), one's kingdom (*raajyadaana*), blood (*raktadaana*) and even one's life (*jeevanadaana*). The more important a resource or the greater self-sacrifice in a "giving", the more meritorious *daana* becomes. Giving away one's life for a higher cause is the highest *daana* that one can make. Granting a person his life (*jeevanadaana*) that is to be taken away is also highly meritorious. There are a

number of instances in the mythology of such examples of *jeevanadaana*. For example, the sage Dadhichi gave his bones to Lord Indra so that he could create *vajra* (thunder) to kill the demon Vritrasura. King Shivi cut off his limbs piece by piece and offered them to a falcon in exchange for life to a pigeon who sought his protection from the falcon.

McClelland, from his Western perspective of the principle of exchange, viewed "giving" differently. He argued that the more a person gives away important resources, the more he feels powerful because he is entitled to demand more in return "… renunciation, yielding, and self-sacrifices often serve only to make a strong urge to power" (p. 143). In the Western exchange model where everything has a market value and has to be exchanged accordingly (Bellah et al. 1985), giving automatically obliges the recipient who must reciprocate at the earliest and in equal value, lest he remain indebted (Blau 1964), and end up losing his face and position in the hierarchy. So, giving is an investment which is sure to bring an equivalent return or a power differential. In contrast, *daana*, ideally, is a natural duty (dharma) that an Indian must discharge as and when he has the opportunity to do so. Chakraborty (1987) quotes the *Taittiriya Upanishad*: "The offering (*daana*) should be with honour … should be plenty … with modesty … with awe … with sympathy" (p. 167). There is no expectation of instant reciprocity. It indeed enriches both the one who gives because of the feedback that he did his duty and the one who receives by meeting his needs. Brahmins receive it from all other castes, but still maintain their superiority. Buddhist monks are supposed to live on alms, but are held in high esteem. The givers do not generally feel they have obliged the recipients. They do, however, earn the moral credit for doing what they should ideally do even at a cost. Hence, they do rise on the moral scale, but are not entitled to demand any return except to spontaneously evoke appreciation and reverence.

The person giving *daana* of course believes to receive much more than what he gives away, but neither from the same recipient nor instantly. He contributes towards creating a culture of giving away important resources where everyone is benefitted over time. *Daana* is a societal mechanism for a need-based distribution of resources in order to create and sustain empathy for and sensitivity to each other. There are forms of "giving" away, where there is in fact no immediate recipient. Renunciation of material possessions is one. *Tapa*, which literary means to burn, is another in which one gives away physical comforts, engages in ascetic practices and resorts to yoga and meditation in order to rise on the spiritual level. *Tapa* endows the person with a glow of spiritual power that radiates and inspires those around him. The *tapasvi* (one who does *tapa*) does not have to exert his spiritual power over others. Ordinary people as well as mighty ones flock around him and seek his or her blessing and guidance in self-enlightenment.

The commonness between *daana* and *tapa* is the element of self-sacrifice enhancing the moral or spiritual standing that attracts lesser people to seek influence or inspiration rather than being forced to behave in particular ways. Power is sought after and granted rather than wielded. However, neither *daana* nor spiritual inspiration is granted indiscriminately. Ideally, it should be granted only

to those who deserve. The criteria to decide who deserves could be three: Equity, equality and need. The literature on the principles of resource allocation suggests that collectivist Indians prioritize need and equality over merit and equity (Berman et al. 1985). However, in reality it is personalized relationships within an in-group that actually count. Once a decision favouring an in-group member is made, the principle of merit, need or equality is evoked to rationalize the decision. Family, as discussed in Chap. 2, is the most salient in-group. Although the whole universe is ideally one's family (*basudhaiva kutumbakam*), only the immediate family, close friends and persons who are close like family members are considered as deserving. Even the Godheads are found to nominate their near and dear ones to inherit their spiritual heritage as well as material wealth. The out-group members, on the contrary, are subjected to the exchange mode that may assume extremely asymmetrical forms. Any "giving away" of important resources indeed would have a built-in intention to extract special favours, including undue ones (see Chap. 8).

3.5.2 Perceptual Frame

The critical factor in resource allocation is the in-group–out-group differences. It is a universal psychological process to identify who are *apane* (in-group) sharing affinity and who are *paraye* (out-group members), having an indifferent relationship. It is also universally true that people are more positive about in-groups than out-groups. Cultures, however, differ in the extent of maintaining differences and acting on them. Collectivistic, compared to individualistic, cultures foster fewer in-groups that are more sharply differentiated from out-groups (Triandis 1995). Indians confirm this trend. They conspicuously favour *apane log* (own people) over *paraye log* (others, out-group members) (Sinha 1995). Power flows freely among *apane log*—power positions enriching both the more and less powerful members who trust each other, cater to each other's needs and expectations, give and receive resources, and enhance harmony. Power relationships with the out-group members, on the contrary, follow the principle of exchange with vigorous attempts to increase the power distance, usurp resources, control and exploit others. No wonder that seeking dominance was the highest and seeking help was the second highest need of the Khalapur children in the famous study of six cultures (Hitchock and Mintern 1963) and coercive and referent are the most dominant bases of power among Indian bank managers (Singh-Sengupta 1990). In between the two, there exists a rather large twilight zone in which Indians are less sure of who are *apane* or *paraye*, and hence engage in an intense power game of pretending to treat *paraye* as *apane* by ingratiating and manipulating them. Quite often, Indians navigate between the three modes depending on the certainty and quality of relationships. An account of the three patterns of power relationships is as follows.

3.5.3 *Power Process Among* Apane Log

In Chap. 2, *apane log* consist mostly of family, close friends and relatives. A few of those who started as *paraye* may end up being *apane* because of their unconditional services, proven personal loyalty and devotional dedication. *Apane log* form a bond where the superior is expected to take care of subordinates. The nature of normative relationship is drawn from the cultural prescription for the superior to be nurturant and the subordinate to be dependent. The source of this cultural mode goes to the primary socialization characterized by an "intense father-son emotional attachment ... constantly striving to gain evidence of father's respect and recognition" (Roland 1988, p. 31) by coming up to his expectations. This leads to a sense of "active submission of subordinates [even after they grew up] leading to the development of individuals with strong and enduring need for dependency as a part of their core personality" (Kakar 1971, p. 100). Roland (1988) observed:

> … Indian hierarchical relationships are oriented towards firmly internalized expectations in both superior and subordinate for reciprocity and mutual obligations in a more closely emotionally connected relationships. Where traditionally there are few if any contractual agreements, the superior in particular is profoundly assumed to be concerned, giving, and responsible for his or her subordinates, and the subordinates to be loyal and deferential to the superior (p. 32).

The nurturant superior provides patronage, guidance and direction to subordinates. He feels concerned for the wellbeing of them, discipline, reprimand, help, protect and promote them in both formal and informal relationships. Subordinates reciprocate by being submissive and loyal. They show deference and seek out the superior's blessings (*kripa)*. They are so deferential to the superior that they do not feel like expressing their raw feelings and ideas to them. Roland (1988) found that "Beneath the observance of an overt etiquette of deference, loyalty and subordination, Indians keep a very private self that contains all kinds of feelings and fantasies that will not be revealed in the usual hierarchical relationships with an elder" (p. 64). It is a relationship of *sneha-shraddha* (affection-deference) where there is no resistance or conflict. In fact, the ideal superior is altruistic towards his subordinates by being self-sacrificing and keeping subordinates' interest above his own. Altruism is built into the idealized Indian psycho-spiritual heritage, which is continuously reinforced by saints and gurus, religious discourses and some scholars (Chakraborty 1987). Roland (1988) contended the following:

> In hierarchical relationships governed by the quality of the [superior] person, there is marked veneration of the superior, with strong efforts to subordinate oneself, to be as close as possible, to have a *darshana* [glimpse], in order to incorporate, identify with, and share in the superior qualities of the other for inner self-transformations (p. 295).

If the power distance is small, the two relate with each other more like younger–elder brothers rather than like father–son. They share and cooperate and accommodate each other. If the power distance is large, the less powerful one evokes a son-like deference to the more powerful father figure who then feels

obliged to extend greater help to the son-like subordinate. The more helpless or deficient the former, the greater is the moral pressure on the superior to help. It is the personal bond, not any merit, which counts. An executive director of Tata Steel, a model company in the 1980s, observed the following:

> There is a feeling that employees who are close to 'men who matter' rise faster. It has also been observed that while a person prospered under the leadership of a certain boss, he fell from the grace the moment the boss changed. Obviously, then, personal likes and dislikes still play a part in the development of an individual (Pandey 1989, p. 70).

It was not only in Tata Steel, but in many other places, that the same scenario emerged:

> Paternalism appears to be the cornerstone of Indian social and cultural organizations which extends in some form or other in some Indian [work] organizations too. Tied to paternalism are such traits as familiality, sense of security, respect for seniority, importance of the personality of the leader, forms of authoritarianism, obedience to authority, and patronage (Virmani and Guptan 1991, p. 187).

In sum, power process among *apane log* occurs within a hierarchical framework where both more and less powerful persons assume a positive stance in generating synergy between themselves. There are variations in the quality of the relationships that range from being utilitarian and personalized to emotional and idealized.

3.5.4 Power Process Among Paraye *Log*

The power process among *paraye log* assumes a different pattern irrespective of either the ascribed or achieved positions that they hold in the hierarchy. Ascribed bases of hierarchy used to generate and sustain stable power pattern in the past with predictable status allocations. They still generally do in traditional domains of rural people, though their power dynamics are getting increasingly turbulent as a result of electoral politics, *panchayati raj* (decentralized governance), job reservations, economic growth, urbanization and other developmental initiatives. However, as over 300 million middle class people mostly in urban areas struggle to compete and improve their positions in the societal hierarchy, they have to deal more with *paraye log* with heterogeneous attributes than *apane log* who have generally more homogeneous backgrounds. Power play, as a result, becomes intense with the sole motive to win in what looks like a zero-sum game.

In a zero-sum game, one's power has to be preferably large. And, the larger it is, the greater is his or her chance to prevail upon others. Hence, any and every resource having power potential has to be acquired, consolidated, monopolized and more important displayed, to cow down the adversaries before they dare think of questioning, resisting or retaliating. Varma (2004) observed that "Those who wielded power were nothing if they could not convey to others the visible symbols of their acquisitions" (p. 19). He elaborated how people go to ridiculous extents to show their power and privileges (p. 20). Noam Chomsky was cited as commenting

during his visit to India in 1996, 'The lifestyle of the Indian elite is amazing. I have never seen such opulence even in America' (Varma 1999, p. 90). Of all the indicators of power, money comes out at the top. The deep and pervasive poverty has created a belief that money can buy almost everything. It in fact symbolizes one's success and worth. Indian media is replete with the news and stories of the vulgar displays of money power. For example, of the two billionaire brothers, one was reported to present a yacht worth US$84 million to his wife on her birthday, the other presented an Airbus costing US$59 million on her birthday, and then built a 27-storey house worth US$2 billion for the family of three or four persons; the son of another billionaire casually gifted a handbag of Rs. 2.5 million to his girlfriend in addition to similar other assorted items that he was often presenting to her; and two top executives of an industrial development bank got over Rs. 60 million salary annually, besides perks. And, all these are happening in a country where millions of people survive on Rs. 20 a day. Power and money gel well and reinforce each other in order to assure a person high status in the Indian society. A powerful person, according to the Bhakti poet Tulasidas, cannot be faulted (*samarath ke nahi dosh gusai*) and hence cannot be censored. He or she can indulge in whatever his or her whims lead to, and with almost total immunity. There is obviously no risk in breaking social norms or legal rules and indulging in even anti-social activities—only the thrills of enjoying unbridled power that is proven to self as well as others.

A number of studies confirmed Indians' strong striving for power and money. Sinha et al. (2001), for example, asked middle-level managers from four different locations in the country (Jamshedpur, Patna, Ahmedabad and Harihar in Karnataka) to identify typical beliefs, values and preferences of the people living around them. The most dominant pattern that emerged was of *power and status consciousness* that included money motives and led to undue favours to family and friends at the cost of others. A few examples of what people prefer, believe and do were the following:

- People obey persons in power because of their position.
- Power and prestige are considered to be more important than the qualities of a person.
- People in our society are highly conscious of their status and position.
- People show undue favours to their family and friends.
- People care more for money and material positions than for warm relationships.
- The strong exploits the weak ones.
- People try to get ahead at the expense of others.

Another study (Sinha et al. 2004) added managers from Kolkata, Lucknow, Gurgaon and Pune to the new samples of managers from Patna, Jamshedpur and Ahmedabad. The managers again confirmed the predominance of people's hankering for power. The people at these seven places in the country were characterized by the following:

- People respect those who are powerful.
- People believe that money is the yardstick of success.
- People value status in the society more than anything else.
- People protect even corrupt friends and relatives.
- People believe that rich are superior to the poor in all respects.

The studies, taken together, highlight the way power process works among *apane* and *paraye*. There is a cluster of beliefs that feeds the power process. People believe that nobody cares for the community; one has to get ahead at the expense of others, personal connections, not merit, matter in the society; money is the yardstick of one's success; rich people are superior to poor in all respects, rich and powerful persons are above laws and the society; they are respected in the society; so, it is more important to be a rich than a good person, and when it comes to wealth, there is nothing like enough; and so on. These beliefs drive the person to acquire power and contacts to get rich quickly, cultivate a selfish orientation to keep one's own interests above others, show off power and wealth in order to impress others, exploit the weak ones and to trust and favour only their family and close friends.

Obliviously, there is no place for morality in such a context. Varma (2004), dwelling on why and how Indians with all their glorious achievements and cultural heritage succumbed to the Muslim invaders, argued thus:

> The pragmatic Indian was willing to collude with a stronger power. Personal aversion, socially prescribed ostracisms, the stigma of capitulation, and all the sophistication and sophistry of a civilization that went back to the dawn of time, were not enough to dilute the essential wisdom that it is futile to fight the powerful. Once the reality of the new power became evident beyond reasonable doubt, acceptance made a smooth transition to co-option, and cooperation to collusion (p. 32).

It is this mindset that even now characterizes how Indians deal with unequivocally more powerful persons. The less powerful persons consider it futile to fight back and resist that which he fears, might evoke retaliation with vengeance. This supports the proposition (Mudler 1977) that larger power distances discourage any attempt to reduce them. The grossly less powerful yields and surrenders; not because it is of his or her liking, but because it is expedient and imperative. It also implies that she or he should lie low and wait for a right opportunity to strike back, double cross and take revenge. Lord Krishna in the *Mahabharata* recommended deception in dealing with the more powerful adversary. There exists some evidence that Indian subordinates sabotage favourite projects of their disliked bosses, change allegiance from old to new bosses and locate more powerful contacts to put reverse-pressure on their bosses (Sinha 1995). Defiance is usually the last resort where all other options are exhausted.

In sum, the power process among *paraye log* is highly asymmetrical and unfair where the more powerful usurps disproportionately more resources and exploits the less powerful ones who have no choice but to yield and surrender and assume a subservient mode. The latter, however, does nurse resentment, waits for an opportunity to strike back and settle the scores.

3.5.5 Power Process in Twilight Zone of Relationships

There are subordinates, juniors and less powerful ones whose loyalty, trustworthiness and dedication are not beyond doubt, but they are indispensable, or could be quite useful in the future. Although they are less powerful, the power distance is not large enough to take them for granted. Similarly, there are superiors whose altruism, benevolence and nurturance are suspect, but they are more powerful and the subordinates cannot afford to defy their power pressure without risking their immediate interests or future prospects. In both cases Indians tend to tread very carefully, creating and maintaining a façade of being *apane,* but keeping their antenna up for the slightest signal to retreat into a defensive posture for damage control, but still going to quite a length in order to prevent it from blowing up. Utmost efforts are made by both sides to maintain the façade for as long as possible, and the relationship at times indeed evolves into a nurturance-dependency mode, although it is also likely to drift into an open conflict or exploitative-subservient mode.

In a twilight zone, the more powerful person often uses profusely pro-social expressions exaggerating his or her own self-sacrifices, care and considerations for subordinates, records of helpings, genuine appreciation for subordinates and so on. She or he may also use soft power tactics referring to the subordinates' dharma (duty) of obedience and compliance. The most often made expressions are:

- You are indispensable.
- I can't run this place without you.
- You are the future of this organization.
- You are the only one whom I trust.
- I am doing everything for you that I can.

Subordinates too suppress their suspicions and misgivings and go around professing to be loyal, trustworthy and dedicated. They may say,

- You are like my father; guide me.
- Who else, except you, can help me?
- There is no one here whom I trust.
- I know I am deficient; but you are kind and powerful.
- I am lucky to have a superior like you.

In other words, ingratiation and manipulation are used abundantly from both sides. Pandey (1981) identified eight ways of ingratiation that Indian superiors and subordinates employ in order to either influence each other or prevent the relationship from drifting into a confrontational mode (see Box 3.3 on the next page).

Box 3.3. Ingratiating Tactics

1. *Other enhancement* means exaggerating the positive qualities and achievement of the person being ingratiated in order to keep him in good humour.
2. *Instrumental dependency* lies is impressing upon the person being ingratiated that only he or she can help and bail the ingratiating person out. The more helpless the ingratiating person is the more the ingratiated person is obliged to extend even undue help.
3. *Self-enhancement* is the opposite of helplessness. The ingratiating person poses himself to be valuable in many other respects, and thereby attracting the ingratiated person to do what is expected from him, hinting that the former can be useful too.
4. *Support* manifests in praising those whom the ingratiated person likes and criticizing those whom he dislikes, and thereby reinforcing his ego.
5. *Name dropping* is close to self-enhancement in the sense that the ingratiating person gives the impression that he or she is personally close to other resourceful persons who can be useful to the person being ingratiated.
6. *Self-presentation* means presenting desirable facet in order to show that he deserves care, consideration, compliance or deference.
7. *Yielding* prepares a favourable ground for subsequently making demands.
8. *Conformity* implies agreeing to what the ingratiated person says rendering him or her more confident of being correct.

Ingratiation is deeply ingrained in the Indian mindset, the source of which goes back to the *bhakti* (devotional) tradition in the medieval India, if not earlier.

A dominant form in the tradition was the *daasa-parampara* (tradition of assuming the position of the most humble like a slave) as reflected in Tulasidas, Surdas, Kabirdas and so on (see more details in Chap. 4). The core features in this tradition were to demean oneself to the limit, praying to the Lord with intense emotionality to salvage oneself because there is no other source of hope and support. The more helpless and miserable a devotee is and the more emotionally he or she calls for help, the more obliged is the Lord to salvage her or him, irrespective of his or her inadequacies and grievous sins. Prayers by Tulasidas capture the essence in the most vivid form. They contain humility, self-depreciation and self-denigration to appeal Gods and Goddesses, particularly Hanuman, to bail the devotee out of his or her miseries. For example one of them states: The Lord can enable a crippled to climb mountains, a blind to see the whole world and so on. *Vinay Patrika* and *Hanuman Chalisa* are quite popular even today, having a present-day version of the *daasa-parampara.* Srinivas (1988/1997) found that the villagers in south India prayed for help to their patrons just as they prayed to their

deities and 'When one deity failed a devotee he approached another in much the same way as when one patron failed him, a client approached another …' (p. 320).

In sum, there are instances where the distinction between *apane* and *paraye,* is not clear, but the superior and the subordinate are considered to be indispensable or likely to be useful, Indians tend to maintain a façade of being *apane* and employ ingratiating tactics to influence each other. The façade either evolves into a genuine nurturance-dependency mode of power relationship, drifts into an exploitative-subservient power process, or less frequently flares up into open defiance and conflict. Indians keep shifting between these three modes of coping with power distance.

3.6 Integrative Reflection

Individuals and collectives everywhere in the world are arranged into hierarchies on some bases or others. They enjoy differential status, attached to which is certain power and privilege over those below them. Indian culture, however, differs from many others in overemphasizing hierarchical positions, attaching a heavy value load to the status differentials, allowing people having more power to unduly favour *apane log* (ingroup) and discriminate and exploit *paraye log* (outgroup), particularly if the latter have less power. This arrangement worked in traditional Indian culture because of the dominance of the Brahmanical worldview that restricted both the vertical and horizontal mobility of people.

However, the socio-economic landscape of the country has changed drastically since the 1990s, and the changes are accelerating much faster than before. People face many challenges and are called upon to respond to many more new opportunities arising from globalization, technological revolution and shortening distances in the flat world. One's skills, expertise and experiences can take a person to any height. Caste, gender and age are no longer so important. The salience of in-groups in terms of family, relatives and close friends is becoming a constraint. They matter in many sectors, regions and pockets of the country only because the globalization process has not penetrated into them. As it does, Indians would need to re-define *apane* and *paraye* in broader terms keeping in view their own future prospects as well as the prospects of the network of organizations through which they are seeking their own prospect. The criteria for whom to take on the bandwagon for marching ahead are going to be totally different. Fortunately, composite cultural heritages equip Indians to make this transition by encompassing with the new equity driven situational demands within the cultural ethos to ensure individuals' and collectives' effectiveness as well as social capital (Fukuyama 1995). There is indeed evidence of how Indians are competing and excelling other nationalities internationally and how traditional hierarchies are changing in India. A sense of hierarchy still persists, but it has to share space with equity and fair play. Larger collectives are indeed driven by sectarian interests and political

dynamics. They continue competing for greater power and better access to national resources, but have to play the game through the democratic rules.

3.7 Summary

The Indian mindset has a vertical perspective in arranging everyone and everything in a hierarchical order of being superior to some and inferior to some other persons and things. The source of this hierarchical worldview goes back to the ancient constellation of beliefs that there is one Ultimate Being expressed in all inanimate and animates, which, depending on their karma (good or bad conduct), are placed at different rungs of the hierarchy at birth, but can climb up or slide down the hierarchy through various births or in the same lifetime on the basis of their karma. Thus, the bases of hierarchy are ascribed (e.g. caste, gender, age, seniority, etc.), but exceptionally qualified individuals can transcend the ascribed barriers and attain higher levels of superiority. Power distance is an index of difference in hierarchical positions, each having a certain amount of power. Power distance operates in combination with the perceptual frame of considering other persons as either *apane* (in-group) or *paraye* (out-group) *log* (people). For the former, the power process is expressed in superiors being patriarchal, caring and subordinates being loyal, trustworthy and dedicated. On the contrary, Indians are exploitative of less powerful *paraye* who have no choice but to yield and remain subservient. In cases where the distinction between *apane* and *paraye* is not clear, Indians resort to ingratiation and manipulation. With the increasing challenges and new opportunities related to globalization, Indians have to expand their concept of in-group and behave accordingly by blending the Indian cultural ethos of care and consideration for others with demands of efficiency, equity and transparency. Larger collectives are indeed competing for greater power and resources, but have to compromise and accommodate each other.

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Chapter 4
Spirituality and Materialism

4.1 The Constructs of Spirituality and Materialism

Spirituality and materialism are not exclusive to each other in the Indian mindset. Rather they intermingle constituting its third most prominent facet. About spirituality, it is said that "Without positing the realization of an inner spiritual self (*aatman*) … , it is virtually impossible to comprehend Indian psychological make-up, society and culture" (Roland 1988, p. 289). Spirituality refers essentially to a self-transformation, a pilgrimage for enlarging the egoistic individualized self into a larger Self (Chakraborty 1987) with expanding consciousness that potentially can turn into cosmic consciousness. In cosmic consciousness,

> … we live as we lived before in the ego-sense, active, more and more in contrast, even unified more and more, with other minds, other lives, other bodies than the organism we call ourselves, producing, effects not only on our own moral and mental being, and on the subjective being of others, but even on the physical world and its events by means nearer to the divine than those possible to our egoistic capacity (Sri Aurobindo 1986, p. 25).

Cosmic consciousness is thus all-inclusive, which "can be attained only if the finite self transcends its narrow individuality and identifies itself with the whole" (Radhakrishnan 1929, p. 209), which then enlightens not only the person who is spiritually realized but also others, and in fact even the material world around them. In other words, spirituality signifies a transcending sense phenomena and self-centredness in search of deeper meanings in life, a relationship with the larger reality, other persons, humanity at large, the cosmos and the divine. A fully spiritually realized person, while living in the material and mundane world, has a state of the mind that is calm, composed and stable without being disturbed by emotions (*sthitaprajna*), free of doubts and dilemmas about what is good or bad, right or wrong (*nirdvandva*) and ideally transcendent of the three basic attributes of the material world (*trigunatita)* (Chakraborty 1987, p.107). Spirituality thus endows an inner strength to cope with existential issues of life and death as well as to relate with larger and larger realities (Holtje 1995; Zajonc 2004). Naturally, all-inclusive spirituality accepts the validity of spirits of dead people, divine characters and

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magic-cosmic forces (MacDonald 2000). They all are believed to be related with human beings and can be aligned to facilitate their spiritual pursuits.

Religiosity obviously overlaps with spirituality. Traditionally, spirituality was considered to be an integral part of religiosity (Pargament 1997). Both were believed to help people strive to realize the sacred, value compassion and righteous conduct, and relate to the divine through prayer, meditation, reflection and contemplation. However, spirituality is different from religiosity in the former being primarily an individual's personal concern, while religiosity being largely social with a link to a particular religion (Piedmont 2001). A religion is an organized system of beliefs, practices, rituals and symbols, with God or Gods and Goddesses and messiahs, and so on. Thus, religion is exclusive—belonging to one excludes one's belonging in other religions and in many instances their core beliefs, practices and rituals. Spirituality, on the other hand, is inclusive. Those belonging to different religions can still pursue identical paths to spirituality. It in fact cuts across religious, cultural, traditional, social-political and academic barriers. Further, a religion may also foster orthodoxy, superstitions, prejudices, intolerance and so on. Organized religion has often been found associated with fundamentalism, extremism and violence. Human history is replete with instances of religious conflicts and wars. Spirituality, on the contrary, is generally associated with higher order human qualities such as patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, responsibility, harmony, concern for others, beauty, creativity and aesthetics in different cultures (Zajonc 2004).

Materialism, on the other hand, refers to the beliefs, norms and values regarding materials things and practices that ensure human beings' existence and facilitate their enjoyment of material things. Materialism is an indispensable reality of life. There are indeed differences between traditional Indian and Western approaches as well as among Western scholars in conceptualizing materialism. Western scholars start with the premise that matter is primary, while mind or spirit is secondary and a product of matter acting upon matter (Novack 1979; Priest 1991). Because nature is all matter, all creatures, including human beings, are postulated to be created in the process of the evolution of nature. Human beings share with animals biological impulses that crave satisfaction. This craving is the fountainhead of all other mental processes, including consciousness. As human beings act on objects and interact with other human beings in order to seek satisfaction of their needs, they become conscious of what helps and what hinders their drives and causes satisfaction or dissatisfaction, respectively. The more material things human beings have, the greater is the possibility that they can satisfy their needs and the more pleasures they can experience. Thus, hedonism—seeking pleasure and avoiding pain—is the driving force for whatever practices, thoughts and ideals human beings claim to have formulated in the course of human history. In other words, materialism and hedonism work hand in hand assuming that possessing and enjoying material objects ensures greater pleasure and failure to do so results in painful experience. This is believed to be a natural law. There is no need to believe that human beings are part of a grand divine design and creation. Materialists argue that the divine is nothing but a metaphysical speculation.

Reality is what human beings perceive and feel rather than what they can speculate. Reason and logic rather than intuition are the means to understanding reality that, for materialists, exists only in the physical world. Divine or cosmic consciousness does not make sense to them; egoistic and utilitarian self-interests and the motivation to serve them do.

In Western traditions of thought, materialism is posited as opposite and antithetical to spirituality. Western thought, under the overwhelming influence of Cartesian assumptions of mind-body dualism, decisively separated materialism from spirituality. Materialism was shown to be amenable to scientific analyses having potential to gain understanding of human behaviour and to promote its development. On the other hand, spirituality was relegated to theology and ethics as the concerns of faith-driven, God-fearing individuals who are left at the mercy of the divine powers to bless or not to bless them.

The Indian approach to spirituality and materialism is inclusive. The existential reality of the material world is accepted, but it does not preclude the possibility that human beings are capable of simultaneously experiencing spirituality. So, the question is not whether to opt for either of the two, but *how to* attain spirituality while living in a material world. An answer can be sought in the ancient Indian thought, which then can be validated in the contemporary context for understanding the Indian mindset. Ancient Indian thought has varied strands of beliefs and suggestions. They range from the *lokaayata* tradition of the Caarvaakas that dismissed spiritualism and prescribed hedonism, through the *Saankha* dualism (*dvaita*) that presented a dialectical account of matter (*prakriti*) and consciousness (*purusha*), to Vedantic monism (*advaita*) that posited the primacy of spirituality. Besides, there are other schools of thought such as Buddhism and Jainism which also dwell on how spirituality can be realized by righteous thoughts and conducts that can be performed while living in the material world. A brief account of the approaches is as follows.

4.2 Ancient Constructions of Spirituality and Materialism

4.2.1 Vedantic Perspective

In the Vedantic perspective, the *aatman*'s progression towards blissful communion with the *Brahman* is spirituality. *Brahman*, according to the Vedantic monism, is the Supreme Being. He wished to be many and the world was created:

> He desired, "May I be many". He concentrated in *Tapas*, by *Tapas* he created the world; creating, he entered into it; entering, he became the existent and the beyond-existence, he became the expressed and the unexpressed, he became knowledge and ignorance, he became the truth and the falsehood; he became the truth, even all this whatsoever that is. "That Truth" they call him (*Taiitiriya Upanishad,* II.6, transl. by Sri Aurobindo 2010, p. 586).

So, the seeker earnestly pleads,

> From the unreal lead me to the real. From darkness lead me to light. From death lead me to immortality (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, I.3.28).

The unreal, the darkness (ignorance), and the temporariness of life characterize the nature, the matter, from which the journey starts. The matter is objectively existent, manifest and *maaya* (phenomenological reality), but still has the presence of *Brahman*; for "Matter is Brahman" (*Taiitiriya Upanishad*, III. 1.2, transl. by Sri Aurobindo 2010, p. 245). The next form in which Brahman appears is the *jivaatman* (*aatman* in a *jiva*—-living being), the highest form of which is the human beings having a body of matter, a mind and a self or soul at the core of both the mind and the matter reflecting the presence of *Brahman* in human beings. The *jivaatman* strives to rise in spirituality by refining from gross to subtle: from body and mind through a number of intermediary states finally to the state of blissful communion of the soul with *Brahman.* This is the endpoint of the journey: the *moksha*:

> There is a self that is of the essence of Matter—there is another inner self of Life that fills the other—there is another inner self of Mind—there is another inner self of Truth-Knowledge—there is another inner self of Bliss (*Taittiriya Upanishad,* II. 1.5, transl. by Sri Aurobindo 2010, p. 266).

While the core of the *jivaatman* is the soul that is everlasting, its body is perishable containing biological impulses, sensory-motor functions and vital life forces, which are conditioned to create the mental organs of *manas* (mind, overall consciousness), *buddhi* (intellect, discriminating capability), *chitta* (disposition/memory) and *ahamkaar* (ego). They too have their source in the soul, but are twisted and distorted by *maaya* (phenomenon reality) in which the *jivaatman* is wrapped. The *jivaatman* has to live in a material world and work through *maaya*. But the *jivaatman* still strives for *moksha*. Its progression towards *moksha* through the cycle of millions of births depends on her karma—conduct. Righteous ones accelerates her progression and the bad ones regress her to a lesser form of life from where she can again progress by a new set of good conducts. The choice of good or bad conducts is partly voluntary. The *jivaatman* carries the traces of accumulated good and bad conducts across past lives. This is her *samskaar* that predisposes her to go about engaging in bad or good conducts in different combinations and varying proportions. But *samskaar* is also modified by new conducts that a person deliberately engages in because of either his or her soul's prompting, external factors or more frequently a combination of both. The person may fortunately meet with a spiritual guru who enlightens him or her. We have the story of Valmiki (the named author of the *Ramayana*) who turned from a robber into a sage. There are also instances where overindulgence in sensuous pleasures leaves a person dissatisfied and makes them fall back on righteous conduct in the hope of lasting contentment. We have the story of Yayaati in the *Mahabharata* who borrowed youthfulness from one of his sons to keep indulging in sexual pleasures only to realize that he was running after a mirage. There are numerous instances of a major traumatic experience (e.g. death of a family member or a close friend)

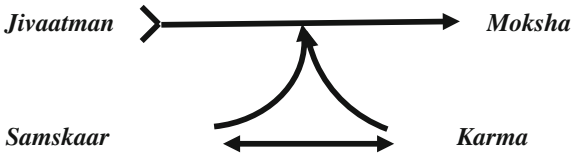

Fig. 4.1 The joint impact of *Samskaar* and karma on spirituality

changing the life course of a person towards seeking solace in spirituality. The Buddha left his princely life and went out for enlightenment when he saw the dark side of life in sickness, old age and death. A visual display of the dynamic impacts of *samskaar* and karma on the spiritual journey of a *jivaatman* is given above in Fig. 4.1.

Thus, performing good conduct is the defining characteristic of spirituality. Three major streams of good conduct were prescribed: karma (doing one's duties), *jnaana* (knowing) and *bhakti* (being totally devoted) to the Supreme. Vedic rites and rituals, *yajna* and animal sacrifices were part of one's karma and some of such rites and rituals are still in vogue. Lord Krishna refined this approach in the *Bhagavad Gita* in terms of *karma-yoga*, which primarily means doing one's duty without being concerned about the outcome (*nishkaama karma*). The practice of *karma-yoga* aims to prevent unhappiness resulting from pursuing desires. According to the *Bhagavad Gita,* pursuing desires traps a person into an unending cycle of desires causing frustration, loss of mental capability and unhappiness. The realization can orient a person to look into his or her inner-self (*drashta bhava*) that can enable him or her to cultivate a detached and composed state of mind. Thus, the pursuit of spirituality by *karma maarg* involves three elements: Performing religious rites and rituals, meeting social obligations and doing one's duty without being concerned about the outcome.

The Upanishads emphasized the *jnaana maarg* (ways of knowing) by departing from Vedic rites and rituals and concentrating on understanding the fundamental issues of life, death and immortality. Cultivating such a consciousness requires intense self-reflection, contemplation and meditation about the nature of the self and the Supreme and how the self can see and know the Supreme. Because of sensory and mental limitations, the self probably can have an intuitive feeling of seeing and knowing the Supreme without being sure. Hence, a third way to attain spirituality was prescribed—the way of devotion (*bhakti*) that Swami Vivekananda defined as "the path of systematized devotion for the attainment of union with the Absolute" (Sundararajan and Mukerji 2003, p. 306). Bhakti was a post-Vedic movement that emerged primarily during the era of epic poetry (Monier and Leumann 1899). The *Bhagavad Gita* marked a transition towards *bhakti yoga* that coexisted with the karma and *jnaana maarg* (Minor 1986). Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* said,

> Fill thy mind with Me, be My devotee, sacrifice unto Me, bow down to Me; thus having made thy heart steadfast in Me, taking Me as the Supreme Goal, thou shalt come to Me. (*Bhagavad Gita*, 9.34, transl. by Swami Swarupananda (1909) and published at Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta).

Later on, the *Bhagavata Purana* developed the idea more elaborately. Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavad Purana* said, "The practice of yoga, *jnaana,* living in dharma, prayer or ascetic renunciation—none of them—is as successful in obtaining me as is the daily increase in loving devotion". Further, "I believe that even a Brahmin equipped with 12 qualities (wealth, family status, knowledge, yoga, intellect, etc.) who has turned his face away from the lotus feet of God is inferior to the *chandaala* [the lowest among untouchables] who has laid his mind, speech, work, wealth, and life at God's feet".

Karma, *jnaana* and *bhakti* complete all three psychological—volitional, cognitive and affective—mental processes for realizing spirituality. Common to them was the requirement that the person must contain their earthly desires, live an ascetic life, concentrate on the Supreme Being and strive for a composed state of mind and body. The Upanishads affirmed that "ultimate reality [*Brahman*] cannot be grasped by learning or reasoning [only]. It reveals itself only in our heart through sublime purity, absolute self-control, self-abnegation, and cessation of mundane desires" (Das Gupta 2007, p. 87). Chapter 13 of the *Shankhayana Aranyaka* required that one must first attitudinally discard one's bodily attachment and then carry on the *shravana* (listen), *manana* (reflection) and *nidhidhyaasana* (yoga and meditation) and practice the disciplines of penance, faith, self-control, etc. in order to realize the *Brahman.* The *Bhagavad Gita* held the same view. In order to realize the state of *sthitaprajna*, a person has to remain free from all emotions, such as attachment, fear, and anger, euphoria, and so on. He does not have to have affection for anybody, nor euphoria over success or depression over failures (Bhawuk 2003).

4.2.2 The Saankya School

Contrary to Vedantic monism, the Saankhya school posited the duality of *purusha* and *prakriti*. However, similar to Vedantic thought, *purusha* was believed to be pure consciousness, absolute, independent, imperceptible, unknowable, and beyond any experience. Unlike the belief in one *Brahman*, Saankhya posited that every individual living being *(jivaatma)* has *purusha* in him or her. That is, there is a plurality of *purusha. Prakriti* is the nature, the matter, the one pervasive whole having three potential attributes (*gunas*): *Sattva* (fineness, lightness, illumination and joy), *raajas (*activity, potency and excitation) and *taamas* (coarseness, inaction, obstruction and staleness). As a *purusha* comes in contact with *prakriti,* they dialectically cause the evolution of sensory, motor and volitional processes that enable a person to acquire the three *gunas* in different combinations in order to think, feel and behave differently. The process of evolution causes differentiation in all human functions, such as expectations, attitudes, motivation and so on. They are, however, constrained by both externally impinging natural forces as well as the sensory motor capacities of human beings. Hence, our understanding of human functions is conditioned and coloured, and therefore, biased, incomplete and imperfect.

In order that the *jivaatma* is able to experience the truth (by transcending subjective bias), bliss (by transcending pain and pleasure) and freedom (by transcending the nature), the psychic processes have to be dissolved into pure consciousness through an inner transformation realizing a state of *kaivalya*— an unconditioned state that transcends mental blocks and physical limitations. This completes the journey to spirituality.

Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, formulated around the second century BCE, elaborated how this journey can be undertaken. There are eight steps involved. The first two, *yama* (attitude) and *niyama* (routine of daily life), are the preparation in cultivating a disciplined routine and positive attitudes and behaviour in order *not* to get distracted by extraneous forces and to orient oneself to the next two steps, *aasana* and *praanayama. Aasana*s are bodily postures that activate and energize muscles and nerves of the body. They are synchronized with deep and rhythmic breathing. However, specially fashioned breathing exercises are *praanayama* that regulate the flow of energy in the body and thereby strengthen the vital life functions. The next step is *pratyahaara* that is an inward observation of one's inner thoughts, feelings and volitions. It is similar to what earlier was described as *drashta bhava*—a self-observer's stance. This stage is a preparation for the next two steps—*dhaarana* and *dhyaana*—that are concentration and meditation, leading the person to the final stage—*samaadhi*. *Samaadhi* is a state of consciousness in which one attains absolute oneness of self, a supreme state of consciousness in which the ego of the meditator disappears. *Samaadhi* is thus similar to *kaivalya*. But *samadhi* is a temporary state from which a person can revert to his or her earlier state of mind and body, while *kaivalya* is a permanent transcendence of the *aatman* or *purusha* from where there is no reversal.[1] In *kaivalya*, the person becomes *trigunaatita* (beyond the three—s*attva, raajas,* and *taamas*—primal attributes derived from the interactions with the nature).

The journey is essentially spiritual, and it is incremental where the intermediary stages are marked by progressive sensory and motor excellence by overcoming existential limitations. There are a number of variations in how these steps are operationalized and practiced, but they all conform to the broad framework of controlling and regulating daily routines, cultivating right attitudes, assuming bodily postures, breathing and calming mental fluctuations in order to advance towards the state of pure consciousness.

4.2.3 Buddhism and Jainism

Buddhism and Jainism were reformist movements that denied the existence of the *Brahman*, denounced Brahmanical rituals and sacrificial rites, disregarded the caste system and the Brahmin's superiority, and discounted the importance of

[1] http://www.ehow.com/info_8378131_difference-between-kaivalya-samadhi.html on 25.09.2011.

metaphysical speculations for understanding reality. "Buddhism and Jainism began as anti-ritualistic, intellectually oriented movements of self-inquiry which appealed precisely to those urban classes who were affluent, educated, and emancipated from magico-religious superstition" (Lannoy 1971/2008, p. 233). They emphasized compassion and consideration to others, and righteous self-conduct for gaining spirituality that drew on some core components from the Vedantic and *Saankhya* schools of thought. For example, inner transformation through meditation remained as an essential manifestation of spirituality.

Spirituality in Buddhism means progressing towards enlightenment and *nirvana* (that is similar to *moksha)* by following the Noble Eightfold Path (Chinchore 2007; Gethin 1998). The path consisted of having right views (*samma ditthi*) by learning through first-hand experience or right persons without getting trapped into superstition; renouncing sensuous pleasure and having compassion for others (*samma sankappa*); speaking truth kindly and wisely (*samma vaaca*) without offending others (*samma kammanto*); and earning one's living by fair means (*samma ajiva*). All these can be possible only by cultivating positive thoughts, full mindfulness and driving out evil ideas (*samma vayamo*); concentrating, contemplating and meditating (*samma sati*), which eventually enable one to enter into *samma samaadhi* having absolute calm and tranquillity, unlimited joy and happiness.

Jainism believed that everything in the universe, such as plants, trees, birds, insects and animals, like human beings, live and breathe, and hence have to be treated with equality and equanimity. Hence, nonviolence (*ahimsa*) is the core of spirituality. The most well-known sage Mahavira, a contemporary of the Buddha, posited that each living being has a body and a soul. Every soul is capable of achieving the state of a perfect consciousness that frees the person from all sorrows and sufferings. The soul assumes various bodies due to the accumulation of karmas as it moves through the cycle of births and deaths. A soul can attain liberation from the cycle by following the right faith (*samyak-darshana*), right knowledge (*samyak-jnaana*) and right conduct (*samyak-charitra*), which were specified as nonviolence, truthfulness, honesty, *brahmacharya* (celibacy) and *aparigraha* (renunciation of material things and detachment from people and places). Meditation was again the way to realize these goals culminating in the pure state of soul which is believed to be pure conscious.[2]

4.2.4 Thoughts on Materialism

Running parallel to the striving for spirituality in the Hindu thought was the impulse to enjoy earthly pleasures. Its presence in the Hindu mindset was conceded even in the Vedic age. Basham (1971) observed the following:

[2] http://1stholistic.com/prayer/hol_Jainism.htm on 22.09.2011.

> From the time of *Rig Veda*, which contains many prayers for riches, worldly wealth was looked upon as morally desirable for the ordinary man, and indeed essential to a full and civilized life … . Thus, the ideals of ancient India, while not perhaps the same as those of the West, by no means excluded money making. India had not only a class of luxury loving and pleasure seeking dilettanti, but also one of the wealth seeking merchants and prosperous craftsmen … (pp. 217-218).

This impulse to accumulate wealth, love luxury and enjoy earthly pleasures has been reported during the Vedic age, in the epics and later on also in some of the philosophical works (Chatterjee and Datta 1984, p. 55). As stated earlier, the *Taiitiriya Upanishad* (III. 1.2.) posited that "Matter is Brahman". In fact, Vedic people in a way subscribed to materialism by believing that all things in the world are essentially *dhaatu* (substance or matter). The differences between them are only about the degrees in which they are *sukshma* (subtle) and *sthula* (gross). Food, for example is gross while words are subtle, body is gross and while vital life functions are subtle, and so on. Hindus further believed that there is continuous transaction and exchanges among the substances enabling human beings to transcend the gross and realize increasingly more subtle existence—the view that in a way paralleled the spiritual journey. In other words, material existence is the starting point for realizing spirituality.

4.2.5 The Caarvaakas' Lokaayata *Tradition of Materialism*

The Caarvaakas, a school of hedonistic philosophy, however, went to the extreme in conceptualizing materialism in a way that was antithetical to spirituality. Caarvaaka materialism originated around the sixth century BCE, about the same time the Upanishads were being composed. The Caarvaakas totally rejected spiritualism as well as the necessity to shift from the gross to the subtle matters by way of refining oneself. They established the "*lokaayata* tradition", which meant grounding thought and behaviour in this world (*loka*), denying the existence that there is another world (*paraloka)* beyond this one, and hence the futility of adopting spiritual ways of entering into the so-called *paraloka*. A *Caarvaaka* philosopher, Jabaali, in the *Valmiki Ramayana*, for example, was reported as arguing thus with Rama:

> O, the highly wise! Arrive at a conclusion, therefore, that there is nothing beyond this Universe. Give precedence to that which meets the eye and turn your back on what is beyond our knowledge. (*Valmiki Ramayana*, 2.108.17)

That is, the *Caarvaakas* did not subscribe to concepts of the Supreme Being, the cycle of births, the law of karma or the superiority of Brahmins. They considered Brahmins greedy, selfish, cunning and devoid of intelligence and energy; for they were engaged in metaphysical speculations and religious rites and rituals in order to serve their self-interests and perpetuate their superiority over others. Because the Caarvaakas relied only on observable reality and rational analysis, they posited

that a being is created only by four elements, namely the earth, water, fire and air (not sky) that are the known physical elements. As he or she dies and gets cremated, the elements are restored to their source of origin, leaving nothing behind the dead. There is no *Brahman,* no heaven or hell, nor any birth after death. This world—the physical world—is the only reality.

As late as the fourteenth century, a Vedantic philosopher, Madhavachaarya, conceded that the majority of people in that time of society subscribed to the *lokaayata* tradition that was originated by Brihaspati, who propounded the following:

> While life is yours, live joyously;
> None can escape Death's searching eye:
> When once this frame of ours they burn,
> How shall it ever return again?[3]

Further, one needs a strong body and the wisdom to enjoy the pleasures of this world through appropriate means of earning (instead of Brahmanical priestly activities) such as agriculture, tending cattle, trade, and so on, which can create wealth. But even if one runs out of money and falls into a debt, she or he should live life lavishly:

> While life remains, let a man live happily,
> Let him feed on butter though he runs in debt;
> When once the body becomes ashes,
> How shall it ever return again?

In sum, the various schools of thought differed in their views on spirituality and materialism. However, there was a broad acceptance of the reality of pleasure seeking biological needs, but with a realization (except by the Caarvaakas) that there is a life beyond material existence, and that it must be explored by transcending biological impulses, sensory and motor limitations, expanding self and consciousness and reaching out to the divine in some form or other. The ways to do so were identified to be the cognitive (such as inner observations, reflections, contemplation and meditation), affective (such as total dedication and surrender to the divine) and volitional efforts such as righteous conducts involving compassion, *ahimsa* (nonviolence) and socially appropriate behaviour.

4.3 Contemporary Formulation of Spirituality and Materialism

The ancient thoughts regarding spirituality and materialism have been filtered through centuries of varied experiences and yet have survived and surfaced in the mindset of Indians today. Indians are not constrained by the fine distinctions

[3] *T*ranslated by E. B. Cowell & A. E. Gough, 1904, quoted in Chattopadhyaya (1990).

among the various schools. We know that, instead of replacing the old ideas and influences by new ones, they just add them. So, they have accepted them all, particularly their common themes by disregarding the finer differences. They do not believe that materialism and spirituality are antithetical. Rather, people have to live in a material world with all its imperatives and compulsions, and yet strive to be spiritual. The former is the reality of this world (*loka*). But there is a world beyond this one (*paraloka*), and that is the final destination for which they have to prepare by performing righteous conducts.

4.3.1 Expressions of Spirituality

Spirituality expresses in a range of righteous conducts. According to Kakar and Kakar (2009), spirituality consists of beliefs in rebirth, *moksha*, dharma, karma, *samskaar, daana* and *punya* (religious credit), and the practices that these beliefs lead to. The practices and beliefs connect them to the divine and make their access to *paraloka* easy. Most Indians, irrespective of their caste, class and the divides of being illiterate–literate, rural–urban and rich–poor, believe that there is a benign "divine design", albeit unknown to them, to bail them out of the most dismal circumstances so long as they intend to remain pious and righteous. Spirituality thus leads Indians to retain hope and optimism even in the worst crises of life. Varma (2004), who considered Indians mostly devoid of spirituality also conceded that Indians believe in a "cosmic" force that assures them that "There is always reason, therefore, not to lose hope. No failure is final. … The defeated could have another [divine] court of appeal, beyond the control of manipulation" (p. 100). All they have to do is to keep performing dharma and karma, which guide them to decide what is right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate, good and bad in their own conduct or in dealing with others in different situations. Belief in karma, *samskaar* and rebirth lead them to perform their duties and behave properly to get reborn in a better position. So, there is always a possibility to make up for the past misdeeds and to build on new efforts.

It is in this vein that Roland (1988) contended that spirituality in the minds of Indians manifests in "… gradual self-transformation toward finer and subtler qualities and refined aspects of power in the quest of self-realization" (p. 294). Roland delineated five ways Indians adopt to realize their spirituality, all of which involve their social and familial roles. They are the following:

1. Relating with superiors Indians tend to acquire and refine their qualities and characteristics by connecting themselves to a superior they idealize. They strive to get closer to them, emulate them and introject their qualities. In fact they believe that being just in their proximity or having even their *darshana* (glimpse) will lead to some of their qualities spilling over. The ancient belief in continuous transmission of substance from person-to-person supports the belief that qualities of the superior will be percolated, transforming people spiritually. The Bhakti

(devotional) tradition exemplified how devotees gain spirituality by getting totally absorbed in their deity.

2. Improving the nature of transactions If transmission and exchanges of gross and subtle substances are basic to Indian social transaction, a shift from gross to subtle, from negative to positive behaviour, and self-improvement would amount to spiritual progression. There could be many variants of such a progression such as from menial work of lower castes to the abstract thinking of Brahmins; from nourishing the body (outer physical sheath) to focusing on the blissful innermost self; changing from *taamasic* (e.g. non-vegetarian) to *sattvic* food (e.g. fruits); from using abusive or harsh language to kind words; and so on. Secondly, observing one's dharma helps gain spirituality. For example even a butcher is worthy of teaching morality to a monk (Bhawuk 2008) or a prostitute can make the Ganges flow backwards (Kakar and Kakar 2009, p. 186) because they were performing their dharma (duties that were not quite pious) meticulously. Finally, meeting social obligations does uplift a person socially, but getting detached and unconcerned about the outcome of one's duty lifts him or her even higher in spirituality.

3. Resorting to mythic orientation means referring to or assuming a mythic role in order to behave in altruistic, self-sacrificing, extremely honest or moral ways. A person may be recognized by others or he himself believes behaving like Rama in observing the norms and values of his promises, like Bharata (one of Rama's younger brothers) in being filially subordinate to his elder brother, like King Harishchandra in being absolutely honest and fair in dealing with own and other people or the sage Dadhichi in making self-sacrifices. Resorting to mythic orientation may also lead to assume a mythic role and start behaving accordingly. An elderly lady, particularly the mother in a family, for example, may embody the spirit of mother Goddesses temporarily in order to protect, guide and chastise her children, and then revert to her normal mindset. This as if integrates the familial and spiritual self.

4. Involving magic-cosmic forces for improving one's destiny Indians tend to so align with magic-cosmic forces that they can draw on their power and support in realizing favourable outcomes of their endeavour. In matters such as marriage, education, career choice, health, wealth and numerous others, they look for auspicious days and time and place that are determined by the positions of celestial bodies in the belief that their constellation will facilitate their efforts. The belief is that human beings constitute a microcosm with a "number of inner correspondence and identities with the forces of the macrocosm or cosmos" (Roland 1988, p. 299). As a result, aligning with the magic-cosmic forces is likely to facilitate the transfer of their power and disposition to the person.

5. Practicing rituals and wearing beads are some of the ways to align with the magic-cosmic forces as well as to relate to mythic characters and events. Rituals refine the substances from gross to subtle and, thereby raise the person on qualities that then affect his or her whole range of behaviour. He or she is, for example transformed from being *taamasic* to *raajasic* to *saattvic*. As a part of practising rituals, everyday household and other objects are presumed to be sacred for

worship and after the worship can be used in the daily routine. Similarly, the person performing rituals too gets vested with spirituality (e.g. the person performing *pooja* or fasting on an auspicious day), and then can resume functioning as he used to do normally. Another way to align with the magic-cosmic forces is to wear stones in rings and chains and beads that transmit and regulate magic-cosmic forces affecting the body and mind of the person who wears them.

In sum, the five ways described above show how Indians *individually* gain on spirituality by refining their qualities and characteristics and empowering themselves to cope with the existential problems of life. They do not necessarily follow any particular ancient school of thought, but follow their essence as filtered through centuries of cultural experiences. Their spirituality is not quite free of religious colouring, nor expunged from superstitions and blind faith, nor devoid of selfish interests for tangible gains. Indians' spirituality is a mixed bag of pure and pious as well as rational and irrational ways of self-development and self-gains.

Collective expressions of spirituality In the culture that is largely collectivist, spirituality is also likely to be manifested in the collective's behaviour. There are indeed reports of collective spirituality. For example Srinivas (2000) reported the case of a village, "The strengthening of the moral fabric of the village and uniting the people was accomplished through regular prayer, chanting of hymns and *bhajan*s (devotional songs), reading of scriptures, and lectures of spirituality and morality" (p. 178). In fact, Srinivas discovered that "thousands of India's villages" have achieved "remarkable socio-economic transformation" through such a *swadhya* (self-help). He further observed the following:

> In *swadhya*, *bhakti* (devotion to God) is transformed into a social force. Through *bhakti*, the values of selflessness, faith in the equality and dignity of all human beings, sharing of resources, concern for happiness, and wellbeing of others, and constant striving for one's own spiritual and psychological growth, have become imprinted on those who have embraced the movement [of *swadhya*]. *Shrambhakti* (devotion in form of voluntary labour) has led to 'impersonal wealth' through collective farming, collective orchards, building community prayer halls, and such other collective self-empowerment (p. 179).

In most of such cases of collective transformation, there is a leader who serves as the source of inspiration, guidance and strength to the people. There exist both normative formulation and empirical evidence in favour of the leader having a high level of spirituality in order to succeed in Indian conditions. Spirituality, according to Kanungo and Mendonca (1996, p. 97), consists of the profound consciousness of the eternal values of truth, goodness and beauty (*satyam, shivam* and *sundaram)*, emotionally entrenched faith in these values, and altruistic behaviour to keep subordinates' interest and concerns over one's own interest and concerns even at one's personal risk and self-sacrifices. A number of studies by Mulla and Krishnan (2006, 2007, 2008) found that *karma-yogi* leaders are those who are duty oriented, indifferent to rewards of their efforts, and being composed in face of pleasure or pain. Such leaders, instead of being ambitious, work hard and possess transformational capabilities.

Chakraborty (1987, 1995) and Chakraborty and Chakraborty (2008) brought in the Vedantic perspective on management to show that such an approach effectively

counteracts the Western consumerism and material orientation. They advanced the *raajarishi* (sage-king) concept of a leader. *Raajarishi* leadership is based on commitment to the enduring values of *satya* (truth) and *rita. Rita*, besides encompassing truth, includes justice and goodness. A leader in work organization, according to them, instead of being technical, analytical and materially oriented, must aspire to be spiritual and duty bound. The leader has to be an ego ideal inspiring subordinates in this "subjective journey", "pilgrimage" or "inner transformation" towards the spiritual self. The leader, by practising yoga, meditation, control of breathing and stilling of turbulent mind, can purify his or her *chitta* (impulsive mind) and make it spiritual, expand his or her self to include others, and help them grow and transform themselves without expecting anything in return. They argue in favour of unconditional giving and making sacrifices that are believed to radiate and transform the subordinates around, and help create a spiritual and effective work climate. A similar approach has been advocated by Sharma (2007). Sharma, drawing on the *Bhagavad Gita* and *guna* typology, has formulated the *OSHA* model. The model prescribes people to take cognizance of their animal impulses (*A*), but transcend them in order to cultivate human qualities (*H*), realize spirituality (S) and ultimately become one with nature (*O*). The synthesis of all these layers is likely to result in a reservoir of wisdom. Srinivas (2000) observed that living by, aspiring to, or feeling bad if they fail to live by higher values is a sure sign of spirituality in Indians' mindset:

> It is not an overstatement to say that in India, more than in any country, living a life of higher values strikes a chord across class and caste divisions. People who live by higher values are respected and listened to. Almost every Indian who for some reason or other is not living by his deeply rooted values feels guilt and shame, and admires those that can and do. Corporate leaders who have been admired and have been able to turn around their organizations have invariably been people with integrity, with high values (p. 181).

A recent study (Cappelli et al. 2010) showed that Indian companies, compared to American companies, prioritize social mission over maximizing profit, focus more on development of human beings within the company, and engage employees more often in problem solving.

It is difficult to be sure that the findings regarding either the spirituality of villagers, Vedantic inputs to managers or the humanistic approach of Indian companies can be generalized beyond a particular point. There may be such sporadic efforts to serve larger interests through collective use of spirituality. But there may also be a selective bias of those who have personal faith in spirituality. They might have got attracted to such instances, trained managers in spirituality and received positive feedback, or got socially desirable responses in a cross-cultural comparative study. There are also trends that the opposite is happening in India. Indians are getting more money-minded and consumerism is riding high in the minds of people (Varma 2004). Indian organizations are emulating multinational organizations by shifting from culturally determined to market driven and strategically oriented work cultures (Sinha 1999). They are driven by profit motive and market forces that require hiring fewer people, extracting maximum from

them by giving variable pay packets, instigating intense competitive excellence, and getting rid of spent forces (Sinha 2004). The balance seems to be tilting towards materialism.

4.3.2 Materialistic Indians

There are indeed scholars who refute the view that Indians are spiritual in their beliefs, values or practices. They find that Indians are pure and simple materialists. Ramanujan (1999), for example argued that, because Indians believe in the transmission and exchange of substances (*dhaatu*), they are materialists:

> Contrary to the notion that Indians are 'spiritual', they are really 'material minded'. They are materialists, believers in substance where there is continuity, a constant flow of substance from context to context, from non-self to self—in eating, breathing, sex, sensation, perception, thought, art, or religious experience (Ramanujan 1999, p. 46).

Ramanujan's (1999) argument was based on the Indians' metaphysical belief in the primacy of substance. So, even if there is a transfer of substance from non-self to self, it is Indians' material mindedness. On the other hand, Roland (1988) interpreted a shift of a substance from gross to subtle as a reflection Indians' attempt for self-refinement and hence and a gain in their spirituality. While Ramanujan based his argument on ancient Indian beliefs, Varma (2004) observed on the basis of day-to-day experiences that Indians are certainly money-minded:

> Indians have always had a down-to-earth relish for materialistic world. Far from being disdainful of the temptation of money and wealth, they have consistently given value to these goals. Given the right opportunity they can emerge as among the most resilient and focused commercial operators of the new millennium (Varma 2004, p. 61).

As reported earlier, there are references in the Vedic literature and in the epics that Indians valued acquiring wealth and relished living luxurious life. *Artha* (earning money), according to Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is the most important goal of life, for dharma and karma cannot be accomplished without money (Rangarajan 1992, p. 145). Varma (2004) contends that money motivates Indians like nothing else does and they "are simply better at pursuing material gain than pondering moral deficits" (p. 81). He referred to "a veritable army of footpath businessmen" who make money under quite adverse conditions. Other scholars such as Nirad Chaudhury (1964) and Naipaul (1979) have substantiated Varma's observation that the vast majority of Indians leave no stone unturned in order to make money even under the most difficult and distractive conditions. Varma (2004) and others like him do not differentiate between Indians' spirituality from their religious practices and rituals, which too disclose Indians' money mindedness:

> The Hindu devotee prays to achieve rewards in this world. He is willing to give material gifts to the Almighty to achieve these, and if one divinity is less willing to oblige, there are

> many others to choose from. … [I]n some of the most important temples, priests aggressively egg on worshippers to contribute generously at the altar. … Every day thousands of devotees donate cash and gold [to the Tirupati Temple], and for those unable to make a personal visit, the Trust enables donations through a website (Varma 2004, p. 62).

The five most popular temples of India (Tirupati, Sri Padmanabhaswamy, Golden Temple at Amritsar, Siddhivinayak at Mumbai, Shirdi Sai Baba) attract millions of devotees who donate billions of rupees every year. Only a few chambers of the sixteenth century Sri Padmanabhaswamy temple have been opened yielding a wealth of over US$ 22 billion (Halpern 2012). The deity in Tirumala Tirupati Venkateswara temple is clad in 1,000 kg gold. The temple has a reserve of 5 tonnes of gold, a fixed deposit of Rs. 5,600 million and donations of Rs. 6,500 million in one year (2010–2011).[4] The Sai Baba Sansthan Trust at Shirdi recorded on 13 May 2013, a Rs 1.441 billion income in the last five years (2008–2013), with 22 % higher donations received every year (*The Times of India* 2013). When Sathya Sai Baba died, it took 20 people 36 hours to count the cash recovered from his private chambers at his ashram in Puttaparthi. Further, 98 kilos of gold, 307 kilos of silver and 1150.60 million in cash were discovered in his Yajur Mandir.[5] The Siddhivinayak Temple in Mumbai had an annual income of about Rs. 400 million several years back (Mankikar 2010). The inside of Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar has work in silver and gold, and its palanquin that bears the Sikh sacred book, the *Adi Granth*, is set with precious stones and has silver poles and a gold canopy.[6] The trust pays for free food for 40,000 visitors every day. At Tirupati, wealthy devotees are favoured in being allowed a *darshana* (glimpse). And the very rich or celebrities enjoy the privilege of offering full-length worship by getting very close to the deity, while thousands stand in line for hours to have a *darshana* for a few seconds from a distance. Materialism, in sum, pervades the Indian life space encroaching upon even those domains that are believed to be spiritual and religious (see Box 4.1).

Box 4.1. Spiritual Gurus Going West

The growth in the travel of spiritual gurus from the Himalayas, the traditional home of spiritual masters, to the Western countries may be another way Indian spirituality is struggling to assert itself in the global world, which is becoming increasingly materialistic (Bhawuk 2003, p. 17).

[4] http://blog.buzzintown.com/2011/07/temple-treasure-richest-temples-of-india/, accessed on April 25, 2014.

[5] http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/12-crores-98-kgs-gold-found-in-sri-sathya-sai-baba-s-room-113024, retrieved on August 26, 2013.

[6] http://blog.buzzintown.com/2011/07/temple-treasure-richest-temples-of-india, retrieved on August 26, 2013.

4.3.3 Spirituality Embedded in Materialism

Despite such an overwhelming dominance of materialism, Indians are still believed to have a built-in spirituality in the inner layers of their mindset, although there are wide disagreements regarding if, how and where in life it surfaces and how and how much it affects their behaviour. Ashis Nandy (1983) observed that spirituality is "hardly the overwhelming aspect of Indian-ness; yet there remains an irreducible element of spiritual concerns which informs the toughest materialism in India" (p. 81). On the contrary, Narain (1957) felt that Indians only profess to be spiritual, "… but their greed for material things is insatiable" (p.130). Varma (2004) admitted that spirituality does have a role, but it only "… serves Indians well in weathering periods of adversity … a safety net in many ways especially built to create reasons for solace in the bleakest of situations" (p. 100). Indians believe that if they think and behave spiritually, whatever wrong they did in the past would sooner or later pass and a favourable situation will emerge as part of the divine design to reward their spirituality. For such people, spirituality is not different from religious or righteous practices. Of course, there are scholars (e.g. Chakraborty 1987, 1995; Roland 1988; Srinivas 2000; among many others) who claims that Indians have a natural disposition towards spirituality being expressed in a whole range of individual and collective thoughts and practices. If materialism smothers spirituality, they argue, this is because of Western influences and everyday imperatives, which have been growing over time. They concede that Indians from the ancient times were attracted to wealth—the Goddess Lakshmi (Goddess of wealth and prosperity) has been worshipped in India since ancient times. But the material impulse was somewhat moderated by the doctrine that desires are endless and insatiable, and hence cause frustrations unless they are contained by practising asceticism that is conducive to spirituality. That constraint was loosened in the medieval period when Turkish and Persian nobles and governing officials indulged freely in sensual pleasure, luxuries and ostentations (see Chap. 1). Their lifestyle was later adopted by the aristocracy of nawabs and maharajas, and emulated by their lesser prototype, the landlords or *zamindar*s. The brown sahibs, doctors, lawyers and professors that the British created followed suit and continued with the lifestyle of the nawabs, maharajas and *zamindar*s.

There was a moderating impact on this march of materialism during the Gandhi-Nehru era, which emphasized the role of ethics in politics and society, manifested sensitivity towards the poor and deprived, and observed reticence and bashfulness towards ostentatious display of wealth (Varma 1999, p. 32). However, liberalization of the economy and the import of the capitalist model of development pulled out all stops and let a whole lot of Indians seek new opportunities and enjoy high-paying jobs, lavish lifestyles, branded products, luxurious houses, membership of expensive clubs and an aura of being intellectuals (Das 2007, p. 282). Now, making money and enjoying its benefits were the overwhelming values. As the development of a country is measured in terms of how much wealth

is being created, not how or by whom, whoever produces, sells and buys is adding to the gross domestic product (GDP) and thus contributes to development. Even crooks, smugglers and corrupt ones contribute to national development so long as they buy and sell. Consumerism was sanctified because people's "ability to consume was an index to progress. Material wants were suddenly severed from any notion of guilt" (Varma 1999, p. 175). Varma (2004) narrated how the founder of a top industrial house built his fortune by availing of opportunities of dubious nature and drew the inference: "Indians envy the manner in which wealth pole-vaults people over prescriptive barriers, and admire the way it insulates them from the unproductive claims of morality" (Varma 2004, p. 95). This amounts to "amoral familism" (Banfield 1958) where the end justifies the means, there is erosion of ethics and idealism in political life, power is glorified, individuals are more important than collectives and common goods, and ideological commitment has been buried under the striving to accumulate wealth at any cost (Varma 1999, pp. 75-76). "It is different from the older bourgeoisie, which was tolerant, secular, and ambiguous. The new class is street smart. It has had to fight to rise from the bottom, and it has learnt to manoeuvre the system. It is easy to despair over its vulgarity, its new-rich mentality" (Das 2007, p. 280).

Thus, Indian materialism is signified in terms of family-centric striving for power and wealth. Power and money are no longer dirty words. Now, the achieving individuals openly admit a high priority to money and power and its obligations to the immediate family. A sample of adults in a recent study (Lakshmi and Sinha 2012) confirmed the presence of two clear configurations in their mindset: Selfish striving for money and power and family centrality:

Striving for Power and Money

- Nobody cares for the community, why should I?
- I need to have more money, lest I fall into poverty.
- I keep my own interests above others.
- It is more important to be a rich person than a good person.
- I do not help others at the cost of my own interests.
- I have to show power and wealth in order to impress others.
- I need power and connections to get rich quickly.
- A rich powerful person is above laws and the society.
- I am more competitive than my friends and acquaintance.
- When it comes to wealth, there is nothing like enough.

Family-Centredness

- Family and friends are my first obligations above others.
- I trust only my family members.
- It is natural that I favour my family members over others.
- It is not merit, but personal connection that works in society.
- Everyone wants to get rich quickly, even at the cost of others.
- Money can buy most of the things in this world.

- I have to pose that I trust even those whom I do not really trust.
- I should leave enough money for my children's wellbeing.
- I wish I have all that I want.

Does this amoral and familial materialism spare any space for spirituality in the Indian mindset? It does push it to the inner layers and let it be expressed mostly in personal domains. However, most Indians still believe in a reality beyond the one that is manifest and framed in terms of *desha* (place), *kaala* (time) and *paatra* (person).[7] Some call it *paraloka* (the other world) beyond this *loka* (world)—the one they enter into after death or the one that envelopes this one. Others intuitively sense it as the Supreme Reality, Divine Design or Principle that guides the universe or even God impacting human beings in a variety of ways. Spirituality lies in this sensing either through meditation, contemplation and reflection or righteous behaviour, social role performance in a detached way or chanting a mantra that helps one to concentrate on consciousness or even practising religious rituals as a stepping stone for relating to the divine (see Box 4.2).

Box 4.2. Indians are Centred in Spirituality

Their [Indians'] ideal mental health is not a rational, socially autonomous and self-actualizing person, but rather that of a person centred in a spiritual consciousness and being, so that there is an inner calm amid the stresses and pulls of close familial and other group hierarchical relationships (Roland 1988, p. 60).

None of these precludes the indispensable reality of living simultaneously a materialistic life. The two are not mutually exclusive of each other. The golden rule is to live in the material world but to yearn for the spiritual in any of its varied forms. It is interesting to note that Gurcharan Das (2007), who is one of the strongest advocates of a market-driven economy and pitches his faith in the rise of the materialistically oriented middle class, concludes the following:

> Despite the spread of the industrial society in the past fifty years, spiritual practice and family bonds continue to be nurtured in Indian life. This is not confined to the uneducated masses. Some of the most successful and rational people in all professions continue to turn to the spiritual. They do so for a number of reasons—a solace against the madness and emptiness of contemporary life, as a true search for the meaning of life, as a matter of observing tradition, as a turning away from failure in material world. *Whatever the reason, religion and spirituality continue to have a powerful hold on the Indian psyche in all walks of life* (Das 2007, p. 355, italics added).

[7] Personal communication with Rajen Gupta, Management Development Institute, Gurgaon, India.

4.4 Summary

Spirituality is an inner transformation of the self that transcends the sense phenomena and becomes inclusive of others. It is a search for deeper meanings in life and a process of relating with the larger reality, other persons, humanity at large, the cosmos and the divine. Materialism, on the other hand, is this—worldliness centred on the primacy of matter. It is a belief that everything, including mind and consciousness, evolves out of matter acting on matter. Materialism works hand in hand with hedonism disposing individuals to acquire and enjoy consuming objects. In the Western thought, spirituality and materialism are considered to be mutually exclusive to each other; but not in the Indian mindset. Indians believe that one can live a materialistic life while perusing spirituality. Except the Caarvaakas *lokaayata* tradition advocating extreme materialism and hedonism, the other Indian schools of thought recognized the indispensability of material existence, allowed people to live life fully and enjoy earthly pleasures, but then required to transcend them by discharging duties and meeting social obligations, developing a detached observing stance, being totally devoted to God or practising yoga and meditation. The liberalizing economy of India has fostered materialism that seems to be smothering spirituality. Indians, however, still yearn for spirituality. Some attempt to gain spirituality by improving their human qualities, rising above selfish interests in social transactions, getting religious or engaging in ritualistic and superstitious practices.

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Chapter 5
Religiosity, Secularism and Sexuality

5.1 The Triangular Configuration Between Religiosity, Secularism and Sexuality

Religiosity, secularism and sexuality, despite their apparent adversative nature, are interwoven in the Indian mindset. Religiosity is the totality of religious beliefs, values and practices including rites and rituals. Many Indians are deeply religious. A major part of their life space is occupied by religious fasting, festivals, individual and collective worship, frequent pilgrimages to proximate and distant places, massive congregations attracting millions of devotees, immensely rich temples and *mazar*s, enormous popularity of Godmen, respect for saints, sages, fakirs, mullahs and monks, a number of television serials on mythological events and characters, religious songs on radios, and numerous rituals and religious offerings. There are a variety of offerings to please a deity and evoke a "dormant benediction" for equally diverse requests and appeals. It could be "a lock of hair, a donation, a pilgrimage, a penance, a vow, a fast, an amulet, a *yajna*, a repetition of particular *sloka*, feeding of monkeys or cow …" (Varma 2004, p. 98), and so on. According to the 2001 Census, there were 2.4 million places of worship in the country compared to only 1.5 million schools and less than a million hospitals (Varma 2004, p. 96). The variety of forms that religious worships take is also amazing. "The religion is lived through ritualistic (*Bahminism, Tantrism*), devotional (*Bhakti*), spiritual-mystic (asceticism, yoga, meditation), and heroic … And yet, to a large extent all these forms are peacefully practiced beside each other. One can almost say that religious post-modernism has been realized in India (Axel Michaels, 1998 cited by Kakar and Kakar 2009, pp. 134–135).

Hinduism, the religion of the majority in India, formally accepts other religions as manifestly different but as valid paths to essentially the same ultimate reality.

Many ideas on religiosity and sexuality in this chapter have been drawn from Kakar (1978) and Kakar and Kakar (2009).

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As a result, it aims to foster a secularism that is not non-religious as in the West, but rests on the acceptance of other religions within its overarching framework believed to contain the essence of all other religions: "… the classical Hindu religious tradition, enshrined in the ancient texts from the Vedas through the *Smritis* … does not recognize a mutually exclusive dichotomy of the religious versus the secular, nor the idea of religion as a private activity …", but "more inclusive and synthetic than pluralistic" (Madan 1997, pp. 198–199). It is this non-discriminating, multi-religious secularism that was enshrined in the Indian Constitution and is formally followed in government policies and schemes, although their full implementation is not always satisfactory; nor do the people at large always go by the spirit of multi-religious secularism. The socio-political dynamics of the various religious communities are constant distractors, to which we shall return to shortly.

Similarly, Indian religiosity does not negate sexuality. Sexuality includes but is not limited to genital sex. It is also a source of the capacity for emotional and erotic relationships and for seeking sensuous pleasures with passion. Hence, it is a natural and indispensable part of living life fully. Similarly, dharma (religion) is conceptualized as the "natural laws" for holding together the societal structure and guiding human conduct. Naturally, in the wholesome perspective dharma encompasses sexuality: "… the sexual act in Hindu tradition does not lie outside but within the holiness of life" (Kakar and Kakar 2009, p. 82). Drawing on this broad, inclusive view, sexuality in ancient literature has been depicted as a joyful experience and not as constraining. But there was also a strong tradition of thought emphasizing the value of asceticism. Indian culture as a result is reported "to oscillate between the ascetic and erotic" (Roland 1988, p. 262)—and the balance in favour of either of the two has been tilting from time to time. The ancient period of joyful expression of sexuality was followed by a long phase of constrained sexuality for a whole millennium, which is now being challenged in globalizing India. The rest of the chapter traces the deep roots of this triangular configuration in historical experiences and its present unfolding in the contemporary mindset.

5.2 The Cultural Roots of Religiosity, Secularism and Sexuality in India

5.2.1 Religiosity

Ancient Vedic literature was fascinated and awed by the forces of nature, which were invested with divinity and personified as male and female (Thapar 1972). The lord of the Gods and ruler of heaven was Indra—the rain maker. His thunder symbolized supreme strength which he deployed to fight and kill demons and protect the rest of the universe. Agni, the God of fire, too, was attributed with many supernatural qualities. He was indispensable for life, a purifier of all impurities, destroyer if displeased, a witness to marriages and a source to reach out to other

Gods and Goddesses through fire sacrifices. Equally important was Surya (the Sun God) who provided light which was the symbol of wisdom overcoming ignorance. Gayatri, the five-faced Goddess, was probably the female counterpart, who controlled the five senses or *praanas* (vital breathing) and, if pleased, was believed to protect these five life-forces. Rudra (storm God) was to be feared. Another God was Soma (which was the drink of immortality, an alcoholic brew). There were 33 Gods and Goddesses during the Vedic period who had to be prayed to and appeased for prosperity, wealth and happiness. The hymns of the *Rig Veda* were dedicated to them. Some of them still resonate in the Indian mind. An example is the Goddess Gayatri, whose hymn (in Sanskrit) many Indians recite regularly. A rough English translation is as follows:

> Oh God! Thou art the Giver of Life,
> Remover of pain and sorrow,
> The Bestower of happiness,
> Oh! Creator of the Universe,
> May we receive thy supreme sin-destroying light,
> May Thou guide our intellect in the right direction.

Vedic people were eclectic in accepting some forms of religious worship that were popular perhaps during the earlier Harappan civilization. They worshipped the horned deity, the Bull, which symbolized the God of fertility, snakes, stones symbolizing various Gods and Goddesses, and sacred trees, plants and flowers such as *ashoka* (saraca indica), banyan, *bael* (aegle marmelos), banana, mango, margosa, *peepal* (ficus religiosa), basil, lotus and so on. They were associated with mythological characters and events. In order to appease Gods and Goddesses, Vedic people considered *yajna* (religious ceremony) a must and, therefore, performed it frequently in which all kinds of oblations and sacrifices were given. In fact, the *Yajur Veda* means "the wisdom of sacrifices" that laid down various sacred invocations for sacrificial rites and rituals and to pray and pay respect to the various instruments that were involved in animal sacrifice. The Brahmanas that were composed following the Vedas were primarily devoted to specify elaborately and meticulously how religious rituals and sacrifices must be performed.

The Puranas, written subsequently, created many more Gods. Some of them were Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the preserver), Shiva (the destroyer), Ganesha (the elephant-headed God known to be the remover of obstructions) and Shakti (the Goddess of power and energy). Eventually, about 33 million Gods and Goddesses were established and were placed in different strata ranging from the personal, through castes and communities, to a whole group of divine bodies. Although the Vedas posited polytheistic beliefs in the existence of many Gods and Goddesses, there were Vedic hymns and poems that hinted at the idea of henotheism. That is, there is one God—the Supreme Being—that takes many different forms. The Puranas, on the other hand, rendered the abstract ideas of the Vedas and Upanishads into stories about the life and events of Gods and Goddesses, narrating their superior qualities and upholding moral and not-so-moral conducts. There are 18 major Puranas: six devoted to the worship of the God Shiva, six to Vishnu and six to Brahma.

At times, tthe stories compete with each other to prove the superiority of one God over the others. During the *Mahabharata*, the *bhakti maarg* (devotional tradition) was initiated. It was about the time that temples started to be built and God images and idols were installed for ritualistic worshipping. Together, they resulted in a complex religious structure where a plethora of Gods and Goddesses occupied various positions of significance with meticulously drawn prescriptions of how they could be appeased through various rites and rituals.

5.2.2 Secularism in Indian and Western Perspectives

Despite this religious backdrop, the Vedas and Upanishads raised a profound question of how the world was created. The answer reflected their flight of creative imagination rather than a dogmatic expression of their religiosity. According to the *Rig Veda,* the world was not created by either the Supreme Being or Gods or Goddesses. They were themselves created later on. The world came into being out of *shunya*—emptiness—a non-religious conceptualization of the origin of the universe:

> Then even nothingness was not, nor existence.
> There was no air then, nor the heaven beyond it … .
> *The Gods themselves are later than creation* [Italic added],
> So who knows truly whence it has arisen![1]

A grand imaginative response of the non-religious nature to this curiosity appears metaphorically in the *Chandogya Upanishad* (vi, 13, transl. by Basham 1971, pp. 250–251). It is in the form of a dialogue between a teacher and his disciple:

> Fetch me a fruit of the Banyan tree.
> Here is one, sir.
> Break it.
> I have broken it, sir.
> What do you see?
> Very tiny seeds, sir.
> Break one.
> I have broken it, sir.
> What do you see now?
> Nothing, sir.
> My son,' the father said, 'what you do not perceive is the essence, and in that essence the mighty Banyan tree exists. Believe me, my son, in that essence is the self of all that is. That is the True, that is the Self …

Two parallel traditions that branched off from the Vedas, the religious codified in the Brahmanas, and another, largely non-religious, in the Upanishads, coexisted in the primordial mindset. The first emphasized the values of *yajna,* sacrificial rites and rituals to seek the blessings of Gods and Goddesses, while the second focused on comprehension, reflection and meditation for understanding the mystery of life,

[1] *Rig Veda*, x, 129, transl. A. L. Basham 1971, pp. 247–248.

death and immortality. In fact, the Sanskrit term *veda* simply means "knowledge" that may or may not have to do with either religion or sacrificial rites and rituals. Accordingly, the term was also used as a system of knowledge pertaining to a variety of other domains such as medicine (*Ayurveda),* music and sacred dance (*Gandharvaveda*), archery (*Dhanurveda*), agriculture (*Sasyaveda*), evil knowledge (*Durveda*), among others. The epics, *Valmiki Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, were originally composed as non-religious works, but were later given religious forms (Thapar 1972, p. 133).

There was another source through which an essence of secularism seeped into ancient Indian thought. The reformist movements of Buddhism and Jainism denied the existence of Gods and Goddesses, denounced Brahmanical religious rites and rituals, but retained the essence of religion in the forms of good personal conduct and proper behaviour with others. One of the six major schools of thought, *Saankhya*, went a step further. It was propounded as an atheistic view assuming dualism of matter and consciousness (see details in Chap. 4). Matter and consciousness were postulated to interact dialectally resulting in 25 principles of all creations. The *Caarvaka*s went to the extreme of being anti-religion and therefore secular in this sense.

More relevant for understanding ancient secularism was the emphasis placed on good personal conduct and amicable behaviour towards others. Jainism and Buddhism considered it the core of their religion. The Upanishadic dictum of *sarva dharma samabhava* (equal respect to all religions) laid the foundation for a multi-religious secularism. In one of the Upanishads, the sage Yagnavalkya is reported to have said, "It is not our religion, still less the colour of our skin, that produces virtue. Virtue must be practiced. Therefore, let no one do to others, what he would not have done to himself" (Nehru 1946/2001, p. 122). Emperor Ashoka (263–231 BCE), who played the most instrumental role in spreading Buddhism in the subcontinent, emphasized, besides nonviolence, tolerance of other religions. One of his famous rock edicts recommended the following:

> On each occasion one should honour another man's sect, for by doing so one increases the influence of one's own sect and benefits that of the other man, while by doing otherwise, one diminishes the influence of one's own sect and harms the other man's … therefore, concord is to be commended so that men may hear one another's principles … (Rock Edict xii, Thapar 1972, p. 87).

Thus, ancient Indian secularism was expressed in the coexistence of religious and non-religious beliefs and practices, good personal and interpersonal relationships, and tolerance and acceptance of other religions.

5.2.2.1 Secularism in the Western Tradition

Secularism in the Western tradition evolved as a cumulative impact of the Reformation, Renaissance, humanism, rationalism, individualism, mechanical concept of nature and a number of scientific discoveries starting from fourteenth-century Europe. It pertained to beliefs, values and activities of a "worldly" nature, which were not sacred. Rather, they were devoid of any religious meanings or rituals.

Secularism signified a departure from the worldview of the earlier period when the existence of God was taken for granted and there was an unshakable belief in the divine design for running the world. Following this worldview, the Church used to dominate the major domains of people's life as well as the functions of the State. Secularism reflected a new worldview where science and reason were supposed to guide human behaviour and religion was not allowed to interfere with the impulse to live life to its fullest. People were free to indulge in earthly pleasures, replace religious superstitions with reasons, facts and evidence, use their intellect and follow their dispositions to live the way they wanted to rather than conforming to the dictates of the Church. Therefore, public policy and State functions were required to be cleansed of religious views and discriminations. Religion was in fact required to be subtracted from culture in order to have a non-religious, worldly and scientifically defined enlightened society where individualism flourished.

An extreme view on secularism appeared in a best-selling book, *The God Delusion* (Dawkins 2006), where Dawkins, a British biologist, argued that a supernatural creator, God, almost certainly does not exist and the belief in a personal God is a delusion in the face of strong contradictory evidence. Further, religion is a "mental virus" that spreads across societies out of a misconception about how the world was created and how people become moral and altruistic. He refuted the theory of "divine design" by arguing that the world was indeed created through a natural selection process of nature evolving from simple to complex. Further, people do not need to be religious in order to be moral and virtuous. In fact, atheists can have a healthy and independent mind and can be happy, balanced, moral, virtuous and intellectually enriched. He accused religion of subverting science, fostering fanaticism, encouraging bigotry against those having different sexual preferences and misleading societies in many other negative ways.

Taylor (2007) on the contrary, argued that religiosity did not totally disappear in the secular age. In his classical work, *A Secular Age*, he traced the emergence of secularism in the Western world and the variety of options it created. He admitted that the major revolutions in Western thought starting from the Reformation resulted in the diminishing salience of the traditional religious mindset and the rise of secularism. However, secularism, he further argued, in fact led to create a vast space in which it became possible to pursue spirituality and even believe in God. He distinguished three facets of secularism: Political, sociological, and cultural. Political secularism refers to the arrangements in which the State remains neutral to various religious beliefs and affiliations without allowing them to dictate or dominate policies and functions. In the sociological sense, secularism means the decline of religious beliefs, values and practices in the day-to-day life of the common people who replace them with non-religious and down-to-earth ones. The cultural meaning of secularism refers to *a change in the conditions of a society* where people shift from blind and unchallenged faith in the existence of God and his design for running the universe to a condition where they are free to think and entertain whatever they like to. This freedom to think may indeed lead to the belief in the existence of God. Thus, a belief in God is one of the many options that cultural secularism allows. In other words, secularism, while demolishing the rigid

frame of Christian religion, promotes humanism that in turn generates an ever-widening variety of moral and spiritual positions as Taylor (2007) said, "across the span of the thinkable and perhaps even beyond". Many people are now not quite satisfied with the atomized material day-to-day life and want to think what is beyond this worldliness. And, thus a new, open and flexible worldview has emerged that allows people to sustain, if they so want, their belief in God and engage in religious practices within the framework of secularism. Religiosity and spirituality seamlessly intermingle in such a broad secular worldview. It is essentially an entitlement of individuals to decide what he or she wants or does.

5.2.3 Sexuality

In the ancient Indian worldview, sexuality was an indispensable part of life. The source of this view goes back to the Vedantic belief in *moksha*—the *aatma* (soul) strives for a blissful union with the *paramaatma* (the Eternal Soul). In the *Saankhya* school of thought, the union of *purusha* and *prakriti* is the source of all creations. If such a union is so pious and fundamental, how could the union between a male and a female be anything but natural and even desirable? The scholar-mathematician Varahamihira (505–587 CE) in the *Brihat samhita* (see Bhat 1947) is quoted as legitimizing sexuality as part of life:

> The whole universe, from *Brahman* to smallest worm, is based on the union of the male and female. Why then should we feel ashamed of it, when even Lord Brahma was forced to take four faces on account of his greed to have a look at a maiden (Kakar and Kakar 2009, p. 82).

The Tantric tradition from the fourth century BCE interpreted sexual rites as passionless, sacred and as a means to achieve cosmic consciousness. The *bhakti maarg* (devotional tradition) drew on this theme of the union of *aatma* with *paramaatma* through heightened emotionality, which amounts, symbolically, to an erotic fusion with God. Thus, the experience of intense person-to-person emotional relationship paves a common ground between religiosity and sexuality.

However, there was a parallel tradition of thought that prescribed restraining sexuality. The *Bhagvad Gita* strongly advocated containing of all desires. Buddhism blamed desires as the source of human sorrows and hence recommended curbing them. In fact, abstinence has been a core value in ancient Indian thought. In the first stage of life, *brahmacharya* (spiritual and practical purity of celibacy and asceticism) was posited to be a must, and only in the *grihasthya* (householder) stage could one indulge in *kaama*—sensuous, including sexual, pleasures, which had to be transcended in the subsequent stage of *vaanaprastha* (going to the forest, or retiring from active life), and given up completely in the stage of *sanyaas* (renunciation of worldly life).

Even during the *grihasthya* (householder) stage, sexuality was prescribed ideally for procreation only. The physiology of *ayurveda* maintained that food is converted into semen in a 30-day period by successive transformations and refinement through

blood, flesh, fat, bone and marrow. One drop of semen is distilled from 40 drops of blood. On the other hand, each ejaculation causes the loss of half an ounce of semen which is produced by consuming 60 pounds of nourishing food. If semen is so precious a source of vitality, it has to be preserved diligently and used exclusively for the most important purpose of procreation, especially a son who is entitled to perform religious rites and rituals that can release the father from the cycle of births and deaths. Any frivolous misuse of it for sensuous pleasure was naturally believed to be sinful and in fact harmful to the body and mind. So, semen should be retained and converted by observing celibacy into *oja* (vibrant energy) that helps gain spirituality. Further, according to this belief, "Longevity, creativity, physical and mental vitality are enhanced by the conservation of semen …" (Kakar 1990, p. 119). There are numerous mythological stories of ascetics maintaining sexual restraint and celibacy in order to gain spirituality while *apsara*s (divine dancers) tried to seduce them to fall into a sexual trap.

Yet, Indian mythology is replete with accounts of sexuality. As early as the first half of the third century BCE, there were depictions of loving couples in temples, but they symbolically represented the union of the individual soul (*aatma*) with the Supreme (*paramaatma*). "The infusion of religion with sexuality is not limited to sculpture, but also extended to literature, pre-eminently to the poetry and songs in the *bhakti* …" (Kakar and Kakar 2009, p. 83). What was spiritual metaphor in the ancient texts was subsequently presented as explicit sexual intercourse. Kakar (1978) observed:

> The principal texts consistently attest to the primary importance of sexuality. In Hindu mythology, sexuality is a rampant flood of polyamorous pleasure and connection, disdaining the distinctions between the heterosexual, genital imperatives of conventional sex, and sweeping away incestual taboos (p. 23).

The *Mahabharata* had characters that did not refrain from venting their lust for women, nor were the women absolutely chaste before marriage. There were instances of pre-marital sexuality, polygamy, women seducing men and so on. Lovemaking was pure and simply a means of sexual gratification while marriage had mostly social and religious purposes (Kakar and Kakar 2009, p. 73). It was not unusual for an otherwise worthy king to fall in love with a woman and marry her simply because she was beautiful despite the disparity in their age, caste and status. The Puranas, particularly the *Shiva-Puranas*, give vivid descriptions of how vulnerable or lustful the Gods were. For example,

> The heavenly nymph Mohini fell in love with the Lord of Creation, Brahma. After gaining the assistance of the God of love, Kaama, she went to Brahma and danced naked before him. Brahma remained unmoved till Kaama struck him with one of his flower arrows. Brahma's protest that he was an ascetic who must avoid all women, especially prostitutes, steadily grew weaker. Mohini laughed and insisted that he make love to her and pulled at his garment, revealing his aroused state (O'Flaherty 1973, p. 51).

Lord Shiva was an ascetic and a yogi, but was equally vigorous in his sexual intercourse with Parvati as well as the wives of sages. There is an instance reported in the *Shiva-Puranas*:

> When Siva failed to be satisfied by making love to Gauri, his wife, he then went naked into the pine forest in guise of a madman, his *linga* (phallus) erect, his mind full of desire, wishing to obtain sexual pleasure with the wives of the sages (O'Flaherty 1973, p. 173).

There is another story. Shiva's elder son, Skanda, killed a demon and so was rewarded by his mother Parvati to "amuse himself", which he did by making love to the wives of the Gods who were helpless to stop him (Kakar and Kakar 2009, p. 100). Shiva also figures prominently in the Tantric tradition which has a philosophical frame similar to the *Saankhya* school of thought. In the Tantric tradition, the one living divinity (*Brahma*) separates Itself into Him (Shiva) and Her (Shakti), male and female, who engage in an eternal play of having sexual intercourse that symbolizes the union of Shiva and Shakti. Sexual rites between male and female Tantrics were a means to celebrate the union of their body, mind, heart and soul, culminating in the experience of *aananda*—the divine bliss. This is also manifested in the worship of Shiva's *lingam* (phallus) in Shakti's *yoni* (vagina). The union of the two represents the indivisible oneness of male and female creative energy from which all life originates (Jansen 2003).

The heightened emotionality in the *bhakti maarg* (devotional tradition) bridged whatever gap existed between religiosity and sexuality in the mainstream of Indian thought. The belief is that a *bhakta* (devotee) is an *aatma*, a female striving for blissful fusion with the *paramaatma*—the male principal—through total surrender. Sexual union (including but not limited to genital intercourse) symbolizes such a union. At the affective level, the heightened emotionality of devotees is quite similar to the peak experience of sex partners. An exquisite example of *bhakti* expressions in erotic practices appears in the form of Krishna's *raas-lila* (drama and dance of love) with thousands of women, especially his beloved Radha. Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda* (written in the twelfth century) has descriptions of ecstatic lovemaking and orgasmic release between Radha and Krishna (Kakar and Kakar 2009, p. 83).

The communality between religiosity and sexuality may not be confined to only these worldviews. Neurological research (Newberg et al. 2001) shows that it is not only a matter of beliefs and emotionality. Some of the changes that occur in the brain during deep meditation and prayer are similar to changes that occur during sexual activities. This suggests that the relationship between sexuality and religiosity is much more basic than only a philosophical formulation. MacKnee (2002) found a communality between the profound nature of sexual and spiritual experience with the partner and in connections with God (respectively). In both experiences there is a disappearance of "dualism in all forms"—in body and spirit, male and female, spirit and nature (p. 241).

Sexuality in another stream of Indian thought has been viewed as part of a lifestyle that is independent of religiosity. Vatsyayana's *Kaama Sutra* (written in the third century) is a classical work on a holistic view of sexuality. Kakar and Kakar (2009) summarized it in the following words:

> What the *Kaama Sutra* is really about is the art of living—about finding a partner, maintaining power in marriage, committing adultery, living as or with a courtesan, using

> drugs—and also about positions in sexual intercourse. It has attained its classical status as the world's first comprehensive guide to erotic love because it is at bottom about essential, unchangeable human attributes—lust, love, shyness, rejection, seduction, manipulation—that are part of our sexuality … (p. 72).

Kakar and Kakar reported that not only the *Kaama Sutra*, but other Sanskrit poems and dramas that were written around that time were permeated with erotic lovemaking, playful enjoyment of ambiguities of lovemaking, delightful savouring of sexual pleasures, and a consummately refined suffering of its sorrows (p. 75). The temples of Khajuraho showcasing erotic art (tenth and eleventh centuries) depicted the variety of ways in which sexual activities could be performed and enjoyed—all highlighting that sexuality is part of a wholesome style of living for enjoying it to the fullest while still keeping the sacred at the centre of one's heart.

5.3 The Contemporary Formulation of Secularism, Religiosity and Sexuality

5.3.1 Political Secularism

The *Constitution of India* declares that India is a secular country prohibiting discrimination against or favour for anyone based on his or her religion, race, caste, gender or place of birth. The State professes to treat all religions with equal respect. Every person has the right to practice and preach any religion that he or she believes in and belongs to. In fact, it is a fundamental right even to get converted to any religion if one so desires. This professed secular commitment, despite the overwhelming majority of Hindus, grew out of a number of reasons. The tolerance ingrained in ancient Indic religions provided a fertile philosophical ground. There were many role models at different times in the cultural history of the country. Ranging from Ashoka, through Akbar, Kabirdas and Vivekananda to Mahatma Gandhi and many more were the exemplars of communal harmony and equanimity. The mystic modern sage Ramakrishna, the guru of Vivekananda is reported as proclaiming:

> I have practiced all religions, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and I have also followed the paths of the different Hindu sects … I have found that it is the same God toward whom all are directing their steps, though along different paths. You must try all beliefs and traverse all the different ways once (Ramakrishna cited by Rolland 1960, p. 79).

Mahatma Gandhi, for example, was a devout Hindu and had instilled religious devotion in the struggle for Independence, but was a strong advocate of harmony between Hindus, Muslims and other religious communities. He maintained, "My Hinduism teaches me to respect all religions".[2] He was thus secular in having a

[2] *Harijan*, October 19, 1947.

multi-religious perspective. Prime Minister Nehru too was secular, but drew his inspiration from European humanism hoping that secularism would cleanse Indians from religious orthodoxy and would foster a scientific temper in them. Secularism was also a political compulsion. The partition of the Indian subcontinent was based on the formula of religious segregation. Many Muslims migrated to Pakistan, but many more also decided to stay back. The country had an obligation to protect Islamic interests as Muslims in India tied their destiny with the rest. There were also Christians, Jews, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and other religious communities which were living mostly in peace for centuries. The country had a moral obligation as well as a political necessity to safeguard their interests and protect them from religious discrimination. In fact, the British right from the very beginning recognized this ground reality of multi-religious communities living in close physical proximity, although religion, till then, was considered to be inseparable from the political and social life of Indians. In order not to dabble and create problems for themselves, they instituted separate civil laws for Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Parsis, creating a precedent for Independent India to follow the multi-religious tradition.

Indian secularism thus pertained to communal coexistence and parity in access to societal resources in contrast to the non-religious European secularism. By the same token, Indian secularism has run into a problem: How to treat all communities equitably when they are numerically, materially, socially and culturally disparate? According to the 2001 Census, Sikhs (1.90 %), Buddhists (0.80 %), Jains (0.40 %) are numerically very small minorities and share origins with Hindus. Christians (2.30 %), larger in size, are still a molecule. They are concentrated mostly in the south and in the north-east. None of them has either the critical mass or the beliefs and rituals to pose a threat to the Hindu identity. Yet, there are occasional instances of religious discriminations and violence against Sikhs and Christians. Muslims, constituting a sizable population (13.43 %) and assuming even a majority position in certain parts of the country, are a real test case for Indian secularism that has not always emerged with flying colours. Religious riots involving Hindus and Muslims have been recurring till today, in some of which political parties, their senior leaders and even State machineries are alleged to be either involved or complacent. Despite various efforts by the government as well as both communities, serious misgivings and trust deficits still exist and prevent people on both sides from maintaining untainted secularism.

Any minority community anywhere in the world, if it is less privileged and less affluent than the surrounding majority, feels insecure, discriminated against and deprived in the best of circumstances. It has to remain alert, cohesive and defensive in order to resist the majority's smothering influences. So are the Muslims in India. They are not only in minority, but also suffer from having, according to the Census (2001), lower literacy rate (59.10 %) and lower participation in work (31.30 %) compared to Hindus (with a literacy rate of 65.10 and work participation of 40.40 %). Worse, many Muslims apprehend that their allegiance to the country is suspect. Many Hindus indeed think so. Such a milieu of mistrust is further vitiated by extremist activities that are often alleged to have

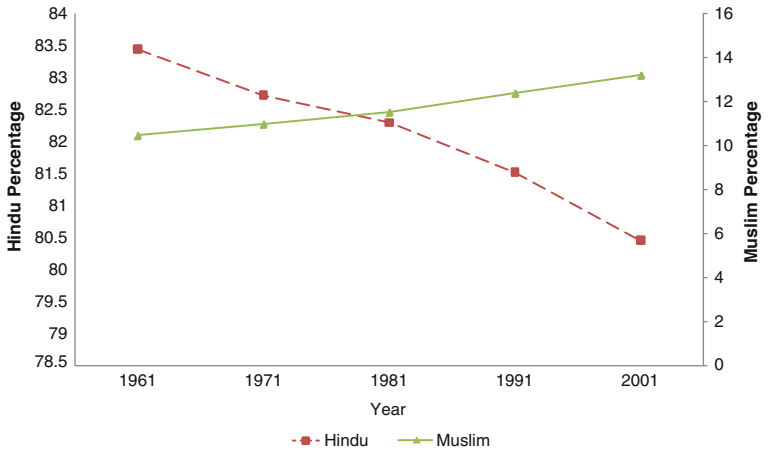

Fig. 5.1 Percentage of Hindus and Muslims in population

local Muslim connections. Unfriendly relations with Pakistan and its linkages with terrorists in India further antagonize Hindus and put a large chunk of Indian Muslims to the edge. Indian Muslims have one trump card, their vote bank, to extract favours from Hindu political leaders, who, it is alleged, exploit their sense of alienation and insecurity. They tend to do so in the name of secularism, but are criticized by many Hindus for their policy of appeasement while Muslims complain of their chronic neglect and implicit discrimination, which have kept them deprived compared to the majority of Hindus. Many Hindus notice with concern the rising proportion of Muslims in the population. They gloss over the fact that Muslims still constitute only 13.43 % of the population; rather, they exaggerate the falling percentage of Hindus and the rising one of Muslims in the total population over the last 40 years of so (Fig. 5.1). It is further pointed out that during the last decade (1991–2001) Muslims had a population growth of 36% compared to 20.3% of Hindus (The Census of India 2001): a trend many Hindus perceive to be a threat to the future of the country.

The extremists among Hindus ask for a uniform civil code in order to maintain equity, a control of disproportionate growth of population, reduction of gender inequality in the society, a ban on cow slaughter and the restoration of religious structures destroyed by the Muslims in the medieval period. Muslims construe this demand as a device of Hindu majoritorianism to assimilate the minority, undermine their religious practices and erode their identity. They consider a uniform code as a violation of the *Shariat* and hence an encroachment on their religious autonomy. Many of them seek, like the other backward castes, reservations in jobs and education in order to gain parity with Hindus. In such a milieu of misgivings and mistrust, it is difficult to really believe in secularity in its spirit and letters. There are instances where religious extremists created conditions that undermined secularity in thought and behaviour (see Box 5.1 on the next page).

Box 5.1. When Secularism Fumbled

- The Sambhaji Brigade ransacked the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI) Pune on 5 January 2004 because of the James Laine's book, *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India*.
- M. F. Hussain had to go in exile for his nude paintings of Hindu Goddesses.
- Because of his book, *The Satanic Verses,* Salman Rushdie was denied a visa and thus was prevented from participating in the Jaipur Literature festival in 2012.
- Taslima Nasreen, the author-poet, was exiled from Bangladesh in 2004–2007 and her autobiographical series, *Nirbaasan* (Exile) was banned in Kolkata, India.
- A professor's hands were cut off in Kerala on July 4, 2010 for asking an inappropriate question about the Prophet.
- A. K. Ramanujan's *Three Hundred Ramayans* was removed on November 27, 2011 from the Delhi University undergraduate syllabus under pressure from rightist extremists.
- The Symbiosis College of Art and Commerce, Pune postponed on January 30, 2012 a seminar on Kashmir that was to include director Sanjay Kak's film, *Jashne-e-Azadi* (the joy of freedom), because of Kashmiri Hindu pundits.
- Rohinton Mistry's book, *Such a Long Journey*, was banned on October 20, 2010 in Maharashtra to placate the Shiv Sena.
- And many other similar cases.

Secularism still holds though a shaky ground, partly because of the constitutional commitment, partly due to the expediency of electoral politics and partly compelled by the conditions of co-living. If it is badly shaken occasionally, the culprits are invariably those with vested interests.

5.3.2 Hindu Nationalism and Religiosity

Hindu nationalism sprouted in the nineteenth century in order to counteract the British denigration of Indians and their claim of Western superiority and the white man's supremacy. The nationalism was expressed in many forms, common to which was, besides social reforms, resurrection of ancient Indian scriptures, the Vedas and Upanishads by way of positing Hindus' spiritual superiority over the materialistic Western worldview. Raja Rammohan Roy, for example, formed the Brahmo Samaj, a sect, by drawing on the Upanishads to envision a rational,

modern India that would combine the best of both—Eastern and Western—worlds. He was an exemplar of the Indian cultural tradition of adding new ideas to old ones. His intellectual approach led him to accept many Western ideas that he considered essential for injecting rationality into the Indian lifestyle. It is said that he maintained two houses—one in which everything was Indian except he who was a typical Western, and another house where everything was Western except he who was an authentic Indian. Another reform movement, the Arya Samaj of Swami Dayanand, opposed not only Christianity and Islam, but also Brahminism, which he blamed as corroding Vedic knowledge by creating superstitions, rituals and social evils such as idolatry, caste hierarchy, untouchability, child marriage and discrimination against women. Although he was mostly a social reformist, many of his disciples were among the champions of nationalism. Two others, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, envisioned freedom and glory for India in the spiritual richness and heritage of Hinduism. Swami Vivekananda defined spirituality through a systematic interpretation of Vedanta and integrated it with yoga and social services, through the Ramakrishna Mission, as a means to attain national revival. Sri Aurobindo's speech on May 30, 1909 pleaded for the fusion of Hinduism and nationalism:

> I say no longer that nationalism is a creed, a religion, a faith; I say that it is the *Sanatan Dharma* which for us is nationalism. This Hindu nation was born with the *Sanatan Dharma*, with it, it moves and with it, it grows. When the *Sanatan Dharma* declines, then the nation declines, and if the *Sanatan Dharma* were capable of perishing, with the nation would perish (1909).

Later on, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, another nationalist, popularized a religious event, Ganesh Chaturthi, to mobilize Indians for Independence and, of course Mahatma Gandhi evoked the metaphor of *Ramraajya* (akin to the virtuous kingdom of Rama) as an ideal future for India where everyone (including diverse religious communities) would live in peace and harmony. This tradition of multi-religious worldview has continued to the present, one of the expressions of which, for example, was seen in the symbol of the Sathya Sai Baba who was one of the most popular Godmen in contemporary India. The symbol is of a flower with the Hindu *om* (ॐ), the Christian cross, the Zoroastrian fire emblem, the Buddhist wheel and the Islamic crescent and stars marked on its petals (Kakar and Kakar 2009, p. 148).

5.3.2.1 The Politics of Hindutva

Hindu nationalism, however, was given a new political twist in the 1920s when Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1923/1989), an activist and author, introduced the term Hindutva as distinct from Hinduism. Hinduism is the dharma of Hindus, which, according to Savarkar, supports Hindutva as the attributes of Hindus turning into a social-political force to mobilize Hindus against other religions and cultural influences. Hindutva was defined as essentially the Hindu-ness or characteristics of Hindus whose religion originated in India (thus excluding Islam

and Christianity, but including Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhs). Hindu religion, Savarkar pronounced, is *sanaatan* (eternal) because of the following:

- Aryans have preserved it through the ages.
- It is universal, containing the essential elements of all other religions.
- It is not circumscribed by any time or space.
- It can triumph over Western materialism.
- It can anticipate discoveries of science and speculations of philosophy.

From this perspective, Hindutva was taken to be the foundation for building a Hindu nation that was believed to protect Hindus, their culture, and political and economic systems on the basis of native thought against the onslaught of other religions and Western values and lifestyles. There were two sets of incongruent thoughts that had to be reconciled in the formulation of Hindutva (Kakar and Kakar 2009). The first was, and indeed still is, an apprehension of the seductive effects of Western materialist culture and glamorous lifestyle, possibly causing the loss of Hindu identity. The fear attracted many Hindus to political parties and organizations that promised to realize the ideals of Hindutva by providing a worldview that claimed to restore and retain the superiority of Hinduism not only over Islam and Christianity but also over Western culture and lifestyle. As a result, a cluster of political, cultural and militant religious organizations emerged on the national landscape, notably the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS).

Hindu activism, however, had to align Hindutva with the second thought regarding the core features of Hinduism, namely its tolerance of other religions and belief in the universality of Hinduism (Kakar and Kakar 2009). How can Hindutva lead to a fight against other religions when it accepts them as valid paths to the same ultimate reality? Or why should there be any fight when all religions are essentially Hinduism at their core, and the differences between them are more in appearance than real? Hindutva, according to the RSS, is indeed sure to prevail upon them eventually, once the manifest differences are seen through. It is argued by the RSS that

> Hindutva will dawn upon the world as the supreme philosophy and way of life … [where] … the belief in the ultimate victory of Hindu thought is based not on blind faith but on a deep inner awareness that Hindu philosophy is based on laws which are not just Hindu laws but universal laws applicable to all (K. S. Sudershan and D. Idate, cited by Kakar and Kakar 2009, p. 142).

However, in order to realize that ultimate possibility, the advocates of Hindutva feel that Hindus have to cultivate *desha-bhakti* (devotion to nation) and *Ram-bhakti* (devotion to Rama). Rama is deified and taken to be a rallying supreme divine for all socio-political and religious forces for national building that "have the ultimate goal of welding together a Hindu society that is fragmented in castes, sects and local traditions so as to prepare it to meet the challenges of globalization [onslaught of alien forces]" (Kakar and Kakar 2009, p. 136). Hence, *Ram-bhakti*, they argue, in essence is *desha-bhakti,* and thus Hindu religiosity is prescribed as an appropriate means to nation building, whatever form it takes—assertive in

terms of building religious artefacts, forming a political party and militant outfits, aggressive against other religions by destroying their religious structures and converting them, or subverting the professed national values of secularism.

Hindu extremists are not a majority; there are many more Hindus who are traditionalists. They are neither worried about the onslaught of Western influences nor aroused "to take up an ideologically committed activist stance" (Kakar and Kakar 2009, p. 141). They take Hinduism for granted and do not apprehend any threat to it. Hence, they hold on to the traditional beliefs and values, rites and rituals and have no problem in tolerating other faiths or interpreting them through their own frame of mind. For example, they believe that Jesus Christ was, like Lord Buddha, an avatar (incarnation) of the God Vishnu. Christian priests, Sufi saints and Sikh gurus are as respectable as Hindu saints and sages, and churches, *mazar*s, gurdwaras are as pious as places of Hindu worship. They pay respect to all of them and go through religious activities as part of everyday existence. Common folks in rural areas are mostly such traditionalists.

5.3.3 Religiosity of Modern Indians

Because of increasing urbanization, large-scale migration and a larger flow of regular visitors, the traditionalists now constitute a sizable population in urban areas also. They continue with their religious beliefs and values, carry on with various religious rites, rituals, superstitions and mythic orientations. There is another, expanding in size, educated, mostly urban middle class Hindus who were born and brought up in the traditional set-up, but were exposed to Western and modern global influences. They tend to retain their Hindu identity, but in a classical Indian style add modern worldviews and lifestyles. Kakar and Kakar (2009) called them "flexible Hindus" and have profiled them in detail (pp. 144–151).

The flexible Hindus have adopted traditional rites and rituals and religious beliefs and practices just like the traditionalists, but also share with the nationalists concerns about the socio-political rights and privileges of Hindus. However, they do not have the orthodoxy of the traditionalists, nor the religious activism of the Hindu extremists. They are eclectic in adding modernity to traditionalism as well as strands of nationalist concerns. They struggle to survive and prosper in the competitive milieu, adjust to work demands, are hooked onto the Internet, mobiles and television, relish new tastes and branded fashion products, enjoy modern comforts, but find time to participate, enjoy and celebrate their *vrat* (fasting and worship), festivals, pilgrimages, *guru-darshana* (glimpse of the guru) and discourse with him, and regularly watch TV channels that broadcast religious programmes. For example, they fast on auspicious days and go through religious rituals and worship, but take short cuts in these rituals; they go on pilgrimages but enjoy it like a holiday trip; they celebrate religious festivals and generously pay offerings to gurus and temples, partly to show off their affluence and status; they wear precious stones to regulate planetary forces as well as to display their

monetary power, and so on: "… a pilgrimage—like a *vrat* or a religious festival—may well become a sensuous and pleasurable experience as long as the 'purity of heart' and the sincerity of religious feelings are not absent" (Kakar and Kakar 2009, p. 146). Their religiosity is genuine, but is framed in modern activities.

A concrete expression of Hindu religiosity is the Mahaakumbha congregation that is held every 12th year at the confluence of the sacred rivers of Ganges, Yamuna and the invisible Saraswati since the Vedic period. It is recorded to be the biggest religious gathering in the world. Hindus bathe in freezing temperature on auspicious days in January for a stretch of 25–27 days for purification from their sins and earning religious credit. Not all stay there for the whole stretch. Probably traditionalists with stronger religious beliefs stay longer while modern urbanites spend a day or two, take a few dips, enjoy the change in their daily routine and then return to it. In 2013, more than 50 million people were estimated to take a dip at the confluence on the main bathing days.

Box 5.2. *Mahaakumbha Mela* (Congregation)

In 1895, Mark Twain visited the Mela and observed the following: "It is wonderful, the power of a faith like that, that can make multitudes upon multitudes of the old and weak and the young and frail enter without hesitation or complaint upon such incredible journeys and endure the resultant miseries without repining. It is done in love, or it is done in fear; I do not know which it is. No matter what the impulse is, the act born of it is beyond imagination, marvellous to our kind of people, the cold whites." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kumbh_Mela, retrieved on March 5, 2013)

Ordinarily, large gatherings are reported to develop a crowd-mind that is devoid of rationality and individual accountability leading to emotional outburst and destructive behaviour (LeBon 1985/1947). A field study of the Mahaakumbha held in the year 2006, on the contrary, showed that the congregation led to a positive social identity that reflected in the pilgrims' greater trust, respect and help for each other.[3] The investigators noted that those who came to the Mahaakumbha were driven by their religiosity and philosophical beliefs, but their social identity was formed out of the experience of collective participation involving the processes of recognition of the presence and needs of each other, connectedness through religiosity and validation of their being religious Hindus (see Box 5.2 for an earlier commentary on this). For example, the participants, particularly those who stayed longer, took daily bath, performed rites and rituals, listened to religious discourses and gave charity. Furthermore, they also engaged each other in intense and

[3] The study was conducted by a team of Indian and British psychologists under the umbrella of the University of Allahabad and their reports were published as the Special Section on Social Psychology of Collectivity in *Psychological Studies,* 2007, 52, pp. 273–331.

continuous interactions. They noticed others, responded to their greetings, shared limited space with them, yielded in order that they too could take a bath, lived and saw them living in hardships and experienced positive emotions for each other. In this process, they were reported to gain "collective self-realization" that "one can live according to group norms in the midst of the connectivity itself. A recurring theme throughout our studies was the ability to achieve some freedom from the everyday constraints of family, work, and society, and hence to live as 'good Hindu life' as a pilgrim" (The Prayag Magh Mela Research Group 2007, p. 298). This was indeed a validation of Hindus' aspirations to realize, at least temporarily, a religious and pious life while living in the material world and dealing with the mundane.

5.3.4 Contemporary Expressions of Sexuality

As stated earlier, religiosity and sexuality coexisted in the ancient Indian mindset and in fact drew on each other through metaphors, philosophical beliefs and heightened emotionality of the *bhakti maarg* (devotional tradition). As we approach the contemporary scenario, we find that religiosity gets explicit expressions in its devotional, ritualistic, social and political forms. But sexuality even now is largely suppressed in the Indian family, and is secretly indulged in with a certain degree of anxiety, fear and guilt by a majority of Indians. Kakar and Kakar (2009) felt that "Indian sexuality remains deeply conservative if not puritanical, lacking that erotic grace which frees sexual activity from the imperatives of biology, uniting the partners in sensuous delight and metaphysical openness." And, "… vast stretches of contemporary India remain covered in sexual darkness" (Kakar and Kakar 2009, p. 84).

The darkness is decreasing, but a full dawn is yet to appear. That is, sexuality is not completely suppressed, but remains devoid of its "erotic grace" (Kakar and Kakar 2009) and "sensuous delight" and is allowed to operate as "biological imperative" in a large part of the Indian population. Probably, the reason is historical in the increasingly impoverished conditions of living and the decay and degeneration of Indian society in the medieval and colonial periods. The shadow still falls on the majority of Indians, restraining them to live in survival mode. They regress to conservative social norms, acquire many superstitions and remain totally preoccupied with the bare essentials of life. Curbing temptations and curtailing needs and desires except those that are critically important for survival are the chief concerns. Thus, sexual pleasure is dispensable, but the biological impulse is not; and the conservative social norms do not allow a public display of sexuality. This is particularly true for higher castes in the middle class which hold on to socio-religious norms more rigidly than either the higher or lower strata of the societal spectrum. So, they compromise to act secretly, lest people talk! Even marital sexual intercourse has to be performed secretly.

In closely knit rural settings where most interactions are in public view, there is very little opportunity to cultivate long, romantic and erotic relationships. Hence, the biological impulse leads to quick-fix sex whenever someone is willing to yield

or unable to resist an imposing person (this mostly refers to male activity in the male-dominated Indian society) in a situation that permits some privacy. Naturally, the extended family provides a safe sanctuary where such sexual affairs are carried out with or without consensus or due to mutual attraction. There are reports of sexual affairs with cousins, uncles, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, uncles-in-law, fathers-in-law and similar others (Kakar and Kakar 2009; Roland 1988, p. 261). But this has to be kept a secret, and if someone in the family senses or catches people in the act, he or she looks the other way or resolves it amicably within the family. The family reputation is more important than the immorality of incestuous transgressions.

The rich, powerful and the landlords, however, are not constrained by social norms. In the pre-Independence era these classes had more than one wife, mistresses, generally from the low castes and a tradition of visiting prostitutes and nautch girls. As polygamy is legally banned in post-Independence India, they cannot have more than one wife, and due to other social sanctions cannot openly exploit lower claste (class + caste) women or openly visit prostitutes and nautch girls. Some still do all these, but more secretly and artfully. Others look for vulnerable and helpless women to exploit.

There used to be another group of Indians—smaller in number, better educated, middle class, urbanite Indians, both men and women—who would also have the opportunity of being attracted to and falling in love, but there was little opportunity by way of physical intimacy and often little hope of consummation of love in view of family arrangements of marriage with regard to caste, class and monetary considerations. Bollywood films till recently have been replete with the sufferings of misunderstood young love faced by an orthodox society! Such self-suffering romantics are less commonly depicted in popular culture. The trend is to move with the times, come out more openly to solicit love, and if not granted, to move on to the next suitable choice.

Global ideas and influences have turned the apple cart of Indian sexuality, which was only wobbling so far, upside down, at least for part of the population. The new philosophy is that sexuality is no longer to be kept secret, suppressed, truncated or stripped off erotic expressions; nor has it to be lived with self-suffering or fantasy. It is now to be indulged in freely and enjoyed fully. There are a number of factors responsible for this drastic change. First of all, increased economic activities and growth in the country have loosened the conventional control of the family and the community and have created new opportunities. A larger number of young men and women are entering into public domains, rub shoulders, compete and cooperate, and relate with each other on almost equal terms. Their academic achievements, high levels of earning, high-tech life and easy mobility away from the home have created a critical mass of young and not-so-young Indians who are distinctly different from their preceding generation. It is a common sight to see them in pairs or in groups in parks, streets, cinema halls, restaurants, shopping malls and similar other public places. They create an environment where sexual relationships are believed to be common and natural.

Second, they imbibe a Western lifestyle, buy branded fashion products, enjoy the arts and music, frequent restaurants and nightclubs, and above all have

acquired an individualistic orientation with a sharp assertive edge. They tend to live their life as they wish, and let others do the same without being judgemental about them. These young men and women are therefore relatively free of social constraints of what people would say, relate with each other without too many conventional hang-ups and assert themselves whenever their interests are at stake. As a result, if friends and colleagues are attracted to each other, they may take their social relationships to an intimate extent.

Third, this open mindset is exposed to the Internet, bringing in a whole new world including pornography to their laptop, alternative sexual orientations, social sites for sharing even intimate images, experiences and emotions. Mobile phones supported by the Internet have not only provided instant connectivity, but access to a virtual fantasy land. The devices have widened the scope of sexual explorations and ventures. Young Indians are behaving like entrepreneurs in aspiring to achieve the best in life. They know that there are now a variety of ways of sexual engagements and they are willing to try them. Not only heterosexual, but bisexual, homosexual, lesbian, trans-sexual and asexual orientations are all in the range of possibilities. There are now web-based associations for networking that promote different sexual preferences and practices in India.

In the wake of these changes, the institution of marriage has weakened and the chances of its break-up have increased. Marriage, which used to be the only legitimate context for heterosexual intercourse, is now redefined to fit even other sexual orientations. Premarital and extramarital sex of incestuous nature, as stated earlier, was confined to the extended family and was kept secret. But now with increased mobility, it is likely to occur more openly at other places. There is ample anecdotal evidence of serious and flirtatious affairs in workplaces between superiors and subordinates as well as between peers. Popular Indian movies display love and sexuality that defy most of the conventional norms regarding class, caste or religious barriers. In many instances, the hero does not keep suffering, but imposes, harasses and prevails upon his beloved to fall in line. The heroine too proactively seeks out the one she likes or loves. Universities and colleges, of course, are much more conspicuous in this regard. Young adults in colleges in metros can now indulge in sexual activity without feeling that there would be any long-term commitment or repercussions, and multiple sexual affairs are also rising. The age for engaging in sexual activity is also going down. In other words, sexual activity, at least in the bigger cities, is becoming detached from the marital frame and has assumed a credible legitimacy in urban India. A well-known Indian author, Khushwant Singh, for example, wondered why a Nobel laureate novelist, Salman Rushdie, of Indian origin married again and again[4]:

> I have not been able to understand [Salman] Rushdie's multiple marriages. If he desired to make love to women he liked, he could have done so without marrying them. He would not have to divorce them and pay alimony.

[4] *Hindustan Times*, Patna, January 22, 2012, p. 9.

How widespread this sexual liberalization is, is anybody's guess. There is no systematic documentation of it. However, there are widely held perceptions that large numbers of young men and women, boys and girls in metros and increasingly in towns are now sexually active outside of marriage. There is a psychological phenomenon called "imagination inflation" (Goff and Roediger 1998). That is, the more people imagine an event happening, the more confidently they believe that the event *actually* happened. The imagination turns into a reality of the make-believe milieu. Easily available pornography and adult friendship sites from the Internet show a variety of ways in which people indulge in sexual activities even without engaging in love affairs, building relationships or even knowing each other.

Reactions to this make-believe pervasive sexual permissiveness are varied. Some view it as a new freedom of choice, which is likely to promote healthy relationships, personal growth and a happy life. Others are worried particularly for the younger generation. They apprehend that younger ones are getting misguided about how they should live and prioritize their values. Still others take it as an assault on traditional Indian culture, which, according to them, values sex as a loving, emotional, self-dissolving and everlasting relationship. Extremists among religious minded people also take it as an assault on Indian culture and are resorting to moral policing. Still others see in it an opportunity to hunt around. They are mostly males who have made quick money or acquired power and position by hook or crook, and like other achievements, they take women (and sometimes men) to be objects to buy and enjoy sex, or to simply exploit in vulnerable situations. They feel, and often rightly so, that the Indian legal system has many loopholes and their money and clout can protect their reputation. Lastly, there are many others, young and not so young, who watch the sexual revolution from the periphery of society. They fantasize having sexual partners, but are ill-equipped to cultivate female friendship, uncouth in their socialization and unable to contain their biological impulses that get worse under intoxication. When they are in the company of like-minded friends, their impulses get out of control, their sense of consequences evaporates and they pounce on their victims. They kidnap, rape and murder.

In a group or collective, individual orientations and impulses are accentuated, calculation of gains and losses is diminished raising risk-taking propensity and actions are expedited (Kogan and Wallace 1964; Strauss 2001). Whether these changes take a positive or negative direction depends on what goals, orientations and impulses individuals bring to the group and how the interactions within the group reinforce them. Earlier, we discussed that collectives at the *sangam* during *Mahaakumbha* developed positive socio-religious identity because they were driven by their religious beliefs and orientations. They shared limited resources, helped each other, and realized their religiosity. On the contrary, a group of juvenile, young, or not-so-young men, who are biologically propelled, get together and drink alcohol, stoke their animal impulses, excite each other, and abuse the vulnerable sexually.

In sum, religiosity expresses itself in a variety of rites, rituals and activities that have continued from the ancient time, but are modified and accommodated into Indians' modern worldview. Extremists are turning religiosity into a political force that threatens the multi-religious secularism, which still holds the ground due to its cultural roots and societal imperatives. Openness in sexuality is still restricted in the middle claste (class + caste), and is a pastime of the rich and the powerful. For the modern youth, it is a newly found freedom. However, this freedom also leads to make-believe milieus of sexual permissiveness that can result in serious sexual crimes.

5.4 Summary

Religiosity, secularism and sexuality have been intermingling in the Indian mindset from ancient times. Indians are highly religious with a variety of rites, rituals, beliefs, values and practices, most of which can be traced to the primordial mindset. They are, however, being adjusted and framed in Indians' modern worldview and busy lifestyle. Hinduism, the religion of the majority, holds the belief that all religions are only manifestly different but are essentially the same, making space for multi-religious secularism. This is threatened by socio-economic and political disparities among the religious communities, misgivings about each other and the rise of extremism among both Hindus and Muslims. Sexuality flourished in the ancient Indian mindset and coexisted with asceticism. It was subsequently suppressed and restricted for most, except for the rich and powerful. Sexuality is now getting liberalized with economic affluence and global influences. Better educated, high earning and Westernized young men and women now have the opportunity of being open and expressive about their sexuality. Others react to them differently. Some are concerned about the future generation. Others regard it to be an assault on the Indian culture and resort to moral policing. Still others see in it an opportunity to hunt for their lust, and the criminally oriented do not hesitate to act in ghastly ways.

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Chapter 6
Entrepreneurship Amidst Dependence Proneness

6.1 Concepts of Dependence Proneness and Entrepreneurship

Dependence proneness is pervasive in the Indian mindset, and yet Indians have recently shown remarkable entrepreneurship. The chapter aims to explain how this has happened. Dependent prone persons are excessively dependent on both others and situations. They generally seek attention, advice, guidance, directions and help from others whenever they have to think, decide and act. They may have competence, authority and justification to make up their own mind and act on their own. But they still look for other's cues, tips and suggestions. Even in instances in which they know what needs to be decided or done, they prefer to wait, if they can. They wait for a clear pressure, suggestion or hint to come up. If the decision cannot wait, they hesitate and reluctantly go through the process, but feel unsure and uncomfortable unless and until they get a positive feedback. They are even willing to have second thoughts and backtrack if so suggested, challenged or criticized. On the other hand, agreement, positive feedback and emotional support boost their spirit. In order to gain a continuous pat on their back or a shoulder to lean on, they tend to appease their superiors, strive for their proximity and affinity and feel energized whenever they receive praise or are called for any errands that instil the superior's confidence in them. By the same token, they feel left out if the superior remains impersonal or distant. From a person younger in age and lower in position, they expect and relish personal loyalty and dedication in terms of seeking their adulation and conformity to whatever they say or do irrespective of their being right or wrong. They feel deflated, annoyed or angry at any hint of disagreement. Similarly, they are sensitive to situational cues. If the cues are positive and promising, they feel energized, confident and competent to take initiative and risk. Otherwise, they remain inactive and defensive and wait for the milieu to turn positive. With even a slight change in the milieu, they seem to overreact by expanding their efforts or withdrawing into despondency.

We all are dependent in certain situations and with reference to some persons. In fact, some dependency is natural, helpful and even indispensable to our growth

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and meaningful living. No one is fully self-sufficient or immune to other's influence or totally independent of environmental support. We do not live in a social vacuum or survive as standalones in a hostile environment. There are some basic needs that have to be met in order to keep alive and grow and build up our capabilities that in turn lead to improve the milieu around us, which in turn help us grow further. This is a growth cycle. It also involves others around us. If we are self-sufficient in one domain or setting, we are likely to be deficient in another where someone else is better off. Both are better off if we make up for each other's deficiency by depending on and drawing strength from each other. Life becomes much more meaningful if people are socially and emotionally interdependent on relevant others and are placed in a milieu that enriches them and they contribute to the milieu. This is particularly true for the Indian culture that is by and large collectivist. Interdependence is not for patting at each other's back all the time, but also to give feedback and creative criticism in order to help other persons grow. With reference to the milieu, interdependence means the understanding that people can draw resources and social capital from the milieu but cannot allow it to be completely depleted. The resources must be utilized so judiciously that they are restored in order that the people and the milieu grow together.

Interdependence between the people and the people and environment presumes that we are independent in some domains while being dependent in others. The two—independence and dependence—are more or less balanced over domains and time. However, there are people who are oblivious to the necessity of being independent in certain domains. They fail to keep the balance and lean on others more often than necessary as well as allow others to have a free ride when the latter should have struggled on their own. They relish being dependent and seeing others in the same mode. They are the dependent prone people.

Entrepreneurship is the opposite of dependence proneness. It is an urge, a drive and an ambition, backed by skills, abilities and values, to achieve specific goals. It is a mindset comprising of what an entrepreneur thinks, feels and does. Entrepreneurs are those who are intuitively sensitive to the environment—its opportunities and constraints. They persistently struggle to achieve their goals by utilizing existing resources, turning even constraints into resources, mobilizing, inspiring and organizing others, exploring and treading upon unchartered terrains and opting for high stakes under uncertain conditions. They are confident of their capabilities and have the conviction that they will succeed. They are unconventional, innovative, creative and above all unlimitedly energetic and obstinately persuasive of their goals. Indeed, achievement is their driving force, but the spirit of entrepreneurship resides primarily in *the experience of the process of achieving*. Once achieved, the goal is extended and the mission is expanded as part of an endless striving for experiencing the efforts and the successes in successive achievements.

The nature of goals determines how entrepreneurship expresses itself. It is generally associated with business, where an entrepreneur assesses the opportunity structure, sets up an enterprise, procures capital and technology, carefully plans a strategy, calibrates the tactics, increases market share and makes maximum profit (Goswami et al. 2008). There is an alertness to keep checking what has been

achieved, what lies ahead and where the pitfalls on the way to the next success are. If the opportunity structure shrinks or the odds multiply, the goals are realigned, business is shifted elsewhere, tactics are changed and measures for damage control are quickly evoked. If legitimate means and ways are unavailable, inadequate or doubtful, there is no hesitation to cut corners, change track, take shortcuts, ditch people and breach contracts. If the opportunity structure, on the other hand, expands, the net is cast wider, portfolios are added, operations and technology upgraded, new markets captured and higher profits are harvested. In other words, an entrepreneur is flexible and opportunist par excellence. He or she is not superbly conscientious or recklessly sentimental in cultivating relationships. Relationships are built on utilitarian grounds. There is almost continuous scanning of who are resourceful and useful now or in future and who can help get access to more resources and resourceful persons. They are the ones with whom special connections are established. And, once the purpose is served and the person is a spent force, relationship is realigned to serve the next purpose. The top priority is profitability and expansion of business, which are realized by forging a nexus between the entrepreneurial spirit and opportunity structure (Shane 2007), other things are means to be acquired, used and disposed off as and when so required. There is hardly any room for excess baggage or past legacies.

A person does not have to fit fully into this profile to be recognized as an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship comes in varied forms, processes and motives. It is not necessary to have in all cases an enterprise, well-defined strategy and tactics, elaborate systems and procedures, staff with expertise or finely defined profit targets. For example, farmers taking loans and investing in their small plots of land to improve the yield, poor women running illegal small shops at a street corner right under the nose of the traffic police, a school teacher taking private tuitions without the knowledge of his school, or a quake running illegal medical practice in a neighbourhood are all entrepreneurs making money under risky conditions. But they do not have the structure of a formal business enterprise; they are the foot-entrepreneurs striving to achieve tangible gains entailing certain amount of risk. There are others with mixed motives. Highly successful business houses or chiefs have on record donated a major part of their fortunes for laudable societal causes. They add value to their highly successful business enterprises by flaunting their social entrepreneurial responsibilities. There are also educational entrepreneurs who profess to advance the cause of quality education by running private schools, glamorous technical institutes and well-advertised universities; but are also motivated to make money and enjoy higher status and power in the society. Most coaching institutes in India claim to prepare students for a bright career, but are in fact money-making shops without any concern for quality of education or future of their students. They all have counterparts in the health sector. Some provide quality health care to the common people at modest price while others accumulate enormous wealth. There are still others who run so-called hospitals or clinics only for making money. There are also religious entrepreneurs who are moved by pious motive of relieving people's miseries and enhancing their wellbeing. However, there are also God-men who are indeed creating a corporate-like efficient

organization, amassing fabulous wealth, trotting the globe, mixing with celebrities and living a luxurious life while still advancing their religious philosophy and blessing the devotees from near and distant lands. At the other end of this spectrum are social entrepreneurs who are concerned about the problems of common people and society at large. Many of them have excellent academic records from prestigious institutions. However, they have resisted the temptation of taking high-paying jobs in the corporate world. They use their entrepreneurial mindset employing managerial acumen to seek grassroots participation and available technology to engineer social transformation. Some of them are not looking for profit. In fact, they are spending their personal resources because they are inspired purely by altruistic motives (Thompson 2002).

6.1.1 The Source of Dependence Proneness and Entrepreneurship

Both entrepreneurial spirit and dependence proneness are part of human neuro-biological-social make up. While dependency reflects a state of deficiency or a need for affiliation, entrepreneurship grows out of the competency motive that energizes a person to overcome his dependency and acquire mastery over others and the milieu. Competency motive is basic not only to human beings but to all living beings (White 1959). It is as much an existential reality as is the state of deficiency of a human child. A child needs to depend on others for help and support, but simultaneously also wants to be on his own, stand up, walk and move around, run away, throw things and so on by way of causing an impact while still remaining within the range of the watching eyes of her or his mother or mother surrogates. Later on, she or he learns to depend on others whenever it is necessary, but also wants to be independent of them and in fact to dominate them whenever she or he can. Which of the modes is acquired and is more deeply ingrained in a person's mindset depends on what situations people accept, appreciate and reward. Parents, teachers, friends and relatives may appreciate and reward a person being obedient, humble and dependent, or assertive, bold and independent, or adventurous, risk taking and opportunistic. Similarly, impoverished conditions of living where the basic infrastructural facilities are missing or are inadequate force a person to depend on others more often than in conditions where systemic supports are adequately available. Living conditions can be depressive and demeaning and can erode the sense of self-efficacy and cause people to feel helpless even in domains where they can be self-reliant. On the contrary, supportive conditions of living nurture a competency motive that can drive people to try adventurous activities.

Both types of situations and people exist in any culture. However, cultures differ in emphasizing either of the two in terms of what the majority of people of a culture believe, value and practise, which in turn determine the relative dominance of either dependence proneness or entrepreneurship. Furthermore, because a culture changes over time as a result of a host of internal and external forces and

events, the two mindsets—dependence prone or entrepreneurial—change their salience. Indian culture, as discussed earlier, is by and large collectivistic and hierarchical where people value being embedded in their groups, personalized relationships, conformity, affective reciprocity, obedience to superiors and seniors and so on. Accordingly, people appreciate, encourage and reward not only children but also adults depending on them. They feel important when there are others who depend on them. They thus foster dependence proneness. Simultaneously, however, people also appreciate and value merit, self-development, distinctive achievements, material success and strivings to improve destiny and so on. As the two cultural preferences interpenetrate, Indians cultivate a blend of dependence proneness and entrepreneurship. They change their primacy depending on the nature of situations and expectations of important others. That is why Indians drifted from highly entrepreneurial activities during the ancient time to excessive dependency in the mediaeval and colonial years and have lately revived their entrepreneurial spirit as new opportunities are created by the liberalizing economy and its integration into the global market. However, the vast socio-cultural landscape is still under the shadow of traditional thought and practices and is afflicted by the inadequacy of infrastructure. They render the nascent entrepreneurship vulnerable to relapse or confine it to only particular domains. Entrepreneurs of today might recoil into excessive dependency on the government tomorrow. They are also likely to drift into a short-term perspective and unethical practices. Let us take a look at how the two have gained and lost their salience over time.

6.2 From Entrepreneurship to Excessive Dependency

There is no evidence of excessive dependency in the primordial mindset. The cosmic collectivism posited interconnectedness among animate and animates, but not dependency of one over another. The *bhakti maarg* (devotional tradition), which later in the mediaeval period played a crucial role in inculcating excessive dependency, started with a purely devotional initiative to attain *moksha* (blissful union with the Supreme). The hymns of the *Rig Veda* had expressions of the devotion to the Supreme and the other Gods and Goddesses soliciting blessings for wealth and wellbeing, but did not contain traces of excessive dependency. Later, the *Katha Upanishad* affirmed that *bhakti* results in divine blessing and therefore, according to the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, it is highly important. The *Bhagavad Gita* as well as the *Bhagavata Purana* prioritized the importance of *bhakti* over other ways to attain *moksha.* However, a devotee was not believed to be passively dependent on the deity. In fact, ancient Indian mindset was highly entrepreneurial in having "triumphant and rebellious thoughts" that "tried to pierce the mysteries of nature and universe, impulse to create "magnificent art and sculpture", "vigour and richness of language", "urge to adventure and overflowing life which led to vast schemes of distant colonization and transplantation of Indian culture in far lands", "a rational spirit of inquiry", and so on (expressions are from Nehru 1946/2001, p. 54).

6.2.1 Rise of Entrepreneurship

The source of such an entrepreneurial mindset, as stated in Chap. 1, can be traced to the highly enabling socio-economic conditions in the period from 600 BCE to the 700 CE. The period was characterized by expanding agrarian economy, self-sufficient and reasonably prosperous villages, more prosperous urban centres, highly developed crafts and specialized small industries, flourishing internal and international trade and commerce and protection by and patronage of large, stable and centralized, although periodic, kingdoms and empires (Thapar 1972). The land in the Gangetic plain was plenty and the soil was fertile. Agricultural income was increased by clearing forests and claiming wastelands. Whenever a new state was conquered, the captives were deported en masse to work on the conqueror's land. For example, after the Kalinga war (262–261 BCE), about 150,000 were deported to clear forests and develop wastelands for new settlements in the state of Magadha (central-east India). New settlements increased land revenue that allowed kings and emperors to raise larger armies and conquer more states. Plenty of forests provided timber for building towns and providing elephants for the armies. Iron was available for better implements and weapons. As larger kingdoms and empires emerged, their centralized and stable administration and formalized taxation led to the development of urban centres with increased industrial activities. Crafts developed into specialized small-scale industries. Roads were constructed to facilitate easy travel and trade. Dams and ponds were built for irrigation. The centralized administration provided security for trade and commerce. The rivers, specially the Ganges, provided trade routes. Magadha was particularly privileged in having control over the rivers through which trade forked in all directions. The delta port of the Ganges, Tamralipta (in modern Bengal, east India), connected internal trade with north Myanmar as well as south India. Following the Ganges, trade routes also went to Koshambi (in north India) and then via Ujjain (central India) to Broach (in modern Gujarat, western India), which was a major port for land and sea trade with the West. From Koshambi, another route crossed via Punjab in the north to reach Taxila (in modern Pakistan), which was the centre for trade with the north. There are reports (Kumar and Sethi 2005) that India had in the third century BCE extensive trading relationships with Persia, Mesopotamia, Egypt and in particular with Sumeria where there was a colony of Indian merchants. They also had a colony in ancient Memphis in Egypt in as back as the fifth century BCE. As back as the second millennium BCE, India exported to Rome textiles, precious stones and a range of manufactured items and imported gold, silver, copper, other metals, and wine (Kumar and Sethi 2005). Indians traded with Central Asia through a combination of sea and land routes. From the first century onwards, traders and merchants went over and settled down in South East Asia, transplanting Indian culture in those countries. The southern kingdoms were familiar with large-scale maritime trades. Most of the urban centres in the south were ports which prospered by trade. "Indian ships were by now regularly

traversing the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean and the China Sea and were seen at every port in these areas" (Thapar 1972, p. 149).

Entrepreneurial spirit seems to have peaked during this period to the extent that a young man from Vaishali (in central India) was reported as travelling all the way to Taxila in the sixth century BCE to obtain advanced training and return home to start his craft (Thapar 1972, p. 52). While artisans in villages catered to local needs, most of those in urban centres formed craft-specific guilds. There were also cooperatives of different craftsmen such as architects, engineers, brick layers, etc., to pool diverse expertise for a project like temple building. Guilds were the instruments for producing high-quality products both for sophisticated urban consumption as well as exports. As industrial activities increased, guilds increased in size, complexity, resources, functions and power. The head of a potter guild, for example, had 500 workshops, a vast distribution network and a large number of boats to transport the merchandise to several ports on the Ganges (Thapar 1972, p. 110).

Despite political upheavals during this time, guilds grew and prospered as autonomous corporate bodies for manufacturing as well as commercial purposes. They fixed rules of work, quality and range of products, prices and arranged for their trades to be taken to distant lands. As children joined the craft of their parents, guilds had generations of members. Guilds thus were also a social body that regulated conduct and provided people status and security of work. Guilds also had an educational role in providing advanced training in mining, metallurgy, weaving, dyeing, carpentry, engineering and so on. Guilds of the same craft joined together into a corporation-like body by sending their representative for collective leadership, which formulated laws and implemented them for running the corporation. The laws of the guilds were accepted by the state, which even invested money in commercial activities of guilds and therefore had interests in ensuring their wellbeing.

Guild leaders had economic power and resources and had factual control over urban institutions. However, most of them being Vaishyas (or middle castes), they had lower status than Brahmins and Kshatriyas in the caste hierarchy. Naturally, they were attracted to Buddhism, which did not concede to Brahmin orthodoxy. They made generous donations and helped Buddhists establish affluent *matha*s (monasteries), reshape caves and furnish them with paintings (e.g. Ajanta and Ellora in western India) and organize centres of learning (e.g. the Nalanda University in central India). "Almost the entire expression of this age, whether architecture or sculpture, centred on Buddhism and most of it was made possible through the patronage of wealthy merchants, guilds and royal donations" (Thapar 1972, p. 124). *Matha*s at times served as bankers to the guilds and invested in their ventures. The culture of business entrepreneurship had a spillover to religious entrepreneurship. Traders who were mostly Buddhists and monks travelled to distant places in South East and Central Asia, China and other places and spread Buddhism. Neither of them employed coercive means to serve their mission.

Buddhism was not conceptualized like other religious missionary movements to convert people into its fold (Berzin 1996). It was not to be imposed on other people

and cultures, nor was any overall hierarchy of religious authority with a supreme head created. Rather, its methods and styles were meant to be modified to fit the local life style without compromising the cardinal values of wisdom and compassion. Each country developed its own forms, its own religious structure and its own spiritual head. The Buddha, for example, was himself an exemplary role model. He asked people not to accept his ideas blindly, but only if they considered them useful. He also instructed his monks to go distant places and to help people overcome their unhappiness and suffering that they were creating for themselves because of their ignorance. The idea was not to ask them to change their religion and get converted into Buddhism, but to learn to get rid of suffering by following certain conducts and the examples from the life of Buddha. Those who followed naturally came into the Buddhist fold and most often their children followed suit. In many cases, local kings and chieftains converted and this led their people to accept Buddhism. Emperor Ashoka (304–232 BCE), for example, was disillusioned by the bloodshed in the Kalinga war and converted to Buddhism. He sent emissaries to distant places not to aggressively proselytize but to make available the principles of Buddhism to accept what they thought to be useful. He had Buddhist edicts engraved on iron pillars throughout his kingdom, and himself followed them to present a role model to his people.

This was a model of gentle religious entrepreneurship that was immensely successful in spreading Buddhism. Religious entrepreneurship did not fit in with the Brahmanical mindset. There is no evidence that there were higher caste Brahmanical religious entrepreneurs; except a young Brahmin, Adi Shankarachcharya, who was exceptionally entrepreneurial in spirit with a mission to restore the superiority of Brahmanical beliefs over Buddhism. He travelled all over India, engaged Buddhist scholars in intense debates, adopted Buddhist missionary zeal and model to establish four *matha*s at the extreme north (Badrinath), south (Rameshwaram), east (Puri) and west (Dwarika) of the country with a view to impress upon Hindus the essentiality of making pilgrimages to them. The implicit assumption was that Hindus by crisscrossing the country for months and years, mixing with local people and sharing their experiences, would get integrated into a cohesive collective mass that would solidify Hinduism.

6.2.2 Fall into Excessive Dependency

Entrepreneurship thrived while Indians had high spirit for adventure emanating from their sense of cultural superiority. From the seventh century onwards, landed aristocracies emerged in the subcontinent due to both political and environmental changes, creating a hierarchy of letting and subletting of lands, an elaborate taxation system and obeisance to overlords. Islamic invasions and rule from the beginning of the second millennium further strengthened this system. The south remained unaffected for another 1,000 years or so and hence was able to sustain entrepreneurial activities through maritime trade with South East Asia and

Western Europe. In north India, Buddhists lost their *matha*s and had to flee to the Himalayas depriving guilds and traders of their spiritual support. Hindus suffered helplessly. Artisans were put at work to produce luxury goods for Hindu and Muslim lords.

Earlier, land was granted generally to Brahmins and Buddhists or their temples and *matha*s for providing religious services to the community. From the seventh century onward, the political landscape got fragmented. The fights among Hindu kings, Islamic invasions, and subsequently Muslim rules required large armies and loyal supporters. Hence, land started being granted for providing military services. The grant comprised a big area, a province (*subah*), or a large or small number of villages called *jaagir*. There were other variants of nobility such as *nawab*s and *zamindar*s. The primary consideration in granting land was their loyalty, which the nobles—both Muslims and Hindus—had to keep proving beyond doubt by not only providing military services during a war, but also by regularly attending the court, presenting gifts regularly and forging their loyalty in relationship by giving their daughter in marriage. The king took additional measures to keep them under tight control. He granted, not the ownership of land, but only the authority to collect revenue on behalf of the state while keeping part of it as their salary. The grant was forfeited after the death of the grantees, or at any sign of their dubious loyalty or mischief. The king would also review levies and shuffle the grantees, so they were never sure how long their fortune would last. The result was that the grantees overdid their loyalty by being overly dependent on the king, over stretching themselves to meet his whims, and even soliciting his advice in routine administration and personal matters. While being totally dependent on the king, they demanded a similar loyalty and subservience from those below them. In fact, they sub-let their land to others who sub-sub-let parts of land, thus creating a hierarchy of revenue collectors who emulated the life style of being over-dependent on and subservient to the over lords while demanding the same from those below. This created a culture of excessive dependency based on their absolute power that they employed to assume not only the authority to collect levies but also to usurp political, administrative and judicial authority rendering their subjects grossly dependent on them.

Because they were never sure how long their fortune would last, they had a strong impulse to indulge in opulent life style for which they ruthlessly used their near absolute power to extract maximum levies from those under them. The same life style cascaded down the tall hierarchy of exploitative revenue collectors who neither had any obligation nor interest to improve land or invest in infrastructure. They were preoccupied in overplaying the loyalty game, conspiring to let the rivals down, and competing in the vulgar display of their wealth. It was reported that the …

> … nobility lived in walled castles with harems, gardens fountains and large retinues of slaves and servants. They had huge wardrobes of splendid garments in fine cotton and silk. In order to cater to their needs, a number of handicraft industries produced high quality cotton textiles, silks, jewellery, decorative swords and weapons. These luxury industries grew up in urban centres (Maddison 1971, Chap. 2: 1).

The livelihood of artisans depended on such lords. Guilds naturally lost their relevance and autonomy, and hence the capability for guiding and training artisans to innovate and create new products. They produced what the nobles demanded. A Dutch traveller, Pelsaert, who visited Agra in 1620, for example, found "all sorts of artisans in great numbers who can imitate nearly whatever they see, but design nothing by themselves" (quoted by Varma 2004, p. 129). An English traveller in 1614 was also quoted observing, "The truth is that the natives of that monarchy (the Mughals) are the best apes for imagination in the world, so full of ingenuity that they will make any new thing by pattern how hard so ever it seems to be done" (Qaisar 1982, p. 17). In sum, while the wealth was grabbed and squandered by the nobility, there was widespread impoverishment and deprivation of the people, as a result of which fewer towns and cities were established during this period (Thapar 1972, p. 250).

Through the first half of the second millennium, there were attacks on religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism), languages (Sanskrit and its various vernaculars), places of learning (like Nalanda, Vikramshila), institutions of learning (*aashramas, gurukulas, sangh*), architectural symbols (temples, *chaityas, vihaaaras, stupas*) and religious symbols. There were many accounts of atrocities (Kosambi 2004). Artisans got converted into Islam in order to avoid paying the religious *Jizyah* (a tax imposed on those who remained Hindus), though they were still regarded as *ajlafs* (degraded) and were made dependent on foreign-descended Muslims. The result was a state of over dependency, impoverishment, and helplessness.

Under these circumstances, the Bhakti tradition seeking solace spread all over India during the fourteenth–seventeenth centuries. While Bhakti had been in practice in the south much earlier, it spread rapidly to the north under threat to existing religions. It was this time that the Sufi movement, with many features similar to the *bhakti maarg* appeared in north India. A dominant form in the *bhakti maarg* was the *daasa-parampara* (tradition of assuming the stance of the most humble, like a slave, which was also present in the Sufi *maarg*) as reflected in Tulasidas, Surdas, Kabirdas and other Hindu and Sufi saints. The core features in this tradition were to demean oneself to the lowest limit, praying to the Lord with intense emotionality to salvage oneself because there is no other source of hope and support. The more helpless and miserable a devotee is and the more emotionally she or he calls for help, the more obliged is the Lord to help, irrespective of his or her inadequacies and grievous sins. Those who keep on trying on their own are believed to be confident of their capability. The Lord does not intervene till their spurious self-confidence (*ahamkaar*) is exhausted. Numerous instances are quoted to support the futility of human efforts and the Lord's benevolence. For example, Pandvas lost their wife, Draupadi, in a gambling to Kaurvas. When one of the Kaurvas started stripping her naked, she resisted as much as she could, but failed. Then, desperately she prayed Lord Krishna who saved her. Similarly, an elephant was caught and dragged by a crocodile into deep water. So long as the elephant kept fighting, the Lord did not come to his rescue. But once he gave up, he was indeed saved. The conclusion is loud and clear. A person's own efforts are futile, but his or her unconditional dependence at the earliest evokes sure benediction of a superior.

Tulasidas was the most outstanding poet in the *bhakti maarg*. His prayers capture the essence in the most vivid form:

I am needy; You are kind;
I am a beggar, You are the generous;
I am a known sinner; You are the great reclaimer;
You're the lord of orphans, who is an orphan like me!
I am the most miserable; You're the greatest saviour
(*Vinay Patrika*, Verse 79).

The prayers of Tulasidas are replete with similar themes where he proclaimed that, for example, the Lord can enable a crippled to climb mountains, a blind to see the whole world and so on. Surdas had similar expressions of praying to Krishna, by whose blessing the blind can see, the dumb can speak and the lame can walk to Kashi (Varanasi). Kabirdas too belonged to the same tradition. In one of his couplets he said, "I am a dog of Lord and my name is Moti. I am chained by Lord and I move wherever he wants me to (*Kabira kukkar Ram ka, Mutiya mera nam, gali hamari jevri, jaha khenchy, vaha chaley jaye*).

In sum, socio-economic compulsions rendered the common people grossly dependent on a hierarchy of lords and induced them to seek divine solace and security through a process of self-denigration that led them to excessive dependency in their day-to-day social transactions.

During the colonial period, the situation worsened. In the seventeenth–eighteenth centuries, Indian luxury goods used to attract Europeans; the textile of Bengal was particularly sought after. About 150 varieties of textiles covering muslins, calicoes and silk along with a mix of cotton and silk were produced in Bengal. Dhaka was famous for the transparency, beauty and delicacy of its muslins (Robins 2006, pp. 62–630). After British occupation of Bengal in the mid-eighteenth century, the British East India Company obtained the right to collect taxes in the region. Through the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there were tales of extreme exploitation of artisans and weavers of Bengal of undervaluation of native products, and creating a debt-ridden economy. William Bolt, who worked for the East India Company for a while, was quoted by Robins from his book, *Considerations on India Affairs*, narrating instances of fines, imprisonment, flogging and forcing bonds on weavers allegedly for not being able to pay back the advances given to them. Many were reported as cutting off their thumbs to prevent being forced to weave under these conditions (Robins 2006, p. 78). Similarly, Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General of Bengal from 1772 to 1785, procured the exclusive right to buy all opium in 1773 that led to "all types of compulsion and coercion to force the farmers to grow opium against their will and sell them to British agents at arbitrarily low prices" (Sinha 1997, p. 2). Similar coercive pressure was exerted on farmers to cultivate indigo for the British industry. Thus, agricultural products, minerals and raw materials from India were taken out for feeding the industrial revolution in Britain and the finished goods were sold back in India. In fact, the export of textile machinery from Britain was banned till 1843. Such was the hostile attitude of the British to the transfer of technology that when the Nizam of Hyderabad procured a

printing press, the British Resident in Calcutta offered to have it broken secretly (Nehru 1946/2001, p. 313). As a result, the vast majority of common people lived a degraded life plagued by frequent famines and debt. Cornelius Walford (1827–1885), and English writer who had written articles on famines of the world, reported that India suffered 34 famines during 120 years of British rule compared to only 17 in the previous 2,000 years (Robins 2006, p. 90). The result was a mindset that was characterized by Mayo (1927) in her notorious book, *Mother India*:

> Inertia, helplessness, lack of initiative and originality, lack of staying power and of sustained loyalties, sterility of enthusiasm, weakness of life-vigour itself—all are traits that truly characterize the Indian not only of today, but of long-past history. … His soul and body are indeed chained in slavery. But he himself wields and hugs his chains and with violence defends them (p. 15).

Mahatma Gandhi called the book "a drain inspector's report". However, he did not deny the presence of these maladies in the Indian mindset, although he rightly charged the English rulers for "our helplessness and lack of initiative and originality".[1]

6.2.3 Sprouting of Entrepreneurship

In such a circumscribed milieu, the scope for entrepreneurial activities was extremely limited to money lending, procuring goods for the British and selling British products in the local market, or joining the British in limited trading and mining activities. Those such as Jagat Seth (a banker) and Amir Chand (a merchant in opium and saltpetre) who colluded with the British and Dwarkanath Tagore (Rabindranath Tagore's grandfather) who formed a company with Carr[2] for mining activities, were specimens of emerging entrepreneurs.

The seeds of entrepreneurship, however, were more extensively lying in the cultural soil waiting for conditions to improve even minimally. Damodaran (2008) has delineated four major factors that in various combinations led to the re-emergence of entrepreneurship in India. They were agricultural and geographical support, caste and community with (or without) entrepreneurial disposition, rise of nationalism and global events. For example, textile machinery from Britain was available in India from 1843, and thus there was a growth of hybrid varieties of cotton and tobacco and new techniques of irrigation were adopted in the coastal south. Together, these three instigated the economically dominant community of Kammas in south India to venture into the textile industry and tobacco processing. Similarly, the new Cambodia breed of cotton helped another southern community, the Naidus, to start a textile industry in Coimbatore in

[1] Gandhi (1927).

[2] Riddick, J. F. (2006). *The History of British India: A Chronology* (p. 136). London: Faber.

southern India. The Parsis (Zoroastrians) of western India were a well-knit community that made it easier for them to raise capital. They picked up the thread from the south and started textile mills in Mumbai and Nagpur in western India. Of them, Jamsetji Tata was the most entrepreneurial and enlightened. He set up a textile mill and was pragmatic to name it Empress Mill when Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India in the late nineteenth century. He pioneered a variety of other industrial activities of which Tata Steel become the jewel in the Tata crown—a symbol of nationalist spirit. While costal southern India was conducive to cotton and tobacco, Damodaran (2008), the Reddys, another southern community, tended to mining industries in inland south.

Calcutta (now Kolkata) was close to the mining areas in the north and central India and the hub of trade from the early British days. Trading communities from all over central and west India had settled in Bengal from the eighteenth century and notably Marwaris, another well-knit community from Rajasthan in western India specialized as brokers and agents of the British. They made fortunes in-between the two World Wars and on record controlled about 70 % of the domestic market and 80 % of the deposits in organized banking (Varma 2004, p. 71). Of them, G. D. Birla, became the most famous. Damodaran (2008) further argues that the Patidars of Gujarat and the Marathas of Maharashtra controlled most of the land in their states. They had caste-based trust and bonding that was conducive to forming cooperatives for their entrepreneurial activities, and this support also counted in their participation in the nation's freedom movement.

In addition, there were individual entrepreneurs such as Laxmanrao Kirloskar, Walchand Hirachand and P. C. Roy who made their mark in their respective areas. They were not, however, the only ones. There were other obstinately motivated and exceptionally gifted individuals writing on spirituality and education. For example, Swami Vivekananda is comparable to Adi Shankarachraya in being a spiritual entrepreneur. He established the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta at the international stage and formed the Ramakrishna Mission to carry it on in practice. Swami Dayananda Saraswati too was a spiritual entrepreneur who formed the Arya Samaj in order to cleanse Hinduism of superstitions and Brahmanical rituals and resort to the pure Vedic worldview. There were other pioneers like Madan Mohan Malviya who established the Benaras Hindu University and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan who founded the Aligarh Muslim University. In a broader conceptual frame, Mahatma Gandhi as well as leaders like Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Bal Gangadhar Tilak were political entrepreneurs. These were of course the most distinct and visible ones. There were millions of not-so-visible entrepreneurs who were struggling at local levels to survive and prosper by fighting against formidable odds that were perpetuating a deepening sense of excessive dependency in the mindset of the mass. The broad picture at the time of Independence of the country was of pervasive dependency with stunted entrepreneurship, except for a few shooting stars.

6.3 Emerging Entrepreneurship from Pervasive Dependence Proneness

6.3.1 Pervasive Dependency

Independent India did not see an immediate transformation. A foreign observer commented the following in the early 1950s:

> Indians find it natural both to take care of others (as they take care of the members of the joint family, and of children generally) and to expect to be cared for. This is fostered at a deep level by the long period of infancy, and later by the governmental system under British rule; thus it is deeply frustrating and probably confusing when problems are not taken care of by some authority … (Murphy 1953, p. 56).

Three Indian investigators in the 1970s (Chattopadhyay 1975; Pareek 1968; Sinha 1970) independently identified excessive dependency as one of the core Indian characteristics. Chattopadhyay found it in the country's mud huts to company boardrooms; Pareek considered it as one of the three most dominant motivations; and Sinha saw its overwhelming presence in the young as well in adults in various walks of life. They all considered it a strong deterrent to the country's development. Sinha and his colleagues conducted over a dozen field and laboratory studies (e.g. Sinha 1970; Saha and Sinha 1973; Sinha and Pandey 1970, 1971a, b, 1975) to explore the facets of dependence proneness and to delineate its causes and consequences. The studies showed that dependence prone Indians are also those who are too preoccupied in religious rites and rituals, hold many superstitions, believe in fate more than their own efforts, and get easily anxious. They are generally traditional in their thought and behaviour, conformists to social norms, obedient to authority and superiors and passive and apathetic in their reactions. They do not want to try new or innovative ways of doing anything, nor do they want to go to distant places in search of better opportunities. A sample of what dependence prone people and those who are not dependence prone do, believe and prefer is the following:

6.3.2 What Dependence Prone People Do, Believe and Prefer

- They consult a good friend or an experienced person before taking any decision.
- They believe that capable people should help the less capable ones.
- They always obey their parents.
- They seek advice from elders and provide the same to younger ones.
- They believe that a good friend never disagrees.
- Instead of trying on their own, they prefer to seek help in solving difficult problems.

- They share both—joys and sorrows—with their friends.
- They avoid disagreements.
- They do what others wish them to do.
- They prefer to follow the majority, even if they do not agree with them.

6.3.3 What Those Who Are Not Dependence Prone Do, Believe and Prefer

- They enjoy doing things that others think are crazy.
- They prefer to remain self-reliant.
- Nobody can force them to do what they do not want.
- They like to do things in new ways.
- They want to take their own decisions.
- They look for new opportunities.
- They are more rational than emotional.
- They are attracted to adventurous activities.
- They keep trying till they solve a problem.
- They take risk to gain something important.
- They do not want to take help from others.
- They calculate losses and gains before taking a decision.
- They do not succumb to a majority, if it is wrong.

The studies also pointed out that there were three sets of factors that foster excessive dependency. They are the following:

- *Impoverished conditions* of living that were created for centuries and are still not alleviated to a satisfactory extent;
- *Social milieu and socialization* of the Indian child that still reinforce excessive dependency and risk avoidance; and
- *Government policy framework* that promised, though ineffectively, to take care of all developmental needs of the people by doling out reliefs and subsidies instead of reinforcing efforts and initiative.

Infrastructural inadequacy. The process of impoverishment during the medi-aeval and colonial periods has been discussed. Impoverished conditions, besides eroding the self-confidence and esteem of the people, hampered the growth of infrastructure that was essential for effective functioning, and hence caused uncertainty whether people could plan their efforts to achieve what they wanted or needed to achieve. At every stage they felt handicapped. The only recourse that they had was to depend on each other for sharing the meagre resources in order to be able to cope with infrastructural inadequacy. The inadequacy continues to create imperatives to compensate with dependency. It is still not uncommon for families in villages to share bicycles or bullock carts. In many cases, two farmers may have one ox each and have to yoke them together to plough their land by turns. Whenever there is a medical emergency, the next door neighbour has to

volunteer to accompany the patient in order to attend him during treatment. In cities, friends and relatives pick each other from railway stations and airports, rush to help in case of exigencies as well as ceremonies. While going to a new town, Indians invariably carry letters of introduction for any help and support in either their boarding or business. There is hardly any economic, social or religious issue or major decision in family, community, village or town that is taken individually and independently of others without risking negative consequences for subsequent transactions. Even individualized interests are often better served, not by making efforts on one's own, but by approaching someone who can help solve the problem. Thus, a milieu is created with a strong norm to seek and provide help and relish caring and being taken care of. Such a milieu fosters a worldview where

> Every individual in India is always linked to the rest of the social body by a network of incredibly diversified ties, with the result that no one in this gigantic country of seven hundred and fifty million [now above one billion] inhabitants could ever be completely abandoned (Lapierre 1986, p. 56).

Socialization of the Indian child in such a milieu makes her or him learn the values of obedience, conformity, humility and dependency by suppressing any disposition towards independence, self-help, assertion and autonomy. Chapter 3 spelt out the pervasive, hierarchical worldview that makes it easy to depend on someone and let others also to depend across a variety of relationships in personal and social spheres (Kakar 1978, p. 119).

Probably, the cultural heritage continuing from the *bhakti maarg* of the mediaeval period reinforces the instrumentality of demeaning oneself and prostrating not only before Gods and Goddesses but also before powerful and resourceful persons for help and protection. The most idealized mode of superior-subordinate relationship is that of *sneha-shradhha*—affection of the senior and superior for the junior and subordinate who have deference for the former. There is a report that even managers of the foreign multinational companies, who were acculturated in global practices,

> … were emotional in making appeals to superiors for help and favours and were themselves amenable to such appeals. They often went out of the way to help those whom they liked. They were not in the habit of saying 'no' to a boss (sic) even for something that they were not in a position to do, nor did the bosses relish hearing 'no' from them (Sinha 2004, p. 252).

It has been duly documented that even adult Indians look for approval and appreciation from their father (Roland 1988) and that the fathers lavishly bestow affection on children (especially sons). Kakar cites two well-known instances of emotional bonding between father and son causing deep dependency in both. Yoganand in his book, *Autography of a Yogi*, describes the father–son relationship thus:

> Father embraced me warmly as I entered our … home. "You have come," he said tenderly. Two large tears dropped from his eyes. Outwardly undemonstrative, he had never before shown me these external signs of affection. Outwardly the grave father, inwardly he possessed the melting heart of a mother (quoted in Kakar 1978, p. 132).

In the second case, Mahatma Gandhi was quoted as describing his father's forgiveness for his transgression:

> I was trembling when I handed the confession to my father … [H]e read it through, and pearl drops trickled down his wet cheeks, wetting the paper. For a moment he closed his eyes in thought and then tore up the note. He had sat up to read it. He again lay down. I also cried. Those pearl-drops of love cleansed my heart, and washed my sin away. Only he who has experienced such love can know what it is … (quoted in Kakar 1978, p. 132).

Government policy framework, contrary to its professed objectives, perpetuated dependency in people (Sinha 2008). Being concerned about the extremely impoverished condition of the people, the government assumed full responsibility for addressing all problems directly. It created central-, state-, district- and block level organizations in order to plan and implement developmental schemes. The mode was to provide material resources and reliefs to the people, expecting that they would respond by developing themselves. On the contrary, people started expecting more and more from the government and began prostrating before government functionaries to take care of them. As a number of prestigious schemes failed to become self-sustaining, the emphasis shifted to partnership with international funding agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which too adopted the same strategy of giving away resources for expediting the pace of development. Although all of them have the same rhetoric of self-reliance, people's participation, sustainable development and so on, their dominant approach is to procure more and more resources and deliver them to needy people who consider it as the donors' moral responsibility to keep giving them what they need. There was no pressure to acquire capabilities to solve their problem. Rather, they acquired the skill to exaggerate the display of their helplessness in order to evoke a greater moral obligation to donors to deliver more resources and relief. Dependency, as a result, was deeply ingrained in the people's mindset.

The socialist model of planned industrial development required that "all industries of basic and strategic importance or in the nature of public utility services should be in the public sector" (Government of India 1956, point 6), leaving very little room for private sector entrepreneurs. Examples from the two top business houses, the Tatas and Birlas, suffice to realize the stifling business environment from the 1950s to 1970s in the country. Aditya Birla, returning fresh from MIT (USA) in 1965, wanted to build world-size plants with the latest technology and to modernize his old plants. He started a textile mill and planned to expand the oil sector for which he needed a licence that was refused for about 11 years. He was forced to move out of India to build plants in Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Egypt, among other places. The Tatas submitted 119 proposals for establishing new businesses or expanding the old ones between 1960 and 1969, which were turned down. Surprisingly, J. R. D. Tata, the Chairman of the Tata Group, was accused in the Parliament for being a monopolist with "great concentration of power". On the contrary, he complained that he was quite powerless as the government laws restrained him to borrow capital, issue shares, decide pricing, negotiate wages and bonus or give dividend. He had to seek the

government's permission even to fix the salary of senior executives (Das 2007, pp. 168–169). Only entrepreneurs such as Dhirubhai Ambani, who were able to read the market, exploit every opportunity, manage the bureaucracy and establish close rapport with politicians in power, were able to succeed in pursuing their ambitious goals (see Box 6.1).

Box 6.1. Dhirubhai Ambani
Although never implicated, Dhirubhai Ambani was alleged as having misused the replenishment licence (REP) to make huge profits and became "the king of REP". He then wanted to establish a factory to produce nylon, for which he needed a licence and finance. He cultivated friendship with Yashpal Kapur and later with R. K. Dhawan (both were close to the then Prime Minister) to get the licence and with a Cabinet Minister, T. A. Pai, who arranged finance through his Syndicate Bank. Pai also got him official permission to import polyester filament yarn (PFY), the domestic price of which was six times higher than that of the international price. So, Dhirubhai started exporting nylon at a loss to import PFY under the REP and made huge profit. He then decided to manufacture PFY, for which, it was also alleged, he bribed politicians to bag the licence (along with two others) out of 42 applicants. By way of expanding his business through backward integration, he started a petrochemicals unit that made Reliance Industries, his company, one of the largest in India, and his sons among the richest few in the world (Das 2007, pp. 191–192).

6.3.4 Resurrection of Entrepreneurship

Expanding opportunity architecture. The government policy framework indeed led to the establishment of a massive public sector, but also resulted in economic stagnation and financial crisis that came to its head by the end of the 1980s. As a result, a process of liberalization began from the 1990s, which has been accelerating, at varying rates, ever since. There were other facilitators. The collapse of the Soviet Union reinforced belief in the efficacy of market capitalism for accelerating economic growth through private entrepreneurship. Revolutionary developments in technology, particularly in computer science, the Internet, mobile connectivity and so on opened up new opportunities for entrepreneurial activities, which were not-so-dependent on governmental control or infrastructural support. Hence, suddenly there was a spurt in entrepreneurship in the country that was led by information technology, but soon spanned a whole range of businesses, health, education, spirituality, art and entertainment, tourism and almost every other domain. An apt observation of the changing scenario was as follows:

> Freeing the individual has indeed released vast amount of energy and creativity. This is now channeled into software, entertainment, remote services, Internet start-ups, as well as Indipop, fashion, cricket mania, and Indian novels in English. These have been "'global industries' and they passionately engage Indians everywhere in the world. The hand of family, caste, and the state, which had blocked human possibilities until now, is letting go and Indians are discovering new forms of social and economic organization that make more of their potential" (Das 2007, pp. 340–341).

Further,

> The Indian entrepreneur is trawling the globe in search of new markets and acquisitions. The children of post-reform India have no time to listen to tales about conspiracies of the "foreign land"—they are too busy tapping into the vast opportunities that are emerging for them (Nilekani 2008, p. 148).

Kindling of entrepreneurship. Media as well as scholarly reports (e.g. Das 2007; Nilekani 2008; Varma 2004, among many others) are full of vivid accounts of the rise of individual and organizational entrepreneurship not only in urban centres but also in remote villages that is inspiring and invigorating a whole lot of young as well as not-so-young, men and women, educated and not-so-educated, affluent and deprived to aspire and make efforts—legitimate or dubious—to realize their dreams quickly. Some Indian companies are acquiring foreign companies larger than their own size and collecting more revenues from their foreign than domestic operations. World-class foreign multinationals are setting up R&D facilities in India to take advantage of new business opportunities in India. Indians are heading some of the most popular global companies; thought leaders are occupying top universities in the West and Indian The diaspora is visibly entrepreneurial and affluent. Indian innovators have made their mark in the Silicon Valley. They lead the list of the USA top 50 venture companies that are funding even American start-ups. Indians' talent and entrepreneurial energy is enabling the Bay Area's research institutions and technology companies to unleash powerful business and create wealth (Randolph and Erich 2009). There are now angel ventures for promoting innovative enterprises such as manufacturing robots to help physically challenged persons, organizing call centres in small towns, helping farmers in rural marketing of agricultural products, financing self-help groups and creating facilities for a range of health and education promotion activities. There were 10 very young (under the age of 30) Indians among the Forbes list of the top 30 "ultra-impressive up-and-comers" in world in 2011 (The Economic Times 2011).

There are cloud computing Indian start-ups to build technology that may have the potential to store everything that has ever been recorded in any way: filmed, taped, photographed, written or spoken. Companies producing white goods, mobile handsets, pharmaceuticals and medical devices are innovating products that cater to the needs and pockets of the bottom of the pyramid in India, but also have the potential to be exported to developed markets. Similar meteoric rise of entrepreneurship has been reported in the domains of education where world-class schools, technical institutes and universities are coming up, in health care where super-speciality hospitals are attracting medical tourism from advanced countries

and in spirituality where Indian gurus are attracting millions of disciples, establishing institutions to propagate their philosophy and teachings and amassing enormous wealth. Earlier, Mahesh Yogi and 'Osho' Rajneesh were the top religious entrepreneurs. Now, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's spiritual foundation (*Art of Living*), in the course of just 25 years, has spread over 140 countries with over 20 million followers. Similarly, Baba Ramdev has popularized yoga along with selling ayurvedic medicines, which have made his trust, Patanjali Sansthan, immensely rich and prosperous.

Social entrepreneurship. A significant development since the 1980s has been the growth of social entrepreneurship all over the world (Leadbeater 1996), but this is particularly prominent in India. Social entrepreneurs are those who use the principles, systems and tactics of business to solve social problems and improve the quality of life of people, mostly those who are poor, deprived, marginalized or discriminated against. They come in a variety of forms with diverse objectives and ways of functioning. In India, they have indeed focused on improving the socio-economic, elementary educational, primary health related and environmental problems; but have also targeted much more specific issues such as corruption, child rights, sex workers, HIV control, rural toilets, sanitation, right to information, micro-financing of self-help groups, use of the Internet to plant trees online and many others. Some of them build large organizations, but others work through small or medium-sized NGOs (non-government organizations) involving a few dedicated members. Some of them make profits along with serving community. But others only want to create self-sustaining activities that also serve social purposes. Still others are more altruistic and invest their own hard-earned money, skills and experiences in social ventures. The media is full of the reports of bright, professionally educated young men and women who have moved to rural and remote areas and are innovating new ways of farming, manufacturing new products, and marketing them nationally and internationally. Similarly, a whole lot of urban people from humble backgrounds, little education and very little capital are turning into micro-entrepreneurs. They are not only improving their income but are also contributing to the variety of products and services that urbanites use daily. Despite many well-intentioned and honest endeavours, however, there are some who have claimed illegal over capitalization of their company, fallen to dust because of their greed, colluded with politicians and bureaucracy to promote crony capitalism, or displaced poor to grab their land and become billionaire overnight.

In conclusion, entrepreneurs in all domains—business, social, education, health or religion—are a varied lot with mixed motives. They all impact the country's landscape, create new opportunities, contribute to growth and development and expand the size of the middle class. Some of them are professional and a few are ethical and inspired by higher human values. However, many among the successful ones are found stooping too low to make big kills and to get quick rich. They are causing serious societal problems by presenting a wrong role model for smaller entrepreneurs.

6.4 Figure–Ground Relationship

Entrepreneurship is like a figure—a showpiece—of the new India with a vast background of excessive dependency in the mindset of the majority of people. Which one, the emerging front or the persisting bulk, is the real India? Both, of course. Many believe that Indians are inherently entrepreneurial and that excessive dependency has been imposed by increasing impoverishment: "Entrepreneurship in the service of material gain is an irrepressible Indian trait (Varma 2004, p. 70)" and "India has been an entrepreneurial society … we had the entrepreneurial skill but suppressed it for too long a time … and now it is thriving" (N. Srinivasan quoted in Radhakrishnan 2007). The essence of Indians' entrepreneurial spirit lies in their "willing to move beyond or outside the system to find the solution to a problem" (Handa 1998, p. 215). They are *jugaru* (improvisers) by nature. If the majority of them lack initiative, confidence, persistence in making efforts to realize their goals, and risk taking, it is because of extraneous factors.

How do we reconcile these contradictory arguments? Two studies (Saha and Sinha 1973; Sinha and Pandey 1975) showed that dependence prone people are highly sensitive to what others expect from them and are predisposed to comply with the expectations. They show greater initiative and risk taking if they are expected and appreciated to do so. It implies two things. First, they can be highly entrepreneurial if an opportunity arises and an expectation is built up. Secondly, if the opportunity structure is volatile and varying, the same people will vacillate between dependency and entrepreneurial behaviour. There indeed exists evidence of vacillating levels of entrepreneurship in India. As expectations of high economic growth and liberalization of the economy built up in the early 2000s, India was found to be the second top globally entrepreneurial country in the total entrepreneurship activity in the *Global Entrepreneurship Monitoring Report* (GEM 2002). However, it has since slipped to ninth position as per the *GEM Report*, 2011 (Kelley et al. 2012). Further, while it is ranked among the highest in necessity-based entrepreneurship among developing countries, it falls to fifth position from the bottom in opportunity-based entrepreneurship (Branson 2011). Need based entrepreneurship probably manifests in "irrepressible energy to somehow get ahead, to survive in the most difficult circumstances, to be clear about personal objectives, and to work for a desired end irrespective of the means—nurturing corruption, it is also the nursery of resourcefulness and enterprise" (Varma 2004, p. 80). Varma described in detail not only the front runners who are nationally and internationally visible, but also the "foot soldiers" having "the ability to single mindedly pursue material benefit in the most adverse and improbable situations" (p. 61).

In other words, Indians are both dependence prone and entrepreneurial depending on the circumstances. They generally prefer to depend on others, even unnecessarily. But once they see opportunities, they turn entrepreneurial by pursuing legitimate means if such means seem to be promising. Otherwise, they can

adopt any means to succeed. Their entrepreneurial spirit rises and falls with fluctuating levels of opportunities. They even resort to dependency as part of their entrepreneurial instrument to advance towards their goals.

6.5 Summary

Indians are by and large dependence prone. They tend to seek other's attention, emotional support, guidance, direction, help and inspiration even in situations in which they can make up their own mind and act on their own. Because they are so oriented to others, they are also highly receptive to their expectations, sensitive to situational cues and alert to opportunities. As a result, if others expect, situations so demand and new opportunities arise, they start taking initiative and risk, make up their own mind and show creativity and innovation, which are the ingredients of entrepreneurship. In other words, dependence proneness in the Indian mindset has potential to turn into entrepreneurship in response to external opportunities, demands and expectations.

Ancient Indians were indeed highly entrepreneurial, not only in international trade and commerce, but also in extending cultural influences to distant lands, gently spreading religious ideas, innovating and inventing scientific knowledge, exploring the frontiers of art, music, crafts and so on. Their entrepreneurship was increasingly depressed during mediaeval and colonial periods, boosted by Independence, but remained subdued due to infrastructural weaknesses, inimical social values and norms and restrictive government policy framework. With the liberalization of the Indian economy and opening up to global influences, entrepreneurship has revived in a big way, although it is still volatile partly because of persisting effects of dependence proneness and partly as a function of fluctuating levels of opportunities caused by global as well as internal socio-economic conditions.

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Chapter 7
The Paradoxical Indian Mindset

7.1 Paradoxes in the Indian Mindset

It is obvious by this time that the most dominant attribute of the Indian mindset is the presence of not only diverse but also inconsistent and even contradictory beliefs, values, norms and practices. The preceding chapters document how collectivism and individualism interpenetrate each other in a means–end relationship, a hierarchical perspective accommodates the importance of individuals' merit and human qualities, dependence proneness breeds entrepreneurship, spirituality grows out of or despite materialism, and religiosity, secularism and sexuality feed on each other. There are many others. A few that deserve our attention are the following.

7.1.1 Harmony and Nonviolence Versus Conflicts and Violence

Harmony and nonviolence are espoused values in most cultures. However, what make them special in the Indian context are their firmly grounded roots in the ancient worldview and philosophy (Mazumdar 2008; Tahtinen 1976), despite recurring instances of conflicts and violence throughout Indian history (Guha 1998). The belief in cosmic collectivism highlights connectedness among all living beings—a shared divine heritage that prepared the ground for a person to see others in the self, and hence treat all beings as she or he expects to be treated by them. In the Western thought, human beings are believed to occupy the centre of the universe and hence have a legitimate right to use, control and exploit the universe and everything within it (including other human beings) in order to satisfy their needs and serve their interests. Hedonism in the Western worldview is a natural right of human beings. Among human beings, each individual is the centre of importance having a moral right to do and enjoy what she or he wants. Anyone

J. B.P. Sinha, *Psycho-Social Analysis of the Indian Mindset*,
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or anything that comes is the way has to be removed, forcefully if so required. This legitimizes the use of violence for serving one's interests. Because all individuals follow the same script, they are likely to clash and hurt each other. Legal and contractual systems are built to regulate and contain such conflicts and violence. So, conflicts and violence are natural attributes of the Western worldview. Harmony and nonviolence are the outcomes of deliberate human efforts and legal arrangements. On the contrary, harmony and nonviolence are the natural concomitants of the Indian collective existence while conflicts and violence are aberrations caused by extraneous factors.

Thus, the *Rig Veda* pronounced, "Do not harm anything" (Mazumdar 2008). Later, the *Chandogya Upaniṣhad* denounced violence against "all creatures" (*sarvabhuta*) and treated *ahimsa* (nonviolence) as one of the five essential virtues (Tahtinen 1976), paradoxically at a time when Brahmanical rituals of animal sacrificial offerings and non-vegetarianism were quite rampant. It is worth noting that one of the most quoted Dharmshaastras, the *Manusmriti*, condemned all those who were directly or indirectly involved in violence against animals:

> Those who permit slaying of animals; those who bring animals for slaughter; those who slaughter; those who sell meat; those who purchase meat; those who prepare dish out of it; those who serve that meat and those who eat are all murderers (*Manusmṛiti*, 5.51).

The epic *Mahabharata* depicted a moral war that killed hundreds and thousands of near and dear ones, but still preached nonviolence. For example, it stated, "Consider all creatures of the world as your friend and see all beings as your own self" (*Anushaasana Parva*, 115/19); "as the footprints of all smaller animals are encompassed in the footprint of an elephant, all virtues are included in nonviolence" (*Anushaasana Parva*, 259/19); and "there is nothing higher than the virtue of nonviolence because it comprehends all virtues" (*Aadi Parva*, 11/13). In other words, nonviolence was indeed a supreme virtue, although violence in a war was justified as a duty for a right cause.

Despite conceding that some violence is indispensable in self-defence or for a right cause, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism emphasized the need to avoid violence. The Buddha asked disciples to

> Go unto all lands and preach this gospel. Tell them that the poor and the lowly, the rich and the high, are all one, and that all castes unite in this religion as do rivers in the sea. … Never in this world does hatred cease by hatred; hatred ceases by love … . Let a man overcome anger by kindness, evil by good (Nehru 1946/2001, pp. 127–128).

Jainism went to the extreme (Laidlaw 1995). It believed that all living beings—humans, animals, insects and even plants—deserve to be treated with compassion. Nonviolence was considered to be the most essential religious duty for everyone (*ahiṃsaa paramo dharmaḥ*). Nonviolence encompassed abstaining from injury to all living beings by refraining from mental, verbal and physical injury (Laidlaw 1995; Tahtinen 1976). Sikhism too advocated nonviolence of thought (do not wish evil), speech (do not speak harshly) or action (do not obstruct anyone's work). Rather, it asks to forgive another's offence, endure sufferings and help others as

much as one can. However, Sikhs were religiously called upon to fight against Muslims. Continuing in this tradition, Mahatma Gandhi turned *ahimsa* (nonviolence) into a political tool for the independence of the country (Borman 1986; Prabhu and Rao 1943). This was the essence of *satyaagraha* (the impelling force of truth)—the civil disobedience of British rule without hate or hurt. Thus, *ahimsa* blended with *satyaagraha* was advanced as a potent means to resolve both interpersonal and intergroup conflicts (Sinha 1987). A person using this means to resolve a conflict is required to follow a three-step strategy:

1. Reasoning to make the opponent realize the need to reduce conflict.
2. Failing which self-suffering (e.g. fasting, etc.) to arouse a moral resonance in the adversary of one's suffering.
3. If that too fails, the aggrieved person or persons are morally entitled to resort to non-cooperation, polite disobedience and stopping interactions without hating or hurting the adversary till good sense prevails on the latter.

In other words, *ahimsa* and *satyaagraha* put the conflict resolution process on a moral pedestal and are directed against unjust or violent acts of the adversary instead of retaliating against him or her. The motive is noble: To bring the adversary back into a positive frame of mind without letting anyone lose face.

There is an axiomatic assumption in this approach that both parties share the same entity (part of a common collective) and hence are bonded in affinity to the extent that the self-suffering of one strikes an empathic cord in the other inducing him or her to reciprocate the positive gesture. There is, however, a rider here. If this we-feeling is missing, the self-sufferings of a person, instead of striking a resonant chord, are likely to let him or her look more gullible and hence a soft target for further exploitation and violence. In other words, the source of harmony and nonviolence is the collectivism. As the society gets differentiated into a number of collectives with different composition of members having discrepant goals and interests, the generalized sense of collective affinity is fractured. Members within a collective are highly positive towards each other. But they distance and discriminate others. Earlier, in Chaps. 2, 3 and 5, we saw how this creates conditions for the rise of conflict and violence. Indian society is indeed conspicuous by the frequent occurrence of all kinds of violence and conflict—religious, communal, political, regional, transnational, economic and above all interpersonal. We shall turn to them again in Chap. 9. Of course, harmony and nonviolence are still espoused as important values. Their impact, however, lies at best in moderating the degree of conflicts and violence preventing them from getting out of control.

7.1.2 The Doctrine of Karma, Faith in Destiny and Premium on Efforts

Indians strongly believe in the predetermined nature of destiny, but equally strongly believe in the doctrine of karma that requires them to make continuous

and earnest efforts to improve their destiny. According to the doctrine of karma, every act has inevitably an effect, although the effect may not be instant or obvious to the actor. The act includes not only what a person does either on his or her own or under other's influence, but also what she or he desires, believes, thinks and speaks. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* states:

> According as a man acts and according as he believes so will he be; a man of meritorious acts will be meritorious, a man of evil deeds sinful. He becomes pure by pure deeds and evil by evil deeds. And here they say that person consists of desires. And as is his desire so is his will; and as is his will, so is his deed; and whatever deeds he does that he will reap (IV. 4. 5).

According to the doctrine of karma, a person's acts, their effects and his reactions to them (*kriyamana*) keep accumulating in this life and are added to those in his previous lives to constitute a totality of his or her accumulated karmas, which have the potential to upgrade or degrade a person's standing in the cycle of births, increase or decrease longevity and cause joyful or sorrowful life events (Kane 1974, p. 176). There are 8.4 million forms of life which are believed to range from plants, through insects, birds and animals, to human beings, each being further differentiated into innumerable forms and grades. Good and virtuous karmas enable a person to climb up the hierarchy eventually attaining *moksha*, while bad ones can downgrade a person to a lower form, from which she or he can again rise into higher forms through good karmas.

Thus, living beings are advised to keep performing good conducts continuously for improving the stock of karma, although the present outcome would not necessarily be fully determined directly by accumulated karmas. Only a part of this accumulated credit would be retrieved to impact the present life. The retrieved part is called *praarabdha* (available), which determines what positive or negative events and experiences are likely to happen. *Praarabdha* is destiny, signifying that which is inevitable over which human beings have no control, nor do they know what is going to happen. Only God is supposed to know and has a divine design to shuffle through the total stock of karmas and selectively grant human beings joyful or painful events and experiences. All that human beings can do is to keep engaging in good conducts such as following dharma, living virtuously, helping others, pilgrimaging to sacred places and, above all, worshiping a personal God in order to receive his grace hoping that the God will rearrange his accumulated karmas, and thereby tilting the *praarabdha* in their favour. Ideally, people should not be too concerned about the outcomes of their conducts. They should have faith that the God would retrieve good karmas, mitigate the bad ones and thus make them fortunate and even help them attain immortality (Krishnan 1997, p. 25).

Box 7.1. The Story of Ajamila

Ajamila had accumulated various bad karmas such as stealing, abandoning his wife and children, and marrying a prostitute. At the moment of death, he desperately kept calling his son, Narayana [probably seeking solace]. It so happened that the God, Narayana thought that he was chanting his name

pleading for mercy and forgiveness. The God was so moved that he saved him from the clutches of the death-God, Yama, and allowed him to attain *moksha* (freedom from the birth cycle). Thus, the sheer chanting of the God's name waived all Ajamila's misdeeds and sins and helped him attain salvation, despite his bad karmas (*Bhagavata Purana*, Skanda 6, Chap. 1).

In this view, God is supposed to have a master plan for each individual, according to which he shuffles their karmas and determines what outcomes are to be experienced by them. There may be an apparent mismatch between the present karmas and the life events. Some may run into misfortune despite their continuous records of good conducts while the chronic crooks indulging in all kinds of misdeeds may still enjoy health and happiness. The reason for this disparity in the present life conducts and the outcomes is attributed to the master plan of God who glossed over the present karmas, and retrieved from their previous lives the bad karmas of the former and the good karmas of the latter. This is believed to be their fate designed by God, on which they have no control, nor do they know the motive of the God. However, the prescription is that if the God is worshipped properly and prayed to sincerely, he may forgive the misconducts and let the person enjoy the fruits of his or her good conducts. The example of Ajamila suggests that even a chronic sinner can get his or her misconducts waived if he or she prays to a God, even without meaning to! (See Box 7.1.). Thus, good conducts are important, but the grace of God is really crucial.

The God-image is generally transferred to worldly figures—Godfather, patrons and other powerful and resourceful persons—who too have control over the fate of lesser people, irrespective of what they do or wish. People indeed must do their duties, meet social obligations and work hard. All these are necessary, but not sufficient. They must also cajole, appease and ingratiate the powerful and superiors in order to get what they want. Like the uncertain nature of the grace of God, the powerful superior too may have their own hidden design to show variable favours keeping the dependent ones guessing and expecting, but not sure what, when and how much their devotion or loyalty would be worth. In fact, there is anecdotal evidence that a person validates his or her power by going out of the way to oblige those who do not quite deserve the favour. Thus, the linkage between efforts and outcome in the Indian mindset is not quite direct; it is indeed mediated through the powerful (Fig. 7.1, on the next page). So, it is pragmatic to direct more efforts to the powerful than to keep trying only on one's own. The powerful superior, if moved, would deliver or get delivered the coveted outcomes.

There are some supportive reports. Compared to Western people, for example, Indians feel having less control over their life events (Trompenaars 1993). This explains high degrees of dependence proneness (Chap. 6), power distance (Chap. 3) and pressure to cultivate a network of relationships as part of the collectivist orientation (Chap. 2). The weak linkages between efforts and outcomes have another consequence. Once an opportunity is perceived within one's reach, it is considered

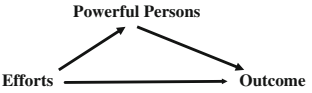

Fig. 7.1 Effort–outcome relationship

wise to grab it, lest it pass by. Long-term strategy is fret with uncertainties, and hence less attractive. Short-term tactics for quick, even sub-optimal, gains are more practical. Opportunism flourishes in such a mindset.

7.1.3 Avoidance and Tolerance of Uncertainty

The tenuous effort–outcome relationship is only one of the sources of uncertainties in the Indian mindset. There are many others. Uncertainties arise out of three sets of sources: Near-nonexistent or inadequate physical and infrastructural facilities, complex social relationships, and unknown and unpredictable destiny. In Chap. 9, we shall see how unsupportive the living conditions afflicted by extreme poverty, poor health, illiteracy, grossly inadequate infrastructure, frequent occurrence of disasters and natural calamities, vagaries of weather and so on, are. The social world of Indians is fragmented by numerous divisions of castes, class, religion, regions, language and a host of other factors. They criss-cross with the power distance discussed in Chap. 3. Even within a relatively homogeneous community or an extended family, social transactions are immensely uncertain because of incompatible roles, long-time perspective on social interactions, and verbal and non-verbal forms of communications that are deliberately kept ambiguous in order to be able to change one's position as and when it suits oneself. For example, the elder brother is to be respected but the younger one who earns more money commands greater authority; a relative has to be taken care of but only if he is capable and likely to reciprocate the favour in the long run; friendship needs to be cultivated but only with a person who is likely to be useful in the future; the loyalty of so-far-trustworthy subordinates is likely to evaporate once the superior loses his power and position; and the third person passive voice (e.g. your work will get done) is a favoured expression in order to avoid owning or fixing responsibility either for an act or its failure.

Indians are highly sensitive to their social milieu and can sense people more accurately than many other nationalities. Yet, they remain uncertain about whom to trust, how much and for how long; how much to yield in order to keep the other in good humour; which of the norms to evoke in incompatible role relationships, how to protect oneself from getting exploited by someone who professes to be benevolent but is not actually helping, how to sustain gainful relationships while pulling out of others without being too obvious. Further, there are always dilemmas of when to disagree with others and when to be silent, when to make a promise knowing that an excuse will have to be invented later on for not keeping the promise, when to keep complying with a superior knowing that he is wrong or

his pet project will surely fail, when to enter into a business agreement while intending to ask later on for a revision and so on. Then, there are uncertainties arising out of destiny (discussed earlier in this chapter), which impair any efforts to plan for the future.

The huge amount and varied kinds of uncertainties have a deep impact on the Indian mindset. Many Indians, irrespective of their age, education and income, consciously as well as subconsciously keep acting out of their sense of uncertainties. For example, they jump queues without any reason; push others, even children, at public places where there is no apparent need to do so; overtake others disregarding traffic rules, rush to fill their plates in buffets as if they may not get the chance for a second helping, interrupt each other lest they do not get a chance to speak out their points, hoard essential things in fear of imagined scarcity and so on.

They adopt many other mechanisms to reduce uncertainties. And yet, they have to live with a huge amount of uncertainties. Thus, they have a below average score on the index of uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede 1980, p. 122). In a country with extreme and pervasive poverty, the fear of falling into misfortune leads to save for a rainy day, particularly when formal institutional instruments are inadequate and unreliable. So, the savings and investment rate (32.50 %),[1] despite low levels of income, was quite high in the year 2010 compared to the leading Western countries such as UK (4.6 %), USA (5.8 %), Japan (6.5 %) and Germany (10.9 %). There is strong pressure to invest in real estate, owning a house and buying gold. In fact, the fear of poverty accentuates the need for greater power to grab and monopolize as much resources as one can by even adopting dubious ways. Another mechanism is to look for a secure job providing life employment, particularly in government organizations that have a tradition not to retrench employees except in rare instances. Organizations in both public and private sectors have rigidly formalized structures, tall bureaucracy with elaborate systems and procedures. Seniority is the basis for promotion in most organizations in order to reduce the chances of discretion and discrimination (Sinha 1990a). Uncertainties in the social domain are reduced by enforcing clearly defined codes of conduct for different roles as well as social stratification based on caste, class, age and gender.

There are still many more uncertainties to cope with. Indians learn to live with them by employing a number of ways. Chapter 1 discussed doing nothing or delaying a decision or the action to implement it till the situation sorts out the alternatives highlighting the one that one has to follow under compulsion. Indians lie low and wait for an adverse situation to pass and for the weather to improve. Another alternative is to make contingency plans lest the situation changes abruptly. If they cannot wait nor make a viable contingency plan, they do what they can and leave the outcome to their destiny. They evoke the doctrine of *nishkaama* karma (doing what needs to be done without worrying about the outcome with the belief that God will do justice) to pacify their worries out of

[1] http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNS.ICTR.ZS. Gross savings (% of GDP) of Germany (24 %), India (30 %), Japan (11 %), UK (11 %), and USA (17%).

uncontrollable uncertainty. If they fail, the reason will be attributed to the past life karmas, and if they succeed it must be their efforts, of course, rewarded by the grace of God. Uncertainties in how to behave appropriately in social role relationships are contained by frequent references to the norms that justify however they behave. There are norms in Indian society that can legitimize any behaviour; but they have to be articulated every time a particular behaviour is likely to be questioned for its social appropriateness. The role partners may not agree but would live with this uncertainty without losing the relationship.

7.1.4 Masculinity and Femininity

Masculinity has been traditionally associated with manly attributes of assertiveness, potency, tough mindedness and so on that enable a person to have control and mastery over others, while femininity has signified nurturance, softness, receptivity and so on, which induces a person to cooperate, self-sacrifice and live in harmony with others. In the West, the former traits have been valued over the latter for centuries. The origin of this value goes back to Christian philosophy, the dictum of the struggle for existence and survival of the fittest, and the industrial revolution that was realized by an extensive exploitation of human and environmental resources. The Bible describes God as commanding Adam and Eve to have many children so that their descendants would live and control the Earth (Genesis 1, Verse 28). Jesus too instructs his disciples, "Go to all people everywhere and make them my disciples, baptize them in the name of the father, the son, and the Holy spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Mathew, 28, Verses 19–20). The mastery motive was considered to be basic not only to human beings but to all living beings (White 1959).

Indic religions, in principle, have included a combination of "masculine" and "feminine" values. Buddhism advocated a gentle approach to let other people reduce their sufferings through righteous conduct without changing their religion. The supreme value of *ahimsa* (nonviolence) of Jainism was obviously antithetical to the forceful influencing propensity of masculinity. In fact, the Indian perspective, instead of conceiving any dichotomy, underlines the unity between masculinity and femininity. Shiva, the creator as well as the destroyer of the universe, is the embodiment of potency. But Shiva is also *shava* (corpse, i.e. lifeless), before the Goddess Aadi Shakti (eternal power—the supreme feminine) enters him to make him supremely potent as *ardhanaarishwar* (half-man and half-woman). The iconic representation of this unity is the phallic *linga* (male organ) of Shiva, which is always placed in the *yoni* (female organ) of the Goddess Shakti (Kakar 1982). The unity of masculinity and femininity has an earlier record in the *Bhagvad Gita* where Krishna said, "I am the father of this world, the mother, the supporter … I am life and I am death …" (Chap. 9, verses 17 and 19).

This unity in the Indian mindset is again magnificently profiled in the portrait of Mahatma Gandhi who was tougher than thunder and softer than a flower:

> With his [Gandhi's] small and fragile frame, feather weight, soft voice, and his spinning wheel, he challenged the mighty British Empire. He stood fearlessly in front of British rulers, defied their orders, broke their rules, walked half-nakedly into Buckingham Palace, made major political decisions single-mindedly in a rather dictatorial style, moved fearlessly among riotous mobs, reigned over the heart of millions, and swayed, not once but 17 times, millions of Indians by resorting to a fast unto death. Through all these, *he manifested his inner strength, his deadly determination, and supreme masculinity* (Sinha 1986, p. 507, italics added).

And yet, Gandhi's masculinity was expressed through his self-suffering (Nandy 1982) and his "autocratic malehood" arose out of "enveloping maternalism" (Erikson 1969). Gandhi was called "Baapu"—father of the nation; but in his prayer meeting on 1 February 1947, he said that he wanted to be "a eunuch" through the prayer of God, because he believed that a woman is an incarnation of *ahimsa* (nonviolence), which means love for others, including adversaries, nurtured by infinite suffering that only a woman is capable of. On the death of his close associate, Maganlal, he felt that he had become "a widow" (Sinha 1986, p. 509). A social worker, Anasuyaben, called him her mother. Gandhi's granddaughter, Manu Gandhi (1949), wrote a book entitled, *Bapu: My Mother*, in which Gandhi was quoted as saying, "Have I not become your mother? I have been a father [*baapu*] to many, but only to you I am a mother" (cited by Sinha 1986, p. 509). Indians are often claimed to seek the father's approval, appreciation and strength, but to identify with their mother—a "deeper acceptance of a feminine self" (Nandy and Kakar 1981, p. 153). The mother with maternal tolerance, emotional vitality, protectiveness and nurturance becomes the core of every Indian's identity. However, even within this positive identity, there exists the opposite—demanding, sometimes stifling, experience of the all-too-present mother (Nandy and Kakar 1981, p. 143).

Because of this complexity of what Indians inherit from their relationships with their parents, their composite score on the dimension of femininity–masculinity comes near the average—slightly inclined towards the latter (Hofstede 1980, p. 189).[2] The Indian's masculinity emerges out of enfolding femininity. Indians derive their potency through self-sacrifices and suffering. Long back, McClelland (1975) observed that "… renunciation, yielding, and self-sacrifices [of Indians] often serve only to make a strong urge to power" (p. 143). Indians, instead of controlling important natural forces, tend to accept them as given and try to adjust themselves (Trompenaars 1993). In other words, instead of attempting "primary control", they resort to "secondary control" of changing themselves in order to change others (Azuma 1984). The secondary control, however, works only when they share a bond so that the self-suffering or self-change strikes a chord in others and lets them introject the sufferings of the person who is *apane* (in-group with affinity). If the bond is missing, as it happens most often, Indians are ruthlessly competitive, aggressive and exploitative in employing their power and strength

[2] Hofstede, however, failed to realize the interwoven nature of femininity and masculinity in the Indian mindset.

(see Chap. 3 for details). In sum, the traditionally espoused blend of notions of masculinity and femininity works mostly in a personalized milieu while a blatant masculinity dominates the Indian mindset in others.

7.1.5 Analytic, Synthetic and Intuitive Ways of Knowing

Analytic and synthetic ways of knowing appear to be antithetical, and yet work in tandem in the Indian mindset for understanding a reality, but only to an extent, beyond which it has be perfected through intuition. The analytical method in the West flows from logical positivism, where reason and logic are supreme and sacrosanct. Individuals are assumed to be rational. The knowing process involves identifying as many bits of ideas and information as are possibly available and evaluating them for describing, explaining and predicting a phenomenon. The most efficacious of them are organized into a thought and used for action. The ways of organizing them are reductionist, in which a complex phenomenon is decomposed into elementary ones and clearly defined forms that are amenable to rigorous investigations through empirical methods in order to establish cause–effect relationships. Such relationships are added one by one, resulting in a body of knowledge with a reasonable degree of certainty of their future replications (Bernard 1957, p. 72).

According to ancient Indian thought, such an analytic process is the starting point, but is elementary and rather inadequate in building perfect knowledge. It has indeed been used to develop a highly elaborate taxonomy in a variety of areas. For example, human beings were conceptualized as having a combination of three deficiencies (*doshas*), five elements (*pancamahabhutas*), seven body tissues *(sapta-dhaatu*), five senses (*panca-indriyas*), five motor functions, three temperaments (*gunas*) and four psychic facets: mind (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi*), ego (*ahamkaar)* and soul (*aatman*). In music, thousands of *raagas* and *raaginis* were composed with elaborate differentiations in tune and rhythm. Similarly, the time and number sense was extraordinarily developed. Time is conceptualized as cyclic (*kaalacakra*), where a cycle was called *kalpa* consisting of 4,320 million earthly years. The *kalpa* was divided into 14 periods, at the end of which the universe was supposed to be recreated. The *kalpa* was further divided into four *yugas*. In contrast to this macro-conceptualization of time, at the other end of the scale, there were finer divisions of a year into seasons, months, hours, minutes, lunar positions, solar positions, stellar positions, etc. The smallest unit was approximately 1/17th of a second. The smallest lineal measure is given as something which approximates to 1.37×7^{-10}. For numericals, while the Greeks, Romans and Arabs had apparently no terminology for denominations above a thousand or at most a myriad (10^4 = 10,000), Indians conceptualized 18 specific denominations (10^{18}), which in the story of Buddha's early education were reported to go up to 10^{50} (Nehru 1946/2001, p. 116). The *Bhrigu Samhita*, a treatise on astrology first written in the Vedic period, had composed about 500,000 main frames, on the

basis of which 45 million horoscopes could be prepared and there was a way to locate the appropriate one for a person in a few minutes only after knowing his place and time of birth (Varma 2004, p. 111).

Despite these impressive achievements of the analytical method, a better approach was suggested to synthesize the bits of ideas that are delineated through an analytical process. This approach starts with the reality as a whole, then cuts it into tiny pieces of ideas and then puts them together into a new whole. But the process does not stop here. The whole has to be cut again into pieces but differently and put together into another whole. And, the process goes on. The *Isha, Katha* and *Kena Upanishad*s affirm that "Wise people of India could partition the world in opposites, then put them together into one whole, and then again partition them" (Bhawuk 2008, p. 12). This Upanishadic recommendation of separating and synthesizing of the pieces of ideas is accepted by Sri Aurobindo (1986) who wrote, "… our inner elements, combinations, functions, forces, can be separated or dissolved, can be new combined, and set to novel and formerly impossible workings or can be transformed and resolved into a new general synthesis by fixed internal processes" (p. 3).

Even in the Western analytical method, the empirically derived pieces of causal relationships are put together to constitute a meaningful whole. But the process is to add them brick by brick in a linear fashion. The "creative imagination" of the Western investigator lies in placing the relationships into a consistent and replicable network that we call a theory. The Indian process of analysing and synthesizing is rather nonlinear. It moves back and forth in slicing the reality many times and differently, and hence yields a number of "wholes" that could be same, similar or paradoxical. Indians tend to "encompass" (Dumont 1972) and "enfold" (Schulberg 1968) all and even those which are paradoxical. In contrast to the logical, positivistic frame where if "X" is true, "Not-X" can't be true, in the Indian perspective, "People are very comfortable with practising both 'X' and 'Not-X' simultaneously, and 'X' plus 'Not-X' does not become zero, instead it becomes what could be labeled infinite" (Bhawuk 2008, p. 12). That is, the slicing that yields "X" and "Not-X" does not negate the unity underlying the reality of which "X" and "Not-X" are the diverse manifests. This is because "… the unified field awareness of traditional Indian thought processes" (Lannoy 1971/2008, p. 420). Indians "do not proceed the way Westerners do, step by step. Instead of applying inductive logic through painstaking scholarship to extend the paradigm to its breaking point, they look for inspiration through deductive logic" (Indiresan 1998, p. 204). "Indians have an intuitive insight into the behaviour of numbers, and their arrangements into patterns and series" (Winter 1998, p. 154). It is often contended that Indians' excellence in information technology, particularly programming of software, is based on their knack for breaking the whole into smallest binary combinations and then putting them together into an innovative whole package again.

These analytic–synthetic ways of knowing are still believed to be imperfect because they are mediated by the sense organs and mind, which have their own limitations (Radhakrishnan 1953/2011). Sense organs can produce only discrete

information that the mind can put together in order to make sense. The mind can reflect and add speculative imagination (Paranjpe 2010, p. 44) to synthesize, but that too remains incomplete knowledge, which the Upanishads called *avidya* (knowledge wrapped in ignorance). Not that what the mind creates out of sensory inputs through synthesizing are unimportant. They are the stuff that a person has to work with. However, one has to go beyond *avidya* in order to have *vidya*—real knowledge. Real knowledge stems from the understanding that diverse manifestations have an invariant source where "Nothing is divided or in conflict within its all comprehensive self-awareness" (Radhakrishnan 1953/2011, pp. 95–96). In other words, "*vidya* stresses the harmony and interconnectedness of elements which make up the world; *avidya* the separateness, mutual independence and strife" (Radhakrishnan 1953/2011, p. 103). A person, according to Isha Upanishad, has to have both *avidya* and *vidya*:

> Those who worship *avidya* [knowledge wrapped in ignorance] enter into blinding darkness, but those who are engaged in *vidya* [real knowledge] enter into greater darkness. They say that by *vidy*a a really different result is achieved, and they say that by *avidya* a different result is achieved, thus have we heard the teaching of those wise people who explained that to us. He or she who knows these two, *vidya* and *avidya*, together, attains immortality through *vidya,* [and] by crossing over death through *avidya*" (*Isha Upanishad*, Gambhiranand 1972, pp. 18–19).

"Knowledge wrapped in ignorance" simply means that it is incomplete knowledge because there is much more to know than *what* is known in terms of discrete ideas. What is more to be known is *how* they are interconnected, resulting in unity and harmony amidst diversity, and most importantly *why* (the unifying principle) they are interconnected. Thus, the Upanishadic dictum is to have both discrete ideas and their connectedness, but then one has to go beyond to see the underlying principle for unity and harmony even in seemingly contradictory ideas. Intuition is the method that is recommended to realize this what, how and why of knowing. The *Rig Veda* said, "An intuition in the heart sees the truth" (I.24).

Not that intuition as a method for knowing and making a decision is unknown in the West. However, it is conceptualized differently. It is postulated to be based on the implicit knowledge of a person. The premise is that many ideas and information are acquired or incidentally experienced and are buried deep in the unconscious of a person. They are triggered on the spur of the moment without the person making a deliberate attempt to retrieve and organize them. Once they appear in the conscious mind, they get organized into novel thought and insightful action without any solid reason or apparent logic to support it (Betsch 2008). In other words, the building blocks of an intuition are still the bits of ideas and influences that were experienced by the sense organs and were repressed or suppressed by the mind because they were not found to be relevant at that moment. They lie unstructured and unclaimed by the logical mind till they are triggered by external stimuli. They appear heuristically and without any deliberate effort (Kahneman 1982). Kahneman, therefore, argues that such an intuitive approach is quite apt in uncertain conditions where the familiar lines of reasoning or logical explorations reach a dead end. So, it is more like an aberration in the otherwise

mainstream of rational and logical ways of knowing and acting. Interestingly, one's positive mood has been found to facilitate the use of the intuitive method while a negative mood seems take a familiar rational–logical route (de Vries et al. 2008). Probably, a positive mood lets the rational mind keep its guard down and lets other ideas from the hidden layers surface spontaneously.

The Indian perspective on the intuitive method is different. It is not an aberration, but a specialized effort to take over the understanding process from the analytical synthesizing limit and further it to the highest possible point of knowing. Its source is the philosophical formulation that elements of phenomenal reality (*maaya*) are different and divergent because individuals see and experience them through their imperfect senses and synthesize them through a still imperfect mind. However, they are all manifestations of one unifying principle. That is why it was said that the person who sees the Supreme in his individual self understands the unity amidst diversity in the whole world. Individual souls are like discrete ideas that reflect the Supreme—the unifying principle. Intuition is the method, as the *Rig Veda* is quoted above, to grasp this truth. However, it is specialized and effortful because it can be used only under certain conditions and through certain practices. It has to be cultivated deliberately by detaching oneself from the sensory inputs and "emptying" the mind of the trodden rational–logical thinking. It is an inward journey. One has to "tranquilize senses", "simplify heart", "cleanse mind" and be "calm, subdued, quiet, patiently enduring and collected" (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, IV.iv, 23) in order to clear the ground for starting the practices of yoga and meditation to see "unity amidst diversity" in the manifest world (Radhakrishnan 1953/2011, p. 100).

It is indeed an idealistic method that is espoused mainly by those who strive to explore the unlimited possibilities of psychic excellence. They argue that rigorous practices of yoga and meditation are akin to the rigorous training that scientists go through in order to be able to start unveiling the mysteries of nature. They also have evidence to show that yoga and meditation help a person develop control over body and mind and improve mental functioning and wellbeing. Many Indians indeed use them in varying degrees and rigour for self-development. Its usefulness in social and work-related activities has also been demonstrated (Chakraborty 1987, 1995). However, the hassles of daily life do not allow the common Indians in indulge in the luxury of intuitive explorations to the full extent. The educational system does not teach intuitive ways of learning either. It talks of "joyful learning", "free exploration", "creative imagination", "out of box thinking", "focusing on the big picture" and so on, but sticks to the cramming of Western stuff, teaching reductionist approach and importing science and technology from elsewhere. Intuitive ways are at best tacit and confined to sensing other's intentions and motives, judging right time and place for action or inaction, seeing valuable solutions in binary combinations of numbers, and so on.

In sum, Indian mindset consists of a bundle of paradoxes; a summary listing of the major ones appears in Table 7.1 on next page.

Table 7.1 Major paradoxes of the Indian mindset

Collectivism		Individualism
Structural Hierarchy		Hierarchy by Quality
Spirituality		Materialism
Religiosity	Secularism	Sexuality
Dependency		Entrepreneurship
Harmony		Violence
Faith in Destiny		Premium on Efforts
Uncertainty Avoidance		Uncertainty Tolerance
Masculinity		Femininity
Ways of Knowing:		
Analytic	Synthetic	Intuitive

7.2 Paradoxes Can Be Adaptive and Creative

7.2.1 Paradoxes Are Universal

All human beings, and in fact many other primate species and some other intelligent animals, according to Talbot (2005), are paradoxical by nature. This means that being paradoxical is not exclusively an attribute of Indians. People of all cultures share with some of the animals contradictory instincts of being selfish as well as social (Tucker 1781/1967). They tend to preserve themselves and their species as well as being empathetic to others' interests and needs. Hence, they are simultaneously cooperative and competitive, peace makers and aggressive, altruistic and selfish, independent minded and conforming, and so on (Talbot 2005, p. 83). From this perspective, Indian paradoxes may be considered as reflective of a universal phenomenon. Further, our common sense is that even if a paradox appears, it is going to be dissolved in due course. According to Talbot, this does not happen; paradoxes are not necessarily dissolved. They are rather perpetuated and continuously engaged in. The belief that a thesis once confronted with its antithesis inevitably results in synthesis does not hold true in most situations; rather, both—thesis and antithesis—remain viable without getting reconciled of their contradictions. It is not that some people are consistent while others are paradoxical or people are paradoxical only in some specific situations. Rather, the *same people* generally *simultaneously keep behaving* in paradoxical ways *across situations* without dissolving their paradoxes. They are naturally predisposed to pick up and combine consistent as well as inconsistent ideas to act in variable ways that suit different situations:

> What evolves is what might be called a sort of "behavioural jukebox, a set of behavioural patterns—often contradictory—from which the jukebox operator can select in response to their environment and preferences. Moreover these behaviours aren't just selectable one at a time, but can be played simultaneously or near simultaneously …" (Talbot 2005, p. 73).

The tendency to think and behave paradoxically is a mixed blessing. It causes chaos and confusion, psychological discomfort and threat, instable forms of behaviour, unpredictability, mental jam and so on. However, it also has a potential to combine diverse and contradictory ideas in ways that are adaptive and creative. Talbot (2005 p. 88) drew parallels from the chaos and complexity theory (Holland 2000; Kauffman 1995) in order to argue that the human mind has a capacity to develop systems and order out of chaos and confusion. The systems and orders are complex, and are both random and patterned at the same time. They may not be quite identical formations across situations, or work in predictable cycles over time, but they do make sense and enable the person to adapt to complex situations, particularly the fast changing ones. In fact, paradoxes have opposing ingredients that may form extremely complex but meaningful wholes, which could be quite adaptive and enormously creative. The human mind has a built-in capacity to do so. However, the cultural context either facilitates or impedes this process in varying degrees.

7.2.2 The Mediating Role of Culture

Cultures vary the extent to which they negate, tolerate, accept or appreciate paradoxes; which in turn impacts on how paradoxes are processed into adaptive and creative or disjointed and dysfunctional behavioural patterns. Human orientations and dispositions get honed and toned down in line with prevalent cultural norms and prescriptions (Singer 1999, p. 37). Western cultures, for example, emphasize rationality and consistency, and thereby, relegate the legitimacy of paradoxes. They value individual autonomy, independence, initiative, freedom, achievement, mastery, contractual relationships and so on (Bellah et al. 1985). Hence, individuals in those cultures tend to suppress those tendencies within paradoxes that are contradictory to these values and align their behaviour with those values and tendencies that they espouse. In instances where unpalatable values and tendencies refuse to get suppressed, spilling into thoughts and behaviour, they are so interpreted as if they serve some noble causes that make life worth living, and hence allow paradoxical thought and action. Thus, if not negated, some paradoxes are tolerated in the Western cultural perspective as exceptions to meet exigencies that really confirm the values and norms of being rational and consistent. Otherwise, they are considered to be aberrations and dysfunctional and are discounted, restricted and possibly sanctioned (Talbot 2005, p. 48).

On the contrary, Indian culture, as detailed in the preceding chapters and above, accepts paradoxes as a reality of life. It is part of a deeply rooted pluralistic worldview (see Chap. 1 for details) that allowed layers of different cultural ideas and influences to develop over centuries without the old being replaced by the new. As a result, Indian culture has indeed a multicultural texture. All cultures, including Western cultures, have multicultural strands. However, the difference lies in whether differences are included by (a) assimilating the divergent influences into a “melting

pot" and treating the rest as "dropout" marginals that are of little significance; or (b) allowing them to coexist as unequal but still legitimate, though not integrated but still functional, in an inclusive, heterogamous cultural basket. Western cultures belong to the former while Indian culture represents the latter. Indian culture has not only demographic diversity stratified by religion, caste, class and a host of other features of unequal number and salience, but also diversity in beliefs, values, norms and practices that result in paradoxes (described in the preceding chapters and above). Indian culture accepts them to a much greater extent than Western cultures.

Indians have "no qualms in borrowing from the West … while continuing to be unmistakably Indian" (Varma 2004, p. 149). "When Indians learn, quite expertly, modern science, business, or technology, they 'compartmentalize' these interests … the new ways of thought and behaviour do not replace, but live along with the old 'religious' ways" (Ramanujan 1989, p. 57). Indian managers, like managers in the West, were found to espouse Western values of achievement, advancement and ability utilization (Kumar 1994; Sinha 1990b; Srinivas 1994). Many of them were " … individualistic, outwardly oriented, educated, emotionally balanced, self-confident, self-actualized, and materialistic" (Braasch 1998, p. 116) in seeking individual ambitions and achievements. However, their inner self may be made of traditional, familial ethos (Garg and Parikh 1993). As a result, "Tradition and technology sleep in the same bed in India" (Varma 2004, p. 142). Inconsistent and contradictory beliefs, values, norms and practices are held not only by different sets of Indians, but the same Indians own them without any discomfort or dissonance (Bharati 1985). Roland (2005) found that "There is much more of an ability [of Indians] to live with inconsistency and dissonance than tends to be characteristics of most Westerners" (pp. 4–5). There is a report that Indians "do not mind seemingly intolerable contradictions" (Carl Jung quoted by Sinha and Tripathi 1994, p. 125).

7.2.3 Adaptive and Creative Potential of Paradoxes

Substantive evidence shows that the greater the diversity of ideas, the greater is the possibility of creativity (Leung et al. 2008). Creativity involves two types of cognitive processes—generative and exploratory. The generative process means retrieving ideas that seem relevant for responding in a creative way to a situation, solving a problem in a better way or composing something unique. The generated ideas are then examined to determine which among them are promising enough to deserve further processing through modification, elaboration and transformation in order to identify a novel way to think in and respond to a situation. This is the process of exploration. Diversity implies the availability of a wider range of ideas that can be generated and explored, and paradoxes indeed extend the range even to a greater extent. Naturally, the more ideas people have, the more they are diverse and discrepant, the more it is likely that people would come up with novel combinations (Weisberg 1993), which could enhance their adaptation to a situation. Diversity and paradoxes also help the exploratory process in expanding the

boundary of a concept or an idea by attributing seemingly contradictory meanings to them (Wan and Chiu 2002).

The tradition of *shaastraartha* for resolving religious and philosophical issues was essentially an exploratory process by accepting the authenticity of the scriptures and then explicating their diverse meanings. This process led to different interpretations, modifications and interpolations in most of the ancient texts (see Chap. 1). It is because of this process that concepts such as dharma, karma, *Brahman* and many others were modified and expanded over time. Dharma is derived from the root word *dhri*—means that "which holds" the world order. This meaning was expanded to discharging one's duties and meeting social obligations through the argument that social harmony and world order are maintained so long as individuals relate with each other properly. Then, dharma was considered to be a Hindi equivalent of religion that has very specific attributes. Karma means conduct or acts that a person wilfully engages in but it also stood for fate or destiny that is believed to be predetermined and beyond one's control. This expansion of seemingly opposite meanings is based on the belief that one's good or bad conducts get accumulated over a cycle of births, out of which a part is delivered according to the divine design. *Brahman* was conceptualized as the Supreme, but the word was used for the members of a caste, Brahmin who self-claimed to be the purest and the most proximate to the Supreme. A contemporary example of the expansion is the concept of self-reliance. It denotes individualism, but in the collectivist culture of India, self-reliance also implies "not being a burden on the family". Rather, a self-reliant family member is the strength of the family (Sinha 2011).

7.3 Duplicity, Selfishness and Achieving Orientation

Creativity means *novel* ways of attaining *useful* goals. However, useful goals are not necessarily desirable to both self and others, nor are novel ways always legitimate and socially approved. Goals may range from idealistic to selfish, and from helpful to injurious to others. Novel ways can also vary in social legitimacy. Scientists, artists, poets, writers, musicians, entrepreneurs and similar others are creative having desirable goals with legitimate means. But they often have bizarre habits and even anti-social dispositions. Further, they are not the only creative people. Even a criminal can be highly creative in devising ingenious ways of committing a crime; a cunning person can cheat many others without making them feel cheated; a scam master can fleece millions of public money without getting caught; a skilful person can produce fake goods or counterfeit money that are hardly detected; an unfaithful husband can manage a loving relationship with his faithful wife without her smelling anything wrong, a clever subordinate can manipulate her imposing boss or sabotage his pet project; a friend can emotionally exploit other friends and so on. They are creative in devising noble ways to serve interests that are gainful to them only.

The presence of paradoxes simply increases the possibility that a person can combine incongruent elements in creative ways to make the best of a situation. Situations vary in their enabling and disabling potentials. Enabling situations generally raise the expectancy that one can do her or his best by selecting from the positive parts of the paradoxes. So, the person feels motivated to expand her or his energy, broaden vision, explore, innovate and come up with creative solutions that have positive implications for self and others. On the contrary, adverse situations make the person feel less secure and confident, and constrains him or her to opt for whatever can help him or her survive. He or she gets selfish, cynical and manipulative, strives for short-term goals, sub-optimal outcomes and so on. Most often situations have shades of both enabling and disabling features inducing people to think, feel and behave in consistent as well as inconsistent ways by drawing on paradoxical ideas.

A study (Sinha et al. 2010) by 14 scholars located at 12 far-flung places in India[3] surveyed 829 adults, who predicted what most people living around them believe, prefer and do. Their responses confirmed the presence of paradoxes in the Indian mindset. The dominant attribute of their mindset was duplicity in their thoughts and behaviour that led them to behave in self-seeking calculative ways, which was also associated with positive goal setting and achievement orientation. Examples of duplicity in thought and behaviour of people were given as follows:

- People dislike corrupt persons, but are likely to remain close to them for personal gains.
- People make promises, but may give excuses for not keeping them.
- People favour their friends and may use them for personal gains as well.
- People believe in science but are likely to be superstitious in behaviour.
- People talk about ideals, but may behave in a selfish manner.
- People don't like to be supervised, but are likely to work hard only when they are supervised.
- People avoid working hard for others, but may work diligently for themselves.
- People want to remain honest, but may bribe someone to get what they want done.
- People run after power and position, although they want peace of mind.
- People who offer worship and prayers regularly are also likely to indulge in unethical practices.
- People believe that hard work pays, but may not exert enough.
- People overreact emotionally, but are also likely to calculate their gains and losses carefully.

[3] Ahmedabad, Aligarh, Kozhikode (Calicut), Chennai, Guwahati, Kharagpur, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, Noida, Patna, and Pune.

Self-serving and calculative behaviours were listed as follows:

- People say only what powerful persons want to hear.
- People surrender to powerful persons and exploit weak ones.
- People hide their intentions and behave in socially desirable ways.
- People take undue advantage of innocent persons.
- People hide their intention to please others in order to get undue favours.
- People work very hard when they expect to get amply rewarded.
- Highly spiritual people turn materialistic on many occasions.
- People throw garbage in public places, though they keep their premises clean.

In terms of setting and achieving positive goals:

- People set ambitious goals and work diligently to achieve them.
- People accommodate others' views to live together peacefully.
- People make small sacrifices in order to achieve long-term results.
- People become quite creative when they get challenging opportunities.
- People remain optimistic in adverse situations hoping that such situations will soon pass.
- People rally around a common cause that a dedicated leader undertakes.
- People make sacrifices to help those who are in distress.

Two other studies (Narain 2011; Sinha 2012) again confirmed the presence of inconsistent elements in the behaviour of Indian adults. Sinha substantiated some of the findings of Sinha et al. (2010). A sample of 100 adults in Patna (Bihar) attributed the following as the most applicable (in decreasing order) to people residing around them. Of 11 attributes, four were positive (in italics).

- People run after power and positions, although value peace of mind.
- *People forget differences and help each other during disasters.*
- People talk idealistically, but behave in a selfish manner.
- People throw garbage in public places, though keep own premises clean.
- *People work very hard when they expect to get amply rewarded.*
- People make promises, but give excuses for not keeping them.
- People make compromises when a situation so demands.
- People hide intentions and behave in socially desirable ways.
- People believe in science but are superstitious in behaviour.
- *People become quite creative when get challenging opportunities.*
- *People believe in destiny but struggle hard to succeed in life.*

Narain (2011) sampled 125 adolescent boys and girls and both their parents. Each among the trio—adolescent, father and mother—rated himself/herself and the other two persons on the statements that assessed discrepant behaviour. Interestingly, their ratings converged, signifying that the three generally agreed about self and the other persons' behaviour. Further, all three were discrepant in their behaviour. The five most discrepant behaviours of the fathers, the mothers and the adolescents were the following:

7.3.1 Fathers' Discrepant Behaviours

- Though himself stays out in the evening, does not allow his children to do so.
- Believes in both science and destiny.
- Welcomes guests he does not like.
- Values honesty, but does not practise it.
- Does not believe in scolding or spanking children, but often does.

7.3.2 Mothers' Discrepant Behaviours

- Cooks food not of her own but her family's choice.
- Grants freedom to the children to adopt Western lifestyles, but expects them to follow Indian culture and tradition.
- Entertains unwelcome guests.
- Behaves in friendly ways with neighbours she dislikes.
- Poses as "modern", but follows Indian traditions.

7.3.3 Adolescents' Discrepant Behaviours

- Though dislikes a teacher, does not let him or her know.
- Though quite naughty, presents a submissive front to teachers.
- Though professes not to lie, does indeed lie.
- Though prepares a routine, does not follow it.
- Though gives advice to friends and siblings, does not follow them.

7.4 Summary

The human mind is full of paradoxes. However, cultures differ in accepting or suppressing them depending on the cultural preference for either maintaining consistency and rationality or holding pluralistic worldview and encompassing diverse and discrepant ideas. Unlike Western cultures that value consistency and rationality and hence tend to suppress paradoxes, Indian culture accepts the presence of paradoxes. The major ones are collectivism coexisting with individualism, hierarchical order recognizing merit and human qualities, spirituality co-living with materialism, religiosity, secularism and sexuality overlapping with each other, excessive dependency turning into entrepreneurship, espoused values of harmony and nonviolence witnessing conflicts and violence, avoidance of uncertainty accompanying living with uncertainty, masculinity and femininity getting blended together, and analytical, synthetic and intuitive ways of learning

building upon each other. The paradoxes create enormous possibilities for Indians to be adaptive and creative in both positive and negative ways.

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Chapter 8
The Shifting Mindset

8.1 Variable Indian Mindset

Two observations made years apart from two distant places revealed the core of the Indian mindset. Singer (1972), an Indologist from the University of Chicago, found it intriguing that an Indian can say one thing to one person and something completely different on the same topic at the same time to another without experiencing any discomfort. Thirty years later, a young Danish manager complained that "the most difficult thing is that the Indians will tell you one thing, think another, and do a third thing, which is not what a Dane would do" (Hughes 2002). The first observation pertains to how Indians restructure their views in completely different forms while responding to different persons. This restructuring probably has to do with the differences between the two persons that Indians sense and decide to align their views to relate to them on their own ground. The second comment discloses Indians' skill to organize their intentions, professed views and actual actions in discrepant ways while reconciling their self-interests and the interests of other persons. These interpersonal and intrapersonal discrepancies in how Indians think, talk and act have a source in their rich repertoire of consistent, inconsistent and contradictory beliefs, values and practices, which are part of the Indian cultural heritage (see Chap. 7). The Indian mindset is indeed very complex and full of paradoxes.

8.2 Switching of Cultural Frames

A mindset[1] is composed of cognitions. Cognitions are concepts, constructs, ideas, feelings, action orientations and whatever a person is aware of. Beliefs, values and activities that a person is aware of are also his or her cognitions. Cognitions are clustered into sets of varying complexities. High cognitive complexity means the

[1] Mindset is also called mental schema or cognitive network, or mental frame. If a mental frame reflects cultural characteristics, it is also labelled as cultural framework.

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presence of many cognitions and their greater differentiation, articulation and integration within a set (Bieri 1955). A set may have sub-sets or sub-sub-sets having smaller number of highly integrated network of cognitions within but not between the sub-sets. The sub-sets may form a federal structure of an overarching mindset that is more complex than the one which consists of only one set. If the cognitions are highly interrelated and integrated into a consistent pattern within a set, it is called *monolithic construing* resulting in a less complex and more predictable mindset than the one in which they remain less related and not so integrated (Rafaeli-Mor et al. 1999). The presence of paradoxes within a mindset reflects a highly complex mindset containing opposing sub-sets.

A mindset is also dynamic in nature on two counts. First, it tends to expand into complexity by a *widening* process (i.e. activating larger number of cognitions with loose networks) and shrink into simplicity by a *narrowing* process (i.e. activating smaller number of cognitions and tighter networks) as a function of situational demands (Menon 2011). Menon and her associates reported that persons having high, compared to low, status and power tend to expand their mindset (network of cognitions) by activating larger number of cognitions. On the other hand, the perception of threat causing stress constrains the mindset (network of cognitions) to narrow the search for cognitions that can be commissioned to cope with an adverse situation. There is well-established evidence that heightened emotions reduce the span of attention by glossing over some of the available but not-so-prominent cognitions. The second way in which a mindset shows its dynamism is to shuffle cognitions or sub-sets of cognitions to bring a particular set into the forefront of mind for acting in a specific way to a situation or a person. That is, cognitions keep getting reorganized or the sets of cognitions keep switching from one form to another across situations and persons.

Switching from one set of cognitions to another is a universal nature of human mind, although there are marked differences in the nature and extent of switching as a function of, among other factors, cultural imperatives. Western cultures, for example, emphasize the importance of rationality and consistency, encourage monolithic construing of sets and thereby undermine paradoxes, and, therefore, discourage switching to a contrasting set the way Indians were observed doing (Hughes 2002; Singer 1972). The dominant paradigm in Western cultures affirms that individuals think, tell and act according to their dispositions, abilities, attitudes and habits—all are their internal attributes constituting personality that remains internally consistent and predictably stable across situations. Personality-driven sets of cognitions are less amenable to switch to their contrasting sets. There are indeed some switching between compatible sets for calibrating one's responses to different persons and situations. So, there are variations in one's thought and behaviour across different persons and situations. However, if aggregated, the variations cancel each other and are smoothed around a predominant mindset that remains stable and consistent (Epstein 1979). Hence, the people in a monoculture are neither likely to express totally opposite opinions on the same topic to suit different persons, nor behave quite differently than what they think and profess as Indians do.

Switching of sets in the bicultural mindset is a different matter. The Chinese residing in the USA, for example, are bicultural in the sense that they possess two cultural sets or frames consisting of distinctly different but internally consistent Chinese and American cultural characteristics. They switch back and forth evoking either Chinese or American cultural frames depending on whether they are expected to behave like the Chinese or Americans (Hong et al. 2000). In other words, they retrieve one of the two sets into the forefront of their mind to guide their behaviour in response to what they judge to be appropriate in a given situation. If they are reminded of being Chinese by the social cues, they start behaving like the Chinese despite being otherwise assimilated into the American culture. However, those who are not quite assimilated into the mainstream American culture are probably concerned about their being marginal. Hence, they react negatively to the Chinese cues as a reaction to their marginality and resort to the American cultural frame to make-believe like being Americans (Benet-Martínez et al. 2002). European and North American students share the same Judo-Christian traditions. However, Europeans are relatively more group oriented. Consequently, North American students of European origin switch between the sets of collective and individualistic cognitions depending on whether they are activated by the European group-oriented or American individualistic social cues (Gardner et al. 1999).

Multi-culturals switch their mindset just like biculturals. However, they have available multiple sets of distinctly different but internally consistent cognitions, which allow them to switch back and forth from one to a variety of sets depending on what a particular situation demands. A South American was reported narrating his switching of cultural frames:

> I think of myself not as a unified cultural being, but as a communion of different cultural beings. Due to the fact that I have spent time in different cultural environments I have developed several cultural identities that diverge and converge according to the need of the moment (Sparrow 2000, p. 190).

8.3 Reorganizing Indian Mindset

Indians are multicultural not only because many of them have spent time in different cultures, but primarily because Indian culture is itself multicultural in essence. As stated earlier (Chap. 1), Indian culture has accepted different alien traditions, integrated some of them, but left the remaining ones to coexist legitimately in their previous forms. Indians are socialized in this multicultural milieu. Hence, they readily switch from one cultural frame to another. They separate, categorize and compartmentalize cognitions according to their relevance for different domains such as workplace and family (Rudolph and Rudolph 1967; Singer 1972; Srinivas 1966) maintaining a Western frame in the former and the traditional one in the latter, but then they switch rather smoothly between them: “We actually

keep two opposing sets of habit patterns in two watertight compartments and keep flitting from one to the other. In this matter, possibly, there is no other mind which can surpass the Hindu mind" (Shah and Rao 1965, pp. 144–145). Not only do they switch between Western and traditional Indian frames, but they wear different caps for different roles. A south Indian woman artist living in New York City was quoted as stating:

> Americans seem to have to be one thing. I and my Indian friends are able to be many different kinds of persons in different situations. I feel very comfortable slipping back and forth from being a professor to being a painter to being a mother and wife. I can't understand these American women who are conflicted between having a career and a family. I do not have to be one set self or have a single identity. In fact I would avoid like the plague having a set identity (Roland 2005, p. 5).

There are numerous similar instances of Indians switching between opposite modes of behaviour. For example, one managing director of a top national organization was known for efficiency and Western management style in his office, but maintained a social court in his official residence in the evening where he was dressed in the traditional style and entertained employees of all categories who came to his court, touched his feet as traditional Indians do to their superiors, passed on (even overheard and confidential) information to him about their department, sought personal favours and above all professed their personal loyalty to him. He often went out of his way to show his generosity by obliging them as kings and emperors used to do in the ancient Indian tradition (Sinha and Sinha 1990). This way he was not only switching his mindset, but also using one to facilitate the other. The information he collected during these evening sessions were quite valuable for making major and minor management decisions. The literature is in fact replete with the documented and anecdotal evidence of Indians switching between different and contradictory mindsets rather smoothly. It is a common observation that many Western trained scientists, physicians and other professionals maintain a Western face at their workplace but turn into a typically traditional lifestyle in their family, perform daily worship and religious rituals, wear amulets and stones to ward off evil spirits, and even run to a faith healer if their children do not respond to an allopathic treatment.

Indians can also selectively draw on paradoxical cultural frames, pick up discrete and even contradictory cognitions, and organize them into a novel but internally inconsistent set that is uniquely relevant to a particular situation or appropriate for dealing with a person of significance. In other words, they can simultaneously wear two or more cultural hats. Edward Shils observed that traditional and Western values were so emotionally enshrined in the Indian mindset that they unconsciously permeate all their decisions in traditional as well as non-traditional contexts. He referred to

> … one sweetly smiling, socialist editor, dressed in a dhoti, his bare feet drawn out of his sandals, saying that he was not unduly disturbed by his contradiction between tradition and modernity in his own life: 'Why should I be alienated, uprooted, or ambivalent? I live in two spheres and there is no conflict between them. Why should everything be logically consistent?' (Shils 1961, p. 68).

Except a few, Indian managers in foreign multinational companies (Anglo-American, Danish, Korean, Japanese and Swedish) were reported as internalizing work norms and practices of the company's home culture and behaved with expatriates just like them. Simultaneously, however, they behaved with their compatriots in traditional Indian ways. They relished as well as provided close supervision and tight control; made emotional appeals to superiors for help and favour as well as went out of the way to help and favour those whom they liked; neither said "no" to their superiors nor accepted "no" from subordinates even in matters where they were not in a position to perform; and so on (Sinha 2004, p. 252). They were as if different persons while interacting with expatriates and compatriots in the same company.

Indians, as Hughes (2002) mentioned earlier in the chapter, can also think, talk and act differently with regard to the same person in the same situation at the same time point. They have an "ability to keep all kinds of thoughts and feelings secret [that] goes far beyond what most Euro-Americans are capable of" (Roland 2005, p. 5). Thus, they can also change their behaviour with the same person in the same situation, but at a different time point (see Box 8.1).

Box 8.1. Frustration of a Danish Manager

The MD (Managing Director) of a Danish multinational narrated his frustration. He had gone through a long negotiation process with a white goods Indian company to form a joint venture. They had complimentary capabilities. The Danish company had state-of-the art technology and deep pockets while the Indian partner had almost obsolete plants but a well-established network of distributors and good connections in the government. They agreed to renovate the plants, expand and invigorate the network, and capture the Indian market. But the Indian partner was all the time thinking of exporting to South-East Asia, as he fancied that export would add to his image, prestige and power in the business community. He kept silent on this important point and brought it up only once the joint venture got going. The Danish MD felt cheated.

Source: Author's Seminar on India, Asian Forum, Copenhagen, Denmark, April 29-May 3, 2003

The managing director-cum-chairman (MD&C) of a highly reputed Indian company was a recognized transformational leader. He groomed his senior managers, promoted the one who was the most competent as his deputy chief, and delegated all necessary power and authority to him. As his successor started asserting himself and taking decisions, the MD&C suddenly felt that he was losing his turf and started reasserting his involvement in the deputy's work, which led to fierce infighting. As the MD&C lost more ground, he resorted to highly vindictive

and childish modes of behaviour (Sinha and Kanungo 1997, p. 94). All his transformational qualities were suppressed by his egocentric concern for power and authority.

At times diverse cultural characteristics are so inextricably interwoven that an Indian may not be quite aware of their diverging influences. There was the case of a new Indian managing director (MD) of a Swedish multinational in India who had earlier a stint with Pepsi (Sinha 2004). He was a hard task master with a strong commitment to "executional excellence", which meant that whatever is worth doing must be done in the best possible way. His strategy was to put the best possible systems in place, hire the brightest graduates from the best institutions, groom and reward those who performed best and weed out those who failed. But he went through implementing his design in the inherently traditional Indian style—nurturing those who would run to him often unnecessarily, hang around him for a bit more than necessary, supposedly with bright ideas (that were in fact his ideas), and sought his guidance and direction a little too often and rather discreetly. The MD cared more for them than others and also took interest in their families and personal matters. They respected and adored him, but could not really achieve executional excellence. He was of course, oblivious to his paternalism underpinning his design for executional excellence.

In sum, Indians are capable of thinking, feeling and behaving differently with

- different persons in the same situation,
- the same persons in different situations,
- the same person in the same situation, but at different time points and
- the same person in the same situation at the same time.

8.3.1 Construction of Situation and Response

How do Indians maintain such a variably shifting mindset?

The answer lies in understanding the way Indians construe a situation and respond to it. Indians perceive a situation and respond to it as an episode in an on-going flow of interactive events of interconnected situations and corresponding responses to them over a time period. This long-term interactive framework is essentially meant to serve Indians' interests and goals. The goals and interests may be individualistic or collectivistic, but more often they are interconnected. Each situation is evaluated for its being favourable or unfavourable to serve interests and goals by evoking different responses. A response is effective if it has high probability to help the person reach the goal or progress towards it. But it also has to be appropriate in terms of social norms and acceptable to the interacting others. While one's interests and goals give rise to intentions that may be implicit, one's response is explicit and subjected to social norms and scrutiny through interaction with others. Intentions, social norms and others' expectations may or may not match. If they match, the situation is favourable, and the response is congruent

with intentions—individuals behave as they intend to do in order to serve their interests and goals. For example, suppose a person working under a boss who is fair and task oriented. The organization too has a performance-based system for promotion. Naturally, the person who intends to get a promotion will try hard to give his best performance. He does not have to hide his intentions to get promoted. In fact, he may even expand his role and behave like an organizational citizen in identifying with the organization, thinking in terms of its overall development, helping his coworkers and so on. Indians in a favourable milieu are generally pro-social, helpful, generous and trusting. They accept others as *apane* (in-group), tend to establish long-term trusting relationships with heightened affective reciprocity, and do not calculate what they give and get in such a relationship.

If intentions are incompatible with either social norms or others' expectations or both, the situation is unfavourable, requiring the person to move carefully by hiding his or her intentions and behaving in ways that serve the purpose without disclosing intentions. To a certain degree, a disparity between intentions and behaviours is universal. But it is striking in the case of Indians because of the largely collectivist culture, close and continuous interactions with others, rigid social norms, scarcity of resources and enormously adverse physical reality in which most Indians have to depend on each other. Keeping in view the nature and magnitude of these adverse factors, Indians adopt a variety of circuitous devices.

One is to wait for the cloud to clear and the odds to diminish or disappear. An underlying and enduring belief is that everything in the universe is in continuous flux and hopefully the unfavourable situation will improve too as a function of either the interplay of larger, macro level forces and events or by the grace of a person's destiny (Indians are chronic optimists about their fate). This is the state of mental block, indecision and inaction (see Chap. 1 for details). Undue delay in taking decisions and their implementation are reported by many (Kumar 2004). Delay in making decisions or inaction is also due to the presence of conflicting sets of cognitions. Indians at times are held back by too many choices and alternatives. Another option is to take a short cut or detour, resort to dubious means, make compromises, settle for sub-optimal outcomes and be happy with what they are able to get under the circumstances. (Chapter 7 documented evidence showing duplicity in the Indian mindset and the tendency to serve self-interests and run after power.) The third option is to try to change the situation before making any move to serve one's interests and goals. This they do by evoking a response or a set of responses guided by one's intentions, but which are so construed that the responses are acceptable both socially as well as to the relevant others. The response or the set of responses neither disclose the intentions nor are manifestly directed to achieve the goal. Instead, they could be seemingly or even diametrically opposed or innocuous and camouflaged in social desirability, but are meant to prepare a conducive ground to turn around subsequently and follow a person's interests and goals. The second move or subsequent moves are inconsistent or disconnected with the previous ones, and yet taken together enable the person to reach or progress towards his or her goal. Thus, intentions are served by a discrepant response sequence. For example, let us revisit the situation given in the

preceding paragraph. A person wants to get promoted. He finds that the organization has a formal system to promote high-performing employees, but the system is flawed because of organizational politics where the seniors favour their personally loyal subordinates. His own immediate boss is egocentric and powerful. In such a case, it is wise for the person to hide his intentions lest many rivals crop up, ingratiate his boss, impress upon him his personal loyalty, talk about the larger interest of serving and sacrificing for organizational goals and even pose to be indifferent to mundane personal issues such as promotion. However, once the ground is prepared, he can assertively claim promotion, through the backing of his boss, of course allegedly for serving organizational (rather than his personal) interests. It was this strategy that the Indian partner adopted to get the Danish multinational into a joint venture, first to renovate the plants and inject capital, before making a move to go for export (see Box 8.1). Two studies (Sinha et al. 2001, 2002) reported in detail in Chap. 2 that Indians serve their individualist interests and goals by behaving first in collectivist ways in situations where collectivistic ways were believed to be more effective. In different situations where individualistic ways were perceived to be justified, they were adopted to serve even their collectivist interests and goals (e.g. to be self-reliant in order to serve family interests).

As most situations have variable elements of being favourable and unfavourable, Indians do not generally take an obvious, direct and linear route to get to their goals. Rather, they habitually prefer many circuitous routes, some of which may be goal-relevant, but not so obvious to the interacting others. Other measures may be too general and defused, but still are meant to create a favourable milieu to serve hopefully multiple gains in the future. Indians generally give a long introduction by way of creating a favourable façade before coming to the focal issue. They may even incur temporary losses while planning to make it up later or continue on amicably in a relationship with someone who is an adversary now but can be made an ally later. They may inflate others' egos through ingratiation, oblige them with undue favours in order to soften them, or put them in a precarious position and then bail them out in order to keep them indebted. Alternatively, they may deprive others of their dues till they toe the dictated line, bribe, make promises without any intention to keep them, withhold information, manipulate a situation and engage in other similar devices. An apt observation of how Indians go about serving their interests is the following:

> No Indian will ever admit to wrongdoing for the advancement of his personal interests. There is always a larger purpose, a bigger goal, a nobler reason, a higher justification to explain his conduct to himself, and to an audience that see through the charade, but would behave in exactly the same way in similar situation (Varma 2004, pp. 42–43).

Therefore, the wisest thing, according to Indians, is to sense each other's mindset, pick up cues that are subliminal and subtle, distinguish genuine from fake friends, move cautiously to establish trusting bonds with reliable ones while keeping a façade of affinity with the rest of them, and use them to serve their

interests and goals without even inadvertently eroding social norms or antagonizing others. All these need high context sensitivity and the capability to keep organizing and re-organizing the mindset.

8.4 Context Sensitivity and Balancing

Indians are indeed highly sensitive to their contexts and they tend to balance their thoughts and actions in order to function effectively. A number of studies (e.g., Hall 1981; Triandis 1994; Trompenaars 1993; among others) reported that Western cultures are low on context sensitivity while Easter cultures of China, India and South Korea are high on context sensitivity. Western countries have developed adequate infrastructure, established stable institutions for regulating human relationships that are fine-tuned by legally binding contracts. Contracts are formal or informal principles, rules, regulations and activities that the people agree to follow in their social transactions. Hence, contracts allow Western people to gloss over their personal preferences as well as situational variations and follow abstract principles and generalized norms in performing their behaviour. On the contrary, Indians suffer from inadequate infrastructure and impoverished living conditions, as a result of which they have to depend on each other's help and support. Hence, they cultivate personalized and highly complicated networks of familial, blood, caste and other forms of relationships with heightened mutual expectations and obligations. *Log kyaa kahenge* (what people will say) is a strong concern in deciding appropriate and acceptable behaviour. They have to be extra alert to the cues from them in order to reconcile each other's expectations and self-interests. Roland (1988) compared Western and Indian ways of thinking and acting by using the metaphors of a gyroscope and a radar:

> A gyroscope enables the Westerner to sail the seas of innumerable social situations by keeping his balance around more universalistic principles of behaviour, even while perceiving and partly identifying with numerous group norms. It suits the autonomous, mobile individual, who must participate in any number of extra-familial groups and relationships. … Radar on the other hand, enables Indians to be extraordinarily sensitive to the norms of responsibilities and proper behaviour, as well as the customs in complex familial and extra-familial hierarchical relationships, enabling them to act appropriately in these very specific situations (p. 252).

An earlier reported study (Chap. 7), which sampled 829 adults at 12 distant places in the country (Sinha et al. 2010), confirmed that Indians tend to sense others' mindset, selectively relate to those who are or likely to be useful, judge the right time to initiate action and reach out to avail of opportunities. Their context sensitivity was expressed in the following concerns, abilities and behaviours:

- To be concerned about what others think of them.
- To have the ability to figure out what others expect, and to behave accordingly.
- To sense what others mean and intend.

- To intuitively know whom to trust and whom to distrust.
- To be able to distinguish genuine friends from opportunists.
- To have a knack to figure out who can be useful in future.
- To know when to delay a decision or action and when to rush into it.
- To watch for a right time to strike back at the person who has been harming.
- To know when to remain silent and when to say what.
- To be alert to opportunities and work timely to exploit them.

8.4.1 Ways of Balancing

Context sensitivity is basically cognitive in involving awareness of cues from physical and social contexts and their implications for engaging in appropriate and adaptive behaviours. Balancing, on the other hand, is a disposition to reconcile incompatible or extreme options. Balancing is a universal human disposition. Western people, as noted above by Roland (1988), keep their balance in behaving to situational variations by sticking close to contractual principles and norms. Their balancing acts are therefore much less tenuous than those of Indians. The physical and social contexts of Indians, on the other hand, are fluid and flux with lots of uncertainties that tax Indians' capability to sense people's intentions, relevance of place and appropriate time for action or inaction. Further, Indians have a mindset that incorporates consistent, inconsistent, and contradictory beliefs, values, norms and action orientations. So, they have to balance their responses by organizing and reorganizing incongruent cognitions, keeping in view the diverse demands in a context. "Context sensitivity and balancing are interrelated, because the persons who are sensitive to their contexts are also aware of their diverse demands, and therefore, have to balance them by adapting their behaviour in order to cope with their environment" (Sinha and Kanungo 1997, p. 96).

Balancing takes three major forms. First, people avoid taking extreme positions. There is a famous Sanskrit saying, "extremes are to be avoided in all cases". Buddhism prescribed a middle path: "The *Tathagatha* avoids the two extremes and talks about the Middle Path" (*Samyuktagama*, Chap. 12). The *Bhagavad Gita* advocated balance in one's daily routine in order to achieve steadiness of mind through emotional equanimity, which meant not getting euphoric by success and depressed by failure. Balancing was prescribed by the most authentic ancient ayurvedic text, *Charaka Samhita*, for better health:

> He should neither trustingly rely on everyone, nor should be over suspicious of others. He should not demand too much of his intellect or his senses. He should neither be conceited over his achievements, nor become despondent over his loss. He should not act in the fit of anger, or of rejoicing … (cited in Kakar 1982, p. 249).

In other words, moderation by avoiding the extremes is considered to be critical to human functioning.

Another way of balancing, if one has to take an extreme view or action, is to follow this up by taking a counterview or action. We have already seen (Chap. 7) the paradoxical nature of the Indian mindset. Successive use of paradoxes is one way. There are others: for example, being submissive, appeasing and ingratiating is followed by being assertive, critical and demanding, or the other way round. Indians assume an accommodating and submissive stance first, which creates a conducive ground to assert and claim favours subsequently. In certain other instances, they may impose a harsh decision or an unpleasant restriction on someone, but then take a U-turn and go overboard to cajole and win over him or her by being extra-accommodative in some other matters. Earlier (Chap. 2), we discussed a young man wanting to marry a girl of his choice, though his parents did not like her, who either marries her anyway and then the two do their best to win over the parents, or the young man keeps appealing to his parents or pressing them through self-suffering (e.g., fasting or sulking) to let him marry her (Sinha et al. 2002).

There is still another way in which the balancing disposition operates. It enables a person to "integrate, accommodate, or tolerate [inconsistent or contradictory thoughts and actions] while coping with the environmental context" (Sinha and Kanungo 1997, p. 96). Balancing between one's self-interests and the desire to be pleasant to the interacting person, as Hughes (2002) noted, leads to keep a thought secret for a while, say nice words that please others, but behave in a pragmatic fashion later on. An oft-quoted Sanskrit saying is, "speak the truth, but it has to be pleasant; do not speak an unpleasant truth". That is, one has to balance the unpalatable truth by mixing it with pleasant elements. Indians, for example, do not like to give or take candidly negative feedback. It has to be sugar-coated by a long rambling of, maybe irrelevant, words that are meant for a positive framing of negative feedback or suggestions. Similarly, a complimenting feedback needs to have a few strands of caution and reservations regarding future apprehensions. One has to be careful to read in-between lines to get the essential meanings by keeping in view the whole context in which the message is being given.

8.4.2 Relativism as Part of Contextualization

Context sensitivity also implies that the relevance and importance of every thought and action are judged on the basis of their instrumental values in a particular context. Nothing has an absolute value or validity across contexts. The most central to the Indian mindset is dharma (religion), which has a number of variants. *Sanaatan* (eternal) or *saamaanya* (general) dharma is meant for overall guidance across time and situations for all. Thus, speaking the truth (*satya*) and remaining nonviolent (*ahimsak*), for example, are always prescribed for everyone. But not really. Speaking unpleasant truth is not valued and lying to save a life is also a

dharma. Similarly, waging war and killing one's relatives and friends could be part of one's duty (as in the *Mahabharata*). Dharma in fact is conditioned by contexts taking discrepant forms. For example, *yuga* (time period) dharma in modern times (e.g. casteless society) is different from that in the ancient time (when castes had a functional role). During a crisis, all other duties and obligations are set aside in favour of behaviour that helps a person survive (*aapat kaala dharma).* There are stories about sages eating dog meat to survive during a famine. Then, *jaati dharma* is defined by castes, although it is becoming less relevant in urban areas. *Varnaashrama dharma* is different at the four stages of life of a person (pre-adulthood, adulthood, phasing out and renunciation). For example, total abstinence and full devotion to learning are required during pre-adulthood, earning money and enjoying sensuous including sexual pleasures are prescribed during adulthood. It has to be followed by gradual withdrawal from earthly preoccupations during the third phase of life that must lead to total renunciation during the last phase of *sanyaas*. Dharma in interpersonal relationships is a web of dos and don'ts that are as diverse and discrepant as the role prescriptions could be. A father, for example, is advised to remain caring and affectionate even to a truant son or a son is similarly counselled to be submissive and obedient to an autocratic father on the grounds that the autocratic father and truant son are deviants by temperament and have to be accepted as such. Finally, there is *sva dharma*—obligations and duties to remain authentic to one's *guna*s. A snake, for example, has the natural orientation to bite, if threatened. There is a fable about a saint taking a sinking scorpion out of water despite that it might sting him. Someone asked him why. The saint replied that the scorpion would do its *sva dharma*, if it had to, as he was doing his own. In sum, there are so many forms of dharma that Indians have a scope to keep switching among them to suit their purpose in different contexts. When they fail to do so, they experience *dharma-sankat* (crisis to decide what to do) to decide which obligations to meet and which one to ignore.

There are other examples of relativism. Truth, according to one of the fundamental doctrines of Jainism, is relative to one's standpoint (Nehru 1946/2001, p. 119). Duty is another construct. The *Bhagavad Gita* posits that the meaning of duty depends upon one's birth and position in life. Those who believe in God would define duty as action towards God. But it also means working sincerely, meeting obligations to others, serving the country and so on. If that is so, then a person who shows undue favour to his or her dear ones, arranges a job for his son by bribing someone, or steals money to help a sick friend is also doing his or her duty. Vivekananda[2] asks if thugs, who kill others for money, think that they are doing their duty. The same is true for deciding what is evil and what is good or what is *ahimsa* (nonviolence) and what is *himsa* (violence). Mahatma Gandhi admitted that "… Evil and good are relative terms. What is good under certain conditions can become an evil or sin, under a different set of conditions … . At every step, [one] has to use his discrimination, as to what is *ahimsa* [nonviolence]

[2] http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/Swami%20Vivekananda.

and what is *himsa* [violence]" (quoted in Tendulkar 1953, pp. 152–153). Forsyth (1980) examined the ethical relativism of Indians. He found that Indians are *idealists* in believing that harming others must be avoided, *situationalists* in denying the universal applicability of moral principles while still insisting that one should do what can benefit all, and *relativists* in accepting that the nature of moral actions must depend on specific situations and persons involved.

8.4.3 Structural and Functional Dimensions

Contexts have three interrelated structural properties: *Desha* (place), *kaala* (time) and *paatra* (person), each having enabling or disabling functions. *Places* are unlimitedly diverse. They are large, small, private, public, informal, formal, organized, social, religious, work-related, leisure-related and on and on. Each of them has specific, though at times overlapping, meanings, affects and norms for deciding appropriate and effective behaviour. Places vary in the degrees to which they facilitate close and continuous interactions, lasting for long or short periods. For example, family as a place is characterized by very close, intimate and continuous interactions for the whole life of members even when they go out to live and work at distant places. Unless they cut off their connections with the family, they remain psychologically engaged in the interactive relationships. A marketplace, on the other hand, has a short interactive life cycle that is generally less intensive and emotional and more contractual and calculative. A workplace is located in-between, having the attributes of both in varying degrees. A workplace may have a long or short interactive span but never for the whole life and interactions at the workplace are generally less intensive and continuous than in the family but are more than the marketplace. The workplace could get quite emotional and absorbing, and in a few cases familial in taking total care of the employees who reciprocate with hard and dedicated performance (Gupta 1999; Sinha 2000). Interactions at a marketplace follow the principle of instant exchange of equivalent values. Workplace too is guided by the principle of exchange but with a longer perspective and an expanded view of equity. Interactions in a family are ideally spontaneous, without any overt expectation for instant exchange of equivalent values, and are based on the belief that the more members give to each other the more they get back over time. There is no calculation of gains or losses. There are indeed underlying currents of self-interests, but they are diluted and sublimated beyond recognition.

Places, however, are just physical frames. Meanings and significance are attached to them by persons through the history of their interactions. A family is based on the normative belief to be congenial, supportive, helpful and an emotional sanctuary, and hence highly enabling to its members to fare well and enjoy a sense of wellbeing. However, it could turn out to be equally disabling by infighting between brothers and their wives, authoritarian fathers, manipulative mothers, truant or alienated children, or hostile cousins. They may play worse politics in

running each other down and smothering their spirit. The politics of a family have quite detrimental effects on the members (Laing 1972). A workplace could be a growth centre that enables its employees to achieve excellence, sense of self-efficacy and organizational citizenship. It can also keep them unmotivated, make them work perfunctorily, pull each other down and end up as redundant. In comparison, a marketplace has less potency, but it can still impact buyers and sellers by maintaining either a fair and friendly relationship or one of mistrust, suspicion and frustration. In sum, places could be immensely enabling or disabling as a joint function of how much life space they incorporate (i.e., close and continuous interactions over time) and the history of interactions (i.e., positive and negative experiences out of life events) over a time period.

Persons, obviously, are a more critical factor, because it is they who create enabling or disabling places. Chapter 3 has delineated two structural dimensions of how persons are interrelated: Affinity and hierarchy. Affinity represents the dimension of *apane* (in-group)—*paraye* (out-group). Family members, friends and relatives are generally *apane*; others are *paraye*. But the boundaries differentiating *apane* and *paraye* expand and shrink depending on the frame of reference. That is, who are being compared in what situations; neighbourhood, caste, religion, region, language or even nation determines at different times the boundaries of *apane* and *paraye*. Indians in the USA have other, even unknown, Indians as *apane*. But once among Indians, they are Gujaratis, Biharis, Punjabis, etc. Families within them are closer in-groups. Even within a family, individual members often have someone who is really intimate in whom they confide while keeping secrets from others.

The second dimension—hierarchy—signifies vertical relationship—a person having better qualities, greater power, more money or superior position than another person. Chapter 3 described how greater power and influence are exerted, resisted, sought after or utilized in case of *apane* and *paraye log*. It is not only power and influence, but a whole range of behaviour that is shaped by the degrees of affinity and the levels of hierarchy. Indians have an irresistible tendency to compare with others and to put them in a finely graded grid comprising of the shades *apane-paraye* on one side and levels of superior-subordinates on the other. The location in the grid has impact on both enabling and disabling potential. An affectionate father can certainly inspire and guide his son to transcend his limitations and achieve excellence in whatever he does. But if the same father is possessive, protective, and domineering, he can thwart his growth and make him dependent prone. A nurturant task-oriented superior, for example, enables his subordinates to grow and mature and take over his superior's responsibilities at a job while an authoritarian boss has a debilitating impact on subordinates (Sinha 1980).

Time changes the relevance and significance of people and places even during a normal course. But the changes are more pronounced during exigencies. People are differently disposed and have different skills and norms to cope with emergencies. For example, Japanese managers in a joint Indo-Japanese venture in India were found to work very efficiently so long as the systems and procedures that they had meticulously formulated were functioning normally. But they were rather lost

in situations that turned unexpectedly adverse. Indian managers, who were ordinarily less efficient than the Japanese, turned out to be better tuned to fire-fighting (Sinha 2004). The poet Tulasidas said that even the most trustworthy four—one's own patience, faith in dharma, friend and wife—have to be tried out during a crisis (*dhiraj, dharma, mitra, auru naari, apat kaala parakhiye charu*) implying that even these four might turn out to be unreliable in difficult hours.

People's needs, expectations, resources and the degree of interdependence change over time. So does the relevance of a place. Such changes evoke different feelings, thoughts and actions. Brothers, who were once very friendly, see each other differently when one of them becomes famous or rich. Peers who were friends become rivals when an opportunity for promotion arises. A blue-eyed subordinate is discarded once he is a spent force. Subordinates shift their allegiance to align with changing power politics in the organization. Organizations change radically with new technology, changing market or changes in the top management. Employees suppress their beliefs, values and action orientations and conform to major policy shifts. Some of these changes are found in every culture. What distinguishes Indians from others is their hypersensitivity to even a minor change in people and places and their strong, quick and overreactions to them. One day, for example, India was shining, although the improvements were at best skin deep; another day there was a slowdown in the rate of GDP growth, downslide of the rupee, and increasing outflow of foreign capital, the sentiments are down and the "India story" is believed to be over.

8.4.4 Empirical Evidence of Contextual Effects

Three studies were conducted to see the impact of places and persons on behaviour (Sinha and Pandey 2007; Sinha et al. 2010; Sinha 2012). All three adopted scenarios analysis approach. S. R. Sinha had three hypothetical managers who were born and brought up in the same city and graduated from the same prestigious bio-engineering institute, implying that their early socialization as well as educational indoctrination was similar. They joined pharmaceutical companies located in the same western state of India. The only difference was that the companies had different organizational cultures which were autocratic, competitive or integrative. The organizations had the following profile.

The autocratic company was old, established in the late 1950s by taking advantage of the government policy to promote pharmaceutical companies to produce standard drugs at affordable prices for common people. Hence, profit and growth rates were modest and stable. The plants and equipment, however, became old over time. The management was control- and discipline-oriented. Superiors closely supervised subordinates and demanded loyalty. Employees were punctual, kept themselves busy and aloof from each other, and worked as directed by their boss. They kept their grievances, if any, to themselves.

The competitive company was a fast-growing one with above 20 % growth rate annually. It had made huge investment in R&D with the best available laboratory and adequately supportive infrastructure. It employed bright, young bio-tech engineers and subjected them to a highly demanding management. The company re-engineered some of the most popular drugs by avoiding patent restrictions and marketed them aggressively. It gave variable pay packets and incentive bonuses to high performers while easing out poor ones.

The integrative company had high reputation, stable profit and above 20 % growth rate. It produced generic drugs for tropical diseases at affordable price. The company maintained high standards of services and ethical practices. It hired bright, young bio-engineers, trained them well, guided and supported them in work, and offered them stock options. It did not fire anyone except for unethical acts or misdemeanours. The atmosphere was friendly, informal and transparent. The management took personal interest in the wellbeing of employees, maintained an open door policy and expected the best from the employees.

All three bio-engineers got faster promotions than others in comparable positions. The respondents, 200 MBA and B.Tech students, in the study had to guess what they could have done to succeed faster than others. Their responses revealed that the bio-engineer in the autocratic company most possibly had manipulated records to show that they performed better than others and made social calls to their superiors' homes to cultivate personalized relationships. The bio-engineer in the competitive organization too went out of the way to impress superiors by working overtime and ignoring his family obligations, competing with others, earning more than others and running others down. The bio-engineer in the integrative organization identified with the company goals, thought well of his company, worked very sincerely considering it as a duty, suggested innovative ideas for the benefit of the company and helped his colleagues complete their work. In sum, the three bio-engineers, irrespective of their common background and Western technological education, behaved differently in response to the different organizational milieus.

The second study (Sinha and Pandey 2007) had two parts. In the first part, 47 social scientists located at 17 institutions in the different parts of the country helped identify four major facets of the Indian mindset. They are paraphrased as the following:

A materialistic mindset is expressed when Indians behave in materialistic and selfish fashion. They compete with others and tend to control them in order to have a sense of power and prestige in the organization. They are enterprising and opportunistic, changing with situations in order to make the best out of situations. They are individualistic in their thoughts and actions.

Dependence proneness manifests when Indians depend too much on others and when they are indecisive and unsure of themselves. They suffer from an inferiority complex and are docile and submissive to the persons in authority. They subscribe to the *chalta hai* [indifferent to quality] style without making efforts to compete with others or to achieve excellence.

A holistic mindset appears when Indians show their capability of abstract thinking and inclusive behaviour. They are emotional as well as analytical about persons, objects and ideas. They maintain personalized relationships with others, but strive for excellence in whatever they do, and are spiritual in pursuing non-material goals and serving a larger goal than their own selfish interests.

A collectivistic mindset of Indians leads them to attach greater importance to their social obligations than their own needs and interests. They conform to rules and social codes of conduct, submit to authority and remain docile to seniors. They tend to maintain good relationships with others. They are neither analytical nor do they change with changing situations.

In the second part, these four profiles of the Indian mindset were presented to 176 middle level managers working in a variety of national and multinational organizations located in the National Capital Area (Delhi and around). As they had grown up in different parts of the country, they hopefully represented both the diversity as well as shared characteristics of the country. They were asked to judge the relative impact of a number of causal factors that could have shaped these four facets of the Indian mindset. The list of causal factors consisted of organizational contexts (foreign multinationals, private national and family owned, and bureaucratic), relationship with superiors and co-workers, family background, traditional Indian cultural influences and personal orientations.

The influence of contexts came out clearly. Materialistic and holistic mindsets of Indians reflected their sensitivity predominantly to organizational contexts while dependence prone and collectivistic mindsets were primarily associated with receptivity to familial milieus and traditional Indian culture. Materialistic Indians were believed to be working in multinational organizations, which were market-driven, profit oriented, paying for performance, inducing employees to compete with each other and achieve the most. Materialistic Indians were following the role model of their superiors who drove them to achieve their best. They came from families of business persons, were opportunists who wanted to make the best at the cost of the rest of the society. On the other hand, holistically minded Indians were working in organizations that were conscious of their social responsibility, attached equal priority to people and performance, expected excellence along with personal growth, leveraged human values for attaining higher level of performance, and encouraged employees to positively support and help each other.

On the other hand, dependence prone Indians were believed to come from families having the experience of working in government services. They worked in family owned organizations and subscribed to traditional Indian culture and traditional industrial values. They were easygoing, working under paternalistic bosses and putting in efforts only when so demanded. Collectivistic Indians were perceived as having a rural background. They, like dependence prone persons, subscribed to Indian cultural and traditional values and worked in family owned organizations. They preferred to maintain good relationships rather than perform well at work. Thus, dependence proneness and collectivistic mindset overlapped in their susceptibility to common contexts, except that the former were easygoing while the latter were relationship oriented.

While the study showed the impact of organizational and cultural contexts, it gave the impression that different Indians have four different mindsets. It did not show that the same Indians manifest different mindsets in different contexts or change their mindset when the context changes. This was attempted in the third study.

The third study, part of which was reported earlier (Sinha et al. 2010), also had four scenarios depicting a disabling superior (Scenario 1) being replaced by an enabling one (Scenario 2) and a disabling organization (Scenario 3) changing into an enabling one (Scenario 4). It was of interest to see whether a manager changes his behaviour when his disabling superior is replaced by an enabling one and whether another manager changes his behaviour when his organization is transformed from a disabling into an enabling form. The four scenarios were as follows:

Scenario 1: *Disabling Superior*. Kumar, after graduating from a prestigious business school, joined a white goods manufacturing company. On the completion of his induction period, he was called by his immediate boss, Raman, who said the following in a very patronizing (dominating) tone:

> Look, forget about what they told you during the induction. Here, I run this place the way I think is right. I go out of the way to help those who do the job well and keep me in confidence about what happens on the shop floor. But I make life hell for those who create problems or have fancy ideas. I do not like any bad name for the department. So, come to me if you need any help and keep me informed; but don't disappoint me.

Kumar soon learnt that Raman made all major as well as minor decisions, demanded personal loyalty and favoured those who ran to him seeking guidance and directions even in small matters. He enjoyed being the boss and expected everyone to obey him. There was a great deal of resentment against Raman in the department, but nobody wanted to say anything to him or even whisper to higher-ups in the management.

Scenario 2: *Enabling Superior*. After a while, Raman was transferred and Keshavan took over after being back from a leadership training course abroad. He had the reputation of being a highly dynamic person, who was expected to revamp the production department and add an assembly line creating new opportunities for many. During the welcome ceremony, he said the following:

> I am looking forward to working with you. We all have to work together and show increasingly higher levels of excellence. Let me know what we need to keep improving performance of the department. If you have any new ideas, let us give them a try. If I can help you in any matter, my doors will always remain open to you all. I expect the best from you.

The study, as reported earlier, involved a large sample of respondents at several places in the country who were asked to predict what Kumar would do first working under Raman and then under Keshavan with respect to each of the following statements on a five-point scale:

1. Kumar will be highly motivated to perform his best.
2. Kumar will flatter Raman/Keshavan by describing him as an ideal boss.

3. Kumar will come up with innovative ideas and share them with Raman/Keshavan.
4. Kumar will communicate employees' feelings to Raman/Keshavan.
5. Kumar will emulate Raman's/Keshavan's style and boss over people reporting to him (in Scenario 1)/encourage and inspire his subordinates (in Scenario 2).

Scenario 3: *Disabling Organization*. Bal Krishna Rao is a project head in the R&D department of a private pharmaceutical company, which had been growing very rapidly by re-engineering some of the most popular drugs by circumventing patents restrictions, and marketing them aggressively at cheaper rates. The company was paying higher than the market rate, although largely as variable pay depending on how quickly the R&D personnel re-engineered the drugs. Rao was working on a cancer drug that was not fully tested, but the management was adamant to market it at the earliest in order to make a huge profit that was to benefit the R&D personnel including Rao. The management had asked Rao to submit the status report about the drug.

Scenario 4: *Enabling Organization*. Rao had prepared the report, but before he could submit it, the company was taken over by an Anglo-American pharmaceutical giant that was known for balancing health and wellbeing of people with profit making. It operated in many countries and invested billions of dollars in inventing new drugs, maintaining high scientific rigour and ethical standards. Immediately after the takeover, the new management assured that employees' jobs would be protected with service conditions and launched a training programme for the managers, including Rao, which aimed to cultivate the importance of value-based practices. The management asked Rao to give the status report about the drug.

In both scenarios, the respondents were asked to predict what Rao would report to the management with respect to each of the statements on a five-point scale:

1. Rao will present the incomplete test report in such a way that the management can decide whether to launch it or go for further testing.
2. Rao will testify that the drug is ready to be marketed and will, thus, earn a handsome bonus and possibly a promotion.
3. Rao will work overtime—day and night—to get the tests completed and will then report the result to the management truthfully.
4. Rao will confidentially seek out his immediate superior's guidance and report accordingly.
5. Rao will caution the management of the human costs in marketing the drug.

The change in scenarios in both cases led to significant shifts in the behaviours of Kumar and Rao. Kumar drastically shifted his behaviour when the autocratic, controlling and power-oriented superior was replaced by an enlightened, participative and inspiring one. He became highly motivated to perform his best, came up with more innovative ideas that he shared with his boss, communicated employees' feelings to his new superior, did not exactly flatter him, but emulated his style of

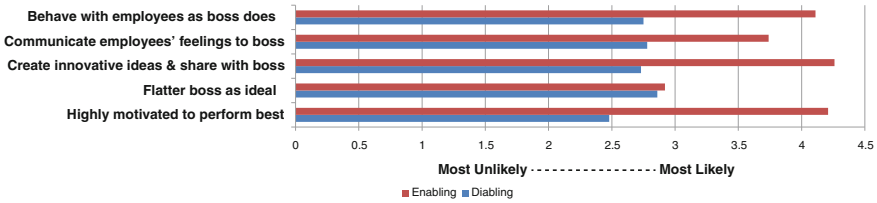

Fig. 8.1 Behaviour under disabling and enabling superior (Sinha et al. 2010)

leadership for encouraging and inspiring his subordinates. A display of the impact of disabling and enabling superior is given in Fig. 8.1.

The other manager, Bal Krishna Rao, also shifted his behaviour once his profit-driven, ethically dubious and incentive-guided organization was taken over by a value-driven, professionally sound and forward looking Anglo-American multi-national. After the takeover, Rao was much less likely either to falsely testify that the drug was ready to be marketed in order to earn a handsome bonus and possibly a promotion, or present incomplete test reports in such a way that the management could decide either to launch it or go for further testing. On the contrary, there was significantly greater chance that he would caution the management of the human costs in marketing the drug that was not fully tested and confidentially seek out his immediate superior's guidance and report accordingly. There was also slight, though insignificant, increase in the chance that he would work overtime—day and night—to get the tests on human beings completed and would then report the result to the management truthfully for an appropriate action irrespective of how that would affect his incentive bonus.

8.4.5 The Unfinished Task

The three studies did show that Indians manifest a different mindset in different contexts and they shift their mindset when their context improves. However, there are still many loose ends. There is still no empirical evidence that a person regresses to more dysfunctional or dubious ways of behaviour under deteriorating contexts from enabling to disabling ones. All we have is that individuals in disabling contexts behave less desirably, while in enabling conditions they shift their behaviours towards more desirable ends. There has not yet been an empirical attempt to simulate the rich texture of various contexts that are contended to elicit matching complex sets of both positive and negative thoughts and actions. Earlier, it was shown that Indians employ collectivist means to serve individualist goals and individualist means to serve collectivistic goals. But a full-blown process-view of the dynamic Indian mindset that keeps getting re-configured in response to changing contexts is yet to be empirically established. We do have plenty of anecdotal evidence, but more rigorously conducted narratives are required.

We have common observations that groups of Indians under highly adverse situations generally show remarkable resilience to survive, though by resorting to dubious ways. There is also anecdotal evidence and media reports that highly successful Indians so far known for their integrity and brilliance were suddenly found to stoop too low in scams and scandals in order to make illegitimate gains. Similarly, the rich and the powerful adopt unfair means for pretty gains. Those who are entrusted with government programmes or funds from international agencies to facilitate development schemes, distribute relief to victims of a disaster or to train rural youth in basic life skills or to provide employment to daily wage earners siphon off part of the money. Strangely enough, many among them demonstrate humane qualities, help people in distress and contribute significantly to common causes. There are also instances of very bright and highly educated young men and women who leave or refuse to join the corporate world and get deeply involved in charity, education of deprived children, primary healthcare of poor, or development in very backward areas. In other words, Indians who look so manipulative and corrupt in starkly adverse milieu, prove to be competent, motivated, high achieving and even morally guided when opportunities beckon them. But some among them also change the lane when the opportunities have crevices for huge windfall gains. Some fall more readily than others under some but not in other situations. We have seen the impact of *desha* (place), *kaala* (time) and *paatra* (person), but probably we need to explore the influence of the larger context of socio-economic and political architecture for a more comprehensive understanding of how Indians organize and reorganize their mindset.

8.5 Summary

Indians think, feel and behave in inconsistent and even contradictory ways. They can express one opinion to one person and just the opposite to another person on the same topic. They can hide their intentions and say what they think is appropriate and acceptable to the other person and then act as they intended. They may go out of the way to help someone they like and for whom they feel obliged, come out with a novel solution to a problem that puzzles others, and make sacrifices for a larger cause. The same Indians are capable of doing all these by organizing and reorganizing their thoughts, feelings and actions in order to deal differently with different persons in the same situation, same person in different situations, and same person in same situation but at different time points. In other words, Indian behave as a situation so demands because they are highly sensitive to a context consisting of *desha* (place), *kaala* (time) and *paatra* (person), each having varying degrees of enabling or disabling potential. This raises the possibility of the impact of larger—socioeconomic and political—contexts, which is addressed in the following chapter.

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Chapter 9
Mindset in the Larger Context

9.1 The Bright and the Bleak in the Indian Milieu

9.1.1 Window of New Opportunities

The economy and polity jointly form a major part of the societal milieu. At the time of Independence in 1947, the Indian milieu was characterized primarily by miserably impoverished conditions of living, idealistically fired political will to turn it around and catch up with the West, and misgivings about the intentions of the erstwhile colonial power. The strategy was to make planned interventions for rapid economic growth and modernization of the people. Fabian socialism was the source for a policy framework to establish a solid industrial base through a dominant public sector and to prepare a sizable educated workforce through institutions of scientific research, technology and management. However, excessive state control, red tape and colonial hiccups made progress slow and tardy. During the first 30 years, the per capita income increased by only around 1 % annually, inviting the sarcastic comment of India having a Hindu rate of growth (see Chap. 1, note 4, p.20).

By the 1980s, pressure started building for a turnaround. This pressure emanated from a number of internal compulsions and external leads. The country had established a large, though inefficient, industrial base and had produced a new crop of English-knowing, educated workforce of engineers and managers with entrepreneurial spirit that was being stifled by the "licence raj".[1] An unprecedented economic crisis forced the government to put its gold in mortgage with the Bank of England. A drastic measure was needed urgently. The way was shown by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall, proving the superiority of the capitalist model of development, which was already happening in East Asia. The ground was ready for liberalizing the economy and integrating it with the

[1] Playing off from the term "British Raj", the term Licence Raj or Permit Raj was coined by C. Rajagopalachari, the last Governor-General of India and a statesman. It refers to the elaborate system of permits and licences that were required for people to set up any enterprise in India till the end of the 1980s, initiated by Jawaharlal Nehru, and the ensuing political and economic corruption and stagnation resulting from this system.

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Table 9.1 Improvements in vital life statistics

Growth indicators	Year		
	1970	1990	2012
Crude birth rate	38.3	30.7	20.7
Crude death rate	16.4	10.6	7.9
Under-5 mortality rate	211	126	56
Total fertility rate	5.5	3.9	2.5
Life expectancy at birth	48.8	58.5	66.2

Source Data adapted from India statistics table, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/india_statistics.html#95, accessed on May 7, 2014

international market. The IT (information technology) industry led the way, opening other industries to global practices, technology and foreign investment. The growth rate picked up and started accelerating, though at a variable rate. New opportunities were created that triggered a sense of optimism and a spirit of adventure, impacting not only the economy but almost all other domains of life.

From Independence in the year 1947 to the year 2011, the per capita income grew at an increasing rate. The average annual growth in GDP (gross domestic product) more than doubled from 2.10 (in 1970–1990) to 4.90 % (in 1990–2010). The average growth rate in the first half of the 2000s (2000–2005) was 5.77 %, which climbed to 8.92 in the next five years (2006–2010). This was the second highest in the world, next only to China. The economy turned into a world-class one with a gross GDP of $1.676 trillion, which was the fourth largest in the world and the third largest by purchasing power parity adjusted exchange rates (PPP). There was corresponding growth in vital life statistics. Indians now lived longer as both birth and death rates decreased and living conditions improved (see Table 9.1).

India ranks second worldwide in producing wheat, rice, sugar, groundnut and inland fish; first in producing milk, cashew nut, coconut, tea, ginger, turmeric; and third in producing tobacco. It has the world's third largest road network, fourth largest rail network, 13 major ports and 74.15 % teledensity.[2] The country had by the year 2012 the third largest higher education system (after China and the United States of America) with 42 central, 285 state, 130 deemed and 112 private universities[3] and over 3,000 (estimates vary)[4] institutions offering engineering courses. There are 362 medical colleges (168 government and 194 private) training 45,629 MBBS and 22,503 MDs every year.[5] India has the second largest pool of skilled

[2] www.mapsofindia.com/indiaagriculture.

[3] UGC (University Grants Commission). The World Bank Report on India Country Summary of Higher Education. https://www.usp.ac.fj/worldbank2009/, 2011, 2012. New Delhi.

[4] http://www.engineering.careers360.com/top-engineering-colleges-india-2013.

[5] Answer to Lok Sabha Starred Question no. 37, dated November 23, 2012, by the Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad, point (a), http://www.gconnect.in/news/number-of-mbbs-and-pg-medicine-seats-in-india.html, accessed on May 7, 2014.

workforce in the world. Every year, the country produces more than 2.5 million university graduates. Statistics vary about the number of engineers India produces every year. According to multiple estimates, the number is around 1.5 million.[6] About 15,000 law graduates and about 9,000 Ph.Ds were added to the pool every year in the late 2000s (Nilekani 2008, p. 53). IT and ITES (IT-enabled services) companies employed about 2.8 million people, and provided indirectly employment to 8.9 million people in the year 2012.[7]

All-round growth expanded the middle class that is now over 300 million and growing fast. This huge consuming class with varied skills has attracted FDI (foreign direct investment). FDI was rather suspect in the 1970s. Once made welcome, the country turned into the second most attractive destination for FDI. In 1990, the inflow was only about one billion US$, which increased to US$ 44.8 billion in 2010 that further grew by 13 % to US$ 50.8 billion in 2011, and was expected to jump eightfold by March 2012 (UNCTAD Survey 2010–2012).[8] Foreign transnational companies, which were initially attracted by the huge market and English-knowing cheap labour, were now impressed by creative energy of engineers, managers and scientists. Most of the major ones have either outsourced expertise or services or now have established full-fledged R&D (research and development) facilities to add values to their products and services, and even to export them to the other parts of the world.

More revealing, however, was the increase in the outflow of capital that signified the growing optimism and a spirit of adventure of Indian entrepreneurs (see Chap. 6). A 2010 report by Columbia University (Satyanand and Raghavendran 2010) documented that India was the world's 21st largest outward investor, with more than US$ 75 billion in overseas investment in the decade 2001–2010. In just one year, 2009–2010, the domestic companies in their joint ventures and wholly owned subsidiaries invested abroad about US$ 10.3 billion (Khan 2012). A study of 287 FDIs by the top Indian companies revealed that the outflow was close (42.83 %) to the inflow (Inflow/Outflow = 37,711/88,052 US$ million) during the years 1995–2007 (Subramanian et al. 2010). Some Indian companies were in fact acquiring foreign companies larger than their own size[9] The Tata Group set the trend in the year 2000 when Tata Tea acquired UK's Tetley which had a threefold larger turnover. Next, Tata Steel acquired the five times larger Anglo-Dutch firm Corus Group in 2006, thus growing into the fifth largest steel company in the world. To crown its adventure, Tata Motors acquired Britain's most famous and luxury automobile models, Jaguar and Land Rover, while domestically producing the world's cheapest car, the Nano. There were others spreading their wings

[6] *The Economic Times*, January 18, 2013.

[7] The NASSCOM Report, Indian IT-BPO Industry. Retrieved December 15, 2012.

[8] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Geneva, Switzerland.

[9] Top 10 global acquisitions by Indian companies, *siliconindia News*, June 23, 2011, http://www.siliconindia.com/shownews/Top_10_global_acquisitions_by_Indian_companies-nid-85123-cid-3.html; http://www.biztechreport.com/story/1459-indian-companies-acquisition-spree-overseas, accessed on May 8, 2014.

abroad. For example, Aditya Birla Group's Hindalco Industries purchased the Canada-based firm Novalis; Essel Packaging bought the Swiss tube packaging major Propack to become the world's largest in laminated tubes; Ranbaxy Laboratories acquired three European drug-makers in the course of a week, Wockhardt bought the fourth largest integrated pharmaceutical group in France, Negma Laboratories; Bennett Coleman (The Times of India Group), purchased UK's Virgin Radio, and Mahindra and Mahindra acquired 90 % stakes of German Schoneweiss. Similarly, Indian companies invested in Africa for producing a wide variety of food crops, some of which are to be used to make biofuel; Adani Enterprise acquired the Australian coal assets of Linc Energy and Bharti Airtel had operations in 15 African countries. Some of the major state enterprises such as NTPC (formerly known as National Thermal Power Corporation Ltd), GAIL (formerly the Gas Authority of India Ltd), ONGC (Oil and Natural Gas Corporation) and NALCO (National Aluminum Company Limited) made significant green-field investments abroad. ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL) and Indian Oil, for example, competed to acquire assets at many places in the world for exploring and producing petroleum products. These are just a small sample out of many others.

Not only business and industry, but other domains also reflected a similar surge of creative energy and optimism. Science and technology have turned the country into a nuclear power and have helped launch an impressive space research programme that has achieved excellence in building and launching mini and micro-satellites, ballistic missiles, anti-satellite weapons, space launch vehicles that have launched several satellites simultaneously and conducting moon missions with demonstrated expertise in re-entry technology. There are super speciality hospitals that provide world-class health care in such a cost-effective way that patients and their family members from the West can add pleasure tours to their medical treatment without overstretching their budget.

The Indian diaspora of over 20 million is not only growing in volume but also gaining in prominence and privileges, wherever in the world they are. For example, Indian business executives are top managers in blue chip multinational corporations, Indian thought leaders are listened with respect in Ivy League prestigious universities, Indian physicians and surgeons occupy senior positions in hospitals, Indian students have achieved well in schools and colleges, and now some Indians are becoming visible in the political arena in countries such as the USA and the UK. Some Indians have started claiming space in the entertainment world of Hollywood movies and television. Paintings by Husain, Raza, Mehta and Souza are fetching over a million dollars each; authors are claiming prestigious literary awards and top positions in the list of best-selling books. The younger among them are experimenting with radical ideas and innovative craftsmanship. Earlier, Indian music and dance were thought to be exotic with only a few connoisseurs; but now they are attracting a host of near-devotees who flock around Indian masters, learn and continue their practice in various destinations.

The achievements of the Indian diaspora combined with the role models of high achievers within the country have a transforming impact on the milieu, causing euphoric optimism in the minds of even those of humble origin and limited

capabilities. Many sons and daughters of the poor and unskilled dream big and some of them have indeed been able to join prestigious institutions such as IITs (Indian Institutes of Technology), IIMs (Indian Institutes of Management), IAS (Indian Administrative Services), and pick up lucrative positions in the corporate world and in government. Similarly, there are individuals and collectives in remote villages or in small companies who are passionately engaged in innovative activities that are upgrading the quality of their products and services. Affordable new technology has enabled them to overcome their parochial interests and reach out to national and international resources and markets. There are books (e.g. Das 2007; Varma 2004; among others) and media reports documenting numerous success stories at various places in the country.

9.1.2 Surrounding Darkness

The opportunities and optimism that we relish so far are, however, only tiny bright spots in the otherwise pervasive dark milieu. The country is the third or fourth largest economy, but it ranks 118th (in purchasing power parity) in terms per capita GDP. The GDP growth rate is the second fastest, but the rural economy catering to about 69 % of Indians[10] has expanded by nearly 2 % per annum. Further, according to a World Bank Report (2008), an alarmingly high percentage (49.6) of India's GDP and as many as 199 out of 633 districts are vulnerable to frequent natural disasters.[11]

There are 115 billionaires (The Financial Express 2011) in the country and a few among them are among the 10 richest in the world. And, there are 6,150 Indians with wealth between $30 and 100 million, and nearly 900 worth between $100 and 200 million. Only 8,200 super-rich Indians own $945 billion, which is about 70 % of the nation's economy! In contrast, nearly 35 % of the population fell below the poverty line in 1994, of which about 25–30 % (estimates vary,[12,13]) were still living below the poverty line in 2010. About 32.70 % of Indians live on less than US$ 1.25 a day and the majority (68.70 %) on less than US$ 2 a day. Although the country claims to have the largest public distribution system in the world and had 55.74 million tonnes (mt) of grains (26.08 mt of rice and 29.67 mt of wheat) in the government stock on 1 November 2011,[14] 42 % of the world's underweight children live here and India is ranked 67th out of 84 countries in the food security on the

[10] Urbanization at 31.16 % in the 2011 Census.

[11] India needs better natural disaster planning: WB, July 20, 2008, http://news.oneindia.in/2008/07/20/india-is-high-risk-country-better-natural-disaster-planning-needed-1216542865.html, retrieved on September 18, 2012.

[12] From the CIA World Factbook, cited on http://www.indexmundi.com/g/g.aspx?c=in&v=69, accessed on May 10, 2014.

[13] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_India, retrieved on August 21, 2012.

[14] Statement of Food Minister, K. V. Thomas, in the Rajya Sabha (Upper House of the Parliament), New Delhi.

Global Hunger Index (GHI)[15]—manifesting how disappointing the government's record is in providing food security to its poor people. Of an estimated 458 million in the total workforce, about 394 million (86 %) are placed in the unorganized sector including 63 % self-employed ones in the informal and irregular employment with very poor work and service conditions. About 3.6 % of the total workforce consists of children under the age of 14 who, instead of going to school, are working in their own rural family settings as free help.[16]

Inequality in wealth has a corresponding impact on inequality in access to education and health. In fact, education and health were allocated only 3 and 2 % (respectively) in the central government budget during the decade 2000–2009.[17] The literacy rate has indeed improved from 52.2 % in 1991 to 74.04 % in 2011. But it also means that around one-fourth of Indians are still illiterate. The Multiple Poverty Index (MPI) that embodies the extent of deprivation of the household in education (years of schooling and enrolment), health (child mortality and nutritional deficiency) and standard of living (lack of access to electricity, clean drinking water, toilet, cooking fuel, radio, TV, phone, good house, etc.) showed that 53.70 % of Indians suffered from multiple poverty (in the year 2005) compared to only 12.50 % in China (in the year 2003). Superspeciality hospitals are running like business enterprises in promoting medical tourism, reporting a cumulative rate of over 27 % growth during 2009–2012, and earning around US$ 310 million that is expected to reach US$ 6 billion by 2018.[18] However, primary healthcare and primary education are in shambles. There are only six physicians for 10,000 Indians and 0.7 beds per thousand patients, as against a world average of 2.6. Both public hospitals and private clinics are running in overcrowded, unhygienic conditions with callous staff and indifferent doctors who have little time or concern for patients, except for those few who are referred to by either powerful persons or close friends. The promise of "Health for All by the Year 2000" (1983) is yet to be met and the National Rural Health Mission (2005) has still to turnaround at the ground level. Common people are left to the care of quacks and faith healers.

There have been a number of commissions on education, and the "Right to Education" has raised high hopes. There are indeed private English-medium schools, which have excellent facilities and quality performance. But they are very expensive and only a few can afford to get access to them. Majority of primary schools have one or absentee teacher and a deserted look with dilapidated or no building of its own, no toilet, no drinking water and no playground. Even middle and high schools are grossly deficient in their infrastructure. The PISA (Program

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[15] Global Hunger Index: India ranks 67th in food security, Zee News.com, November 28, 2011, http://zeenews.india.com/business/news/economy/global-hunger-index-india-ranks-67th-in-food-security_34705.html, accessed on May 10, 2014.

[16] Ruddar Datt (1 January 2008). Growth, Poverty, and Equity: Story of India's Economic Development. Deep & Deep. p. 134.

[17] http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/india_statistics.html#95, accessed on May 11, 2014.

[18] http://www.livemint.com/Home-Page/NX5IF0yZtnkCFz4vzxtt5N/India-medical-tourism-industry-to-reach-6-billion-by-2018.html.

Table 9.2 Levels of human development adjusted for inequality

Rank HDI/IHDI	Country	IHDI	HDI	Loss (%)
04/23	USA	0.771	0.910	15.30
101/70	China	0.534	0.687	22.30
134/93	India	0.392	0.547	28.30

Note HDI = Human Development Index; IHDI = Human Development Index Adjusted for Inequality, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_inequality-adjusted_HDI, accessed on May 11, 2014

for International Student Assessment 2009[19]) Report of the evaluation of 15-year-old students' scholastic performance in mathematics, science and reading found Indian students doing rather poorly. This is again in contrast to how well Indian students are doing in the USA. Institutions of higher education have indeed proliferated, but have also attracted observations such as the one made by none else than the ex-Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh:

> Our university system is, in many parts, in a state of disrepair … . In almost half the districts in the country, higher education enrollments are abysmally low, almost two-third of our universities and 90 % of our colleges are rated as below average on quality parameters … I am concerned that in many states university appointments, including that of vice-chancellors, have been politicized and have become subject to caste and communal considerations, there are complaints of favouritism and corruption.[20]

Inequality in health and education has taken a toll on the level of human development in the country. In a survey of human development in 185 countries (UNDP 2011), India stood at the 136th: much lower than China and the USA. Further, its loss in the Human Development Index (HDI) after adjusting for inequality (IHDI) is much larger than the other two countries (Table 9.2). The IHDI ranks of India, China and the USA were 04, 70 and 93, respectively.

The same is true for gender inequality. India ranks 88th on gender equality as compared to China (rank 61) or the USA (rank 67). A small consolation is that it is better off than Japan (rank 138).[21] Although India remains the second most attractive destination for foreign companies to make their presence, largely because of the huge market and quality of human resources, it is not quite easier to start business, run it smoothly and exit if the prospect dims or profit dries up. Government regulations, labour laws and pathological bureaucracy (Sinha 2008) cause delays, backtrack of decisions made earlier, policy paralysis due to fragmented political scenario and so on. The International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank Group, which evaluates how easy or difficult is to start business activities in different countries ranked India quite low at 134th among 189 countries in 2013.[22] In 2011–2012, India also stood low at 56th rank in global

[19] PISA 2009 Technical Report, 2012, OECD, http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/60/31/50036771.pdf.

[20] Address at the 150th Anniversary Function of University of Mumbai in 2007. http://pmindia.nic.in/speech/content.asp?id=555, accessed on April 23, 2013.

[21] http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/eco_inc_equ_un_gin_ind-income-equality-un-gini-index.

[22] http://www.doingbusiness.org/rankings, accessed on May 11, 2014.

competitiveness (Schwab 2011). The country also seems to have indifferent future in managing its people and environment. It has 2.4 % of the world's land, but has to support 16 % of the global population. The demographic dividend that many foreign scholars and even some within the country (e.g. Nilekani 2008) hopes to leverage the country in future is grossly exaggerated. We do not have societal instruments, resources or political will to create a sizeable, healthy and well-educated young workforce and to provide them with adequate infrastructural support. None of the political parties has a clear and effective policy for population planning. The country is doing poorly in maintaining sustainability of its environment. The prestigious work by the Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy and the Center for International Earth Science Information Network at Columbia University have developed an Environmental Performance Index (EPI) combining how countries are taking care of their environmental health, ecosystem vitality, productive use of natural resources, maintenance and upgrading of forestry and checking climate change. In its recent report, India is ranked 125th among 132 countries.[23]

In sum, the milieu has indeed improved a lot over the years, offering new opportunities in almost all domains of life. Some Indians have availed of them and have made impressive achievements that reflect their growing optimism and entrepreneurial skills. Although high achievers are still tiny in size, they are inspiring the rest of Indians who are fired by a euphoric optimism to escape the ugly ground reality and reach out to a lofty future. Many of them have indeed entered into the middle class. They are confronting formidable constraints and manoeuvre through a variety of behaviours that range from opportunity seeking through fair means to opportunism by taking short cuts, cutting corners and engaging in many other dubious activities. It is imperative to take a closer look at the constraints they face in order to understand the courses that their opportunity seeking and opportunism take. Of the constraints, some such as the caste system have been with us since the ancient time and still exist as much as in the minds of people as in the society (Dirks 2001). Others such as poverty were aggravated through the centuries. Castes and poverty were entangled together, degrading the milieu to the extent that added teeth to many other constraints. We shall first discuss the caste scenario and facets of poverty followed by other constraints that often deflate Indians' optimism and dilute their honest efforts, derailing them into problematic misdemeanour.

9.2 Enduring Constraints

9.2.1 Caste and Poverty

Castes originated in the Vedic period and had been construed and reconstrued ever since by the political dynamics in the different periods of Indian history. Brahmins defined it to assert their superiority, and Vaishyas defied it by promoting Buddhism.

[23] 2010 EPI Rankings Released on January 25, 2012.

Caste had a role in the medieval period in attracting certain communities to get converted to Islam. Colonial narrative made it all pervasive of Indian culture and society with an implicit agenda for the ease of dealing with Indians, and caste politics continued to play a critical role in post-Independence India (Dirks 2001). It remains deeply entrenched in the Indian psyche, despite several reformist movements, exposure to the West, ban on caste discrimination by the Constitution, a blackout by the Census of India after 1931, and assaults from inside (Ambedkar 1968; Ilaiah 2003; among others). It has been so basic to Hindus that even those who converted carried it on to their new religion (Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism or Sikhism) that opposed casteism. There are lower castes among all of them. For example, Muslims were stratified as *ashraf*s (noble Muslims) of foreign origin, *ajlaf*s who were Hindu converts from backward castes, and *arzal*s, the scheduled caste converts (Singh Sikand 2006). *Ajlaf*s and *arzal*s were clubbed as "*pasmanda*"—a Persian word meaning "those who have fallen behind", "broken" or "oppressed". They constituted over 85 % of Indian Muslims (Upadhyay 2011). Similarly, 96.9 % of Buddhists, 31.8 % of Christians, 31.6 % of Sikhs, 15.9 % of Parsees and 2.6 % of Jains are reported to belong to Scheduled Castes and Tribes and suffer variable discriminations by their upper caste counterparts.

While these caste stratifications and associated discriminations still exist, caste relationships have undergone many changes in forms and degrees. Caste associations of the 1920s are no longer that active. Many stereotypes, rituals and taboos associated with castes have lost much of their salience, particularly in urban settings. Caste-based discriminations are not always as crude, frequent, extreme or pervasive as they used to be earlier. Castes are no longer the basis for occupational specialization or imputing purity or impurity that prevented inter-caste dining and mixing. Some visible indicators such as surnames are losing their shine more readily while others such as inter-caste marriages are yielding more slowly to various compulsions of modern life. Modernization has indeed blurred their sharp contours, although castes still serve as readily available ascribed sources for affiliation and support, and for differentiating between *apane* (own) and *paraye log* (other people). An ethnographic survey by the Anthropological Survey of India from 1985 to 1992 entitled, *People of India,* concluded that "caste has weakened to some extent in recent years in terms of its adherence to hereditary occupation and norms of purity and pollution. It has also acquired new strength in a political sense as a constituency and as a vote bank" (Singh 1992, p. 24). True, the media and electoral politics are playing an overactive role in accentuating caste consciousness by infusing emotions and exploiting it for their own gains (Bèteille 2012).

The media sensationalize and impute caste colours to even those news and episodes that are not solely caste driven (see Box 9.1). Contentious issues are blown out of proportion and painted rather passionately. Electoral politics have radically changed the caste architecture and have infused intense power play and passion in caste relationships. Caste men often rally around their caste leaders who are expected to give them petty favours. Castes are generally clustered as forward, backward and Dalits (Scheduled Castes and Tribes). In the absence of any census data on their distribution after 1931, their numerical strengths are subjected to

exaggerated claims and counterclaims with an overall impression (based on the previous census) that the backward castes hold the majority while the forwards are in minority, and the Dalits, though numerically better off than the forwards, are still the most deprived and exploited. All castes fight for political space by controlling vote banks of their own castes. The backwards, because of their numerical superiority, have turned table on the forwards snatching political power from them and turning them as junior partners in politics. Dalits, despite reservations in education and jobs and several incentives, continue to suffer on several counts. The multiple poverty index that covers deprivations in health, education and standard of living revealed that in the year 2005, 65.8 and 81.4 % of Scheduled Castes and Tribes (respectively) suffered from multiple poverty compared to the national average 53.70 %. Among Catholic Christians, the Dalits constitute about 70 %, but they have only 10 % of the Church's administrative jobs, and only 6 Catholic bishops out of the total number of 156 bishops are Dalits. Low-caste Sikhs, despite constituting about 32 % of the Sikh population, have only 20 seats out of 140 members in the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.

A closer look, however, reveals that the forwards are not evenly fortunate either. Evidence[24] showed that while the forwards constituted about 30 % of the rural population, only 6.4 % of them were in the upper income slab (of more than Rs. 925 per month) while over 65 % were counted as poor having the per capita income of less than Rs. 525 per month. In the urban setting, only 5.50 % forwards were in the upper-income group (more than Rs. 1,925 per month) while 25 % were poor having less than Rs. 500 per month. More than 30 % of forward castes above the age of 15 years were illiterate. On the other hand, specially gifted Dalits have occupied top positions in the judiciary, politics and administration. Some Dalit politicians are billionaires and flaunt their wealth like the other super rich. The creamy layers of the backward castes are distinctly superior economically, educationally and socially to the majority in the forward castes.

In sum, castes are the archetypal sources of two psychic orientations: A sense of affiliation with a collective of own (*apane*) caste and its location in the caste hierarchy. Caste hierarchy broadly corresponds to the socio-economic grading, although poverty and its allied maladies (poor health and illiteracy, among others) afflict all castes and render the majority of them miserable, except for a small number of high achievers and exceptionally successful ones across all castes who are the elites occupying top positions in the societal pyramid. The miserable are not exactly alike across castes. They accept being graded in terms of *claste* (caste + class) hierarchy, follow social norms guiding inter-caste relationships and rally around their elite caste leaders for petty favours. But they all remain miserable nevertheless. On the other hand, the elites across the castes are relatively much more similar in their overt behaviour. They are alike in acquiring and enjoying with impunity lots of money, undue power and numerous privileges.

[24] The National Sample Survey (1999–2000) and the National Family Health Survey (2005–2006).

However, caste consciousness is filtered into the inner layer of their mind both for trusting only a small network of *apane* log (own ones) as well as arranging everything and everyone hierarchically.

9.2.2 Culture of Poverty and Poverty Syndrome

Pervasive poverty over a long period of time cultivates a culture of its own. The poor in Mexico City, for example, had a "culture of poverty" with the mindset that was characterized by, among other attributes, excessive dependency, helplessness, powerlessness, a sense of inferiority and a feeling of personal unworthiness (Oscar Lewis 1959). Indians too are dependence prone (Chap. 6). Poverty is reported to dehumanize Indians, restrict their access to resources, diminish their self-esteem and retard their capability to cope with external exigencies, causing a sense of helplessness and powerlessness (Pareek 1970). Further, the poor in India suffer from nutritional deficiency and a sense of weak self-efficacy that retard their perceptual skills, restrict their access to legitimate means to achieve their goals, pushing them towards socially pathological behaviour and causing a loss of their sense of well-being (Sinha 1975). There are, however, reports of brave struggle by the poor to survive. Grass observed " … I came to admire their [Indians living in slums] stubborn or almost exemplary will to survive, work, and live" (Grass 2001, p. 123). Their stamina to "struggle to survive despite the odds" (e.g. Rushdie 1991, p. 32) are accounted for by two cultural factors. First, they imbibe like the rest of Indians a strong belief that time changes in circular ways and that their bad days would soon be over—a chronic optimism that sustains them through worse adversities. Second, this optimism soars high when they see the instances of similar others crossing barriers and rising high. They too, they believe, can have a breakthrough.

Many indeed do and rise out of poverty into the vaguely defined middle class that, according to the varying estimates, has expanded to over 300 million. A recent study (Pandey 2012) disclosed that most of the middle class started from a humble beginning and struggled through numerous economic and social hardships to rise in the socio-economic hierarchy. In the process, they indeed created wealth, expanded the consumer market and pushed the GDP. As they tasted success, they kept striving to achieve more and more and climbed up the societal hierarchy. There are two additional reasons for their endless striving. First, they are still not quite sure that they have safely and securely distanced from the shadows of poverty; for they still carry the scars—the memories of starting poor. They see around them pervasive poverty that keeps their memory fresh. "Right in front of its [middle class] door, there is so much poverty and misery, so much suffering, and yet they do not react. It's as if this misery simply does not exist" (Grass 1999, p. 2). Surely, "They teach themselves to see only what they want to see, yet the senses must stay in the subconscious, suppressed but not all together, to emerge in self-remembered dreams … [thus,] they live in fear of poverty for themselves, regarding it as a personal threat" (Mehta 1967, p. 565). Second, they see many others like them who started at par with them, but

have surpassed them. This gives them a bitter taste of being relatively deprived of what they are justifiably entitled to. Relative deprivation is "the conscious experience of a negative discrepancy between legitimate expectations and present actualities" (Schaefer 2008, p. 69). The fear of poverty and a sense of relative deprivation jointly cause a *poverty syndrome:* A constellation of values, beliefs and practices carrying the footprints of poverty and an impulse to escape it for good (Sinha 2000). They fear that societal resources are scarce and that many claimants similar to them are vying to grab and monopolize these resources. They suspect that merit is not enough as others may not stick to the norms of fair play. This is a competition, they think, where no bars are held. Only power is sure to deliver. So, they must have power. Power resides in money and relationship with powerful persons. They must accumulate money and cultivate network with powerful persons (see Chap. 3). But they must be careful; for the more powerful and affluent ones are also competing for more and more. So, they have to move carefully by colluding with them, but not really trusting them. They can trust only the family and those who have proven to be trustworthy beyond any doubt. However, in order to collude with them, they still have to create a façade of a pseudo-trusting relationship while cleverly competing and waiting for an opportunity to outwit others. This is indeed a fluid situation with lots of uncertainties (Chap. 7), which has to be managed by a cluster of tactics such as sensing others' interests and intentions, judging the right moment to act fast to outwit others, to keep improving one's power and affluence and depriving others of legitimate resources so that they no longer remain a threat. This process of amoral opportunism leads to other disablers, such as corruption, violence and fragmented politics.

9.3 Trinity of Disablers

9.3.1 Enveloping Corruption

Corruption is a direct outcome of Indians' *amoral opportunism.* Corruption means giving due or undue favour in return for a bribe that is either a tangible gain or intangible gratification. The person doing favours generally demands—directly or indirectly—what the recipient of the favour has to part with before the favour or the due is granted. It could be the other way too. A person seeking undue favours seduces the one who is in a position to grant the favour by offering an irresistible bribe. Both—bribe giving and taking—are corruption. However, there is a difference. Giving a bribe at times could be a compulsion. A person may desperately need what he or she rightfully deserves, but is made to realize that it will not be given lest a bribe is given first. The person has no choice, or the cost of losing what is due is too high. On the other hand, the one seeking undue favour or asking for a bribe is wilfully indulging in corruption.

A precipitating cause of corruption is the poverty syndrome. That is, a mad rush for accumulating wealth and power is a major immediate factor. It erodes a person's internal deterrents to succumb to unfair means. Even a rich or powerful person hankers for more and more. The author has a personal knowledge of a landlord in the Darbhanga district of Bihar (India) who joined the poor of his village to claim relief for the flood-affected people. When the officer-in-charge showed his surprise, the man unrepentantly said, "I maybe rich for the rest of the poor, but I am poor for the government and I am flood-affected". It is the social comparison that fuels the sense of relative deprivation and stokes the impulse to accumulate more. There are grapevine reports that the faculty of prestigious management institutes compare the number of consultancies that each one has and the one who, for example, has 20 feels bad in comparison to those who have even a few more. They tend to manoeuvre to catch up and surpass them.

However, the major predisposing factors of corruption are rooted much deeper in Indian culture and historical experiences. Culture endows Indians with ethical relativism (see Chap. 8). In the face of temptations, they juggle with incompatible ethical prescriptions to cull their conscience and select the option that allows them to accumulate wealth and power. Ethical relativism affirms that what is right or wrong, moral or immoral, desirable or undesirable depends on a situation. Telling a lie rather than the truth, being expedient rather than principled, favouring family and friends, accumulating wealth to ward off the miseries of poverty, and similar other practices are morally right given the constraints of a situation. Ethical relativity justifies changing the rules of social transaction in order to procure undue gains even if it means forcing others to pay a price in cash, kind or obligation.

Indian mythology is full of instances where devotees asked for undue favours and blessings from Gods and Goddesses by making various offerings in kind or cash, chanting feverously in their praise, or abandoning themselves desperately to their mercy. There is continuity of the trend to seek various kinds of blessings through offerings.

> When one deity failed a devotee, he approached another in much the same way as when one patron failed him, a client approached another … . To put it crudely, devotees expected to benefit from propitiating deities, and the benefits sought [out of turn] were health, wealth, children, good crops, victory over rivals, and a sense of security … . (Srinivas 1988/1997, p. 320).

Many Indians follow the same mode—appease and ingratiate powerful and resourceful persons in order to harvest undue favours.

The *Mahabharata*, which was primarily about a dharma *yuddha* (war fought for moral justice) has many instances of morally dubious conducts even by the one who was the embodiment of dharma (the eldest Pandava brother, Yudhisthira) or a God incarnate (Krishna). Krishna in the *Mahabharata* approved deception as a means to defeat a more powerful enemy. In the third century BCE, the politico-economic strategist Chanakya observed how opportunities tempt government functionaries to corruption:

> Just as it is impossible not to taste the honey or the poison that finds itself at the tip of the tongue, so it is impossible for a government servant not to eat up, at least, a bit of the king's revenue. Just as fish moving under water cannot possibly be found out either as drinking or not drinking water, so government servants employed in the government work cannot be found out [while] taking money for themselves.[25]

During the mediaeval period, the Mughal courts were the epicentre of corrupt practices. *Nazrana* (presents) were customary on each and every occasion. The long hierarchy of intermediaries that the Mughal governance created for extracting land and other taxes was instrumental in creating pervasive corruption permeating the fabric of society. Some British governors were infamously corrupt and cultivated a culture of corruption that cascaded over the whole administration and benefitted both the white and brown sahibs. Corruption during the British regime was one of the crucial issues that the Indian National Congress raised in the late 1930s.

Since Independence, corruption has increased exponentially. Prime Minister Nehru lamented in the early years of Independence that "Merely shouting from the house tops that everybody is corrupt creates an atmosphere of corruption. People feel they are in a climate of corruption and they get corrupted themselves".[26] This is what happened subsequently,

> … corruption has increased to such an extent that people have started losing faith in the integrity of public administration. We heard from all sides that corruption has, in recent years, spread even to those [higher] levels of administration from which it was conspicuously absent in the past (*The Santhanam Committee Report* 1964, pp. 12–13).

The following years witnessed its further aggravation. Too much state control during the days of the "licence raj" (mentioned earlier) instigated many unscrupulous and greedy entrepreneurs, bureaucrats and politicians to collude and get immensely rich. Fragmenting political parties depended more and more on vote banks and money power resulting into criminalization of politics. Together they almost institutionalized corruption by the end of the 1990s. The *Vohra Committee Report* (1993) disclosed that crime syndicates and mafia outfits had developed muscle and money power and linkages with government functionaries, political leaders and others to the extent that they operate with impunity.

The new opportunities created by the liberalization of the economy further expanded the scope of corruption. The shift towards a capitalist model of development, in combination with the poverty syndrome, has not only legitimized unlimited profit making by rendering money as the most central value, but led to crony capitalism. By 2011, India turned into one of the most corrupt countries, ranked 95th out of 178 countries by the Transparency International on its perceptual index of honesty.[27] Innumerable instances of scams involving millions of rupees at the highest levels in the central and state governments, business and

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[25] *Arthashastra*, examination of the conduct of government servants. In Book 2 (Chap. 9): The Duties of Government Superintendents.

[26] As quoted in http://jaago.indiaonline.in/corruption-in-india-65, accessed on May 19, 2013.

[27] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corruption_in_India.

industries, stock market, defence and judiciary are pouring into the media. In May 2012, the Swiss Ministry of External Affairs confirmed that Indian citizens have about US$ 2.20 billion deposited in the Swiss National Bank, although European, particularly Swiss, banks are alleged to have with them much more of unaccounted Indian money. A nexus between political power, crime and money is conspicuous in a 10-year (2004–2013) survey of the wealth of Indian MPs (members of the Parliament) and MLAs (members of the Legislative Assembly).[28] A total of 62,847 candidates contested the elections for the state legislative assemblies or the Parliament during this period. By their own admission to the Election Commission, their average assets were Rs. 13.70 million, which was more than 100 times the per capita wealth of Indians (Rs. 133,400 approximately in 2011[29]). It is understandable. Indian elections are expensive and only the rich can afford to contest. But those 8,790 who won the election had average assets of Rs. 38.3 million. That is, the winners were about three times wealthier than the losers. But it was not enough. Of the winners, 2,575 who had criminal charges against them were wealthier, with assets of Rs. 43 million. And, 1,187 with serious criminal changes were had even larger assets of 43.8 million. It is obvious that those Indians who vie for political power are 100 times richer than the average Indian, and the wealthier among them win elections, and the wealthiest ones are in addition alleged to have criminal records.

Investigating agencies are overladen with the number of cases and crippled by political interference. The CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation) of India has admitted to the Supreme Court that inadequate autonomy hampers its investigations and the government has adamantly shown its unwillingness to let it function independently. The judiciary is independent, but is burdened with too many cases, handicapped by an inadequate number of judges and staff, and seemingly hesitant to quickly dispense with justice. There are allegations even against the chief justices of the Supreme Court. One of the chief justices of a high court in India had to resign because of the impending impeachment for his transgressions.

These icons, when caught (although rarely) on the wrong foot, are briefly jailed; but are neither ashamed nor disgraced socially. Rather, people flock around them with servile adulation. They defend them as if they are victims of a conspiracy reinforcing the bond of affiliation for further exchange of undue favours. But more so for hedging and justifying their own corrupt practices. Thus, the sedative effects of corruption in higher places cascade over the rest of the society, where the commonest of the common people keep extracting extra money or gratification by unfair means. Any decision or activity that has discretion is likely to be bought and sold with a price that is often quite standardized and even open. There is a strong rumour about a chancellor of the state universities appointing vice chancellors at a

[28] The ADR (Association for Democratic Reforms) Report, May 13, 2013. http://adrindia.org/content/nexus-between-elections-crime-and-money-ten-years-election-watch.

[29] http://www.x-rates.com/average/?from=INR&to=USD&amount=1&year=2011, accessed on May 19, 2014.

price. As a defence mechanism, they all vehemently condemn corruption, but indulge in it wilfully as if it is the normal thing to do. There are so many colours and shades of corruption that it seems inevitable for most people to absorb one of them. Corruption is not confined to giving and receiving stuffed envelopes under (often over) the table, customary payments and precious gifts or bonuses to lesser people (tips for extra service in future), but are extended to ignoring merit, deferring decisions, denying justice and fair play, and buying and selling decisions like commercial commodities as a part of amoral opportunism. In a nutshell, it is the state of the society where most of the individuals and groups have lost faith in fair play and accept foul means as fair.

9.3.2 Conflicts and Violence

Despite the highly espoused values of harmony and nonviolence, the Indian milieu is smeared with conflicts and violence, which has multiple facets at both individual and collective levels, varied precipitating and deep predisposing causation. Hindu–Muslim estrangement is a major source that arises out of endemic trust deficiency. Similarly, the Northeastern states of India still feel alienated from the rest of the country and continue to engage in insurgency for varied reasons, including independence from India. Then, ultra left-Maoist insurgency afflicts eight major states of India (Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal). In the government view, it is a law and order issue or a lack of development, but from the other side, it is retaliation against exploitations and violence of the State's machinery. If that is not enough, there are instances of inter-castes, inter-groups and inter-states conflicts and violence. There are violent protests and demonstrations, vandalism, *bunds* (forced closure) of cities and blockages of railways, roads and highways that disrupt normal life, harass and coerce common people. Earlier in Chap. 5, there was a discourse on sexual violence. We have increasing instances of domestic violence, street violence as well as violence directed to the self in terms of suicides by farmers and young boys and girls. Indians seem to be prone to explode into both collective as well as inter-personal and intra-personal level violence at a slightest provocation.

There has been an international initiative to develop an index of how peaceful or disturbed a country is compared to others. The index consisted of a wide range of negative indicators, some of which were the following: Deaths due to external wars, level of organized internal conflict, strained relations with neighbouring countries, level of perceived criminality in society, number of refugees and displaced persons as percentage of population, political instability, level of respect for human rights (in reverse order), potential for terrorist acts, number of homicides, level of violent crime, likelihood of violent demonstrations, number of jailed persons, number of police and security officers, military expenditure as a percentage of GDP and so on. A comparative analysis of 158 countries in the year

2012 placed India almost at the bottom of peaceful countries with a rank of 142, compared to China (rank 89), the USA (rank 88) and Japan (rank 5).

It is indeed ironic that a country which claims to get Independence by a long, nonviolent struggle is witnessing such an aggravated scenario of conflicts and violence. Why is it so? There are many precipitating factors. They are, for example, alienation of certain sections of people from the mainstream, illegal immigrants encroaching upon the life space of local people, land acquisition in name of development displacing people and affecting their livelihood, job reservations depriving the meritorious ones, labour-management relationship, political rivalry, caste discrimination, and communal events, among others. But they are on the surface. Underlying them deep in the psyche are two concomitant causes: A sense of real or imagined injustice of the victimized people or individuals and the greed of the powerful ones who know no scruples. Indians accept inequality in the society and the resultant disparity in power and privileges. But there is always a sense of threshold of tolerance. Once that is crossed, Indians, collectively as well as individually, burst into conflicts and violence. There is a well-documented literature on insurgency by peasants, workers, and tribal groups even against the colonial exploitation (Guha 1982–1989; Desai 1948). That threshold has been lowered in the changing socio-economic and political scenario. There is less of tolerance of inequality. People see recurring instances of injustice and unfair means, a few somehow getting rich overnight and getting richer every day, the powerful exploiting the weak ones, widespread scams and scandals, and so on. They get frustrated. Frustration leads to aggression, not necessarily against the causes of aggression, but whoever or whatever are soft targets and whatever ways it can be inflicted. The more numerous are the instances causing frustrations, the greater are the chances of conflicts and violence.

9.3.3 Fragmenting Politics

As stated earlier, politics and economy set the main frame of a milieu. Politics is the game of power that controls the economy and those who have economic power try to shape political policies and their implementations. In the decades following Independence, the economy was weak. So, politics dominated the economy. As the economy has been growing fast, a nexus between the two is getting stronger, impacting not only political and economic activities, but most other activities of the people and, thereby, shaping their self-view and worldview.

Indian politics is now getting increasingly fragmented. It was not like this in the early years after Independence. Initially, it was idealistically inspired, grounded and headed by an overwhelming, powerful and scholarly prime minister who had imbibed, on the one hand, European liberalism and scientific temper and on the other, the indigenous democratic spirit that had given rise to a number of republics as back as 600 BCE (Thapar 1972, p. 51). He knew that even under monarchy "village communities" at that time functioned like "little republics", the unions of

which were like the "little states" (Charles Metcalfe, cited by Nehru 1946/2001, p. 303). But his charisma was ruffled by the humiliating Chinese invasion in the early 1960s. This probably forced a turnaround of politics during the next phase that witnessed the emergence of a highly centralized, autocratic and tough regime. It restored part of the national pride by splitting Pakistan into Bangladesh in the early 1970s, restricted foreign investment, established the dominance of public sector and nationalized banks for serving social sector, but in the process drifted into a licence raj. During this phase, the internal democratic spirit was eroded both within the parties as well as in the government. Grassroots political participation was rendered redundant. The crucial concern was to manage vote banks and to connect with Godfathers within parties. Vote bank politics required money and muscle power, which opened doors wide to criminals and musclemen, who were initially commissioned to capture vote banks, but turned themselves into politicians. According to *The National Election Watch Report* (2013),[30] about 30 % of the total of 8,790 MPs and MLAs who won elections between 2004 and 2013 by their own self-sworn affidavit to the Election Commission of India admitted facing criminal charges, and 13.5 % were facing serious criminal charges such as rape, murder and kidnapping. A recent comparison of the criminal records of Lok Sabha (lower house) members compiled by the Association for Democratic Reform (ADR) with the official figures of crimes in India revealed that the proportions of MPs facing serious crimes such as murder, kidnapping, abduction and dacoity were 20 to 200 times greater than the people.[31] That is, Lok Sabha members are much more criminalized than the population at large. As politics got devoid of ideals or ideology, large-scale buying and selling of politicians and internal feuds and fissures took a toll of the political parties. National parties started getting fragmented and many new state- and regional-level parties appeared. The country thus was ushered into the third phase of politics of coalitions.

Long back, John Kenneth Galbraith called Indian democracy a "functional anarchy" (Tully 2001). The politics of coalitions are now much more chaotic and often function in more disjointed ways. The parties are generally focused more on local, parochial and regional than national issues in order to legitimize themselves and expand their local base. Further, they need money and power to survive for which they keep manoeuvring by forming alliances even with incompatible partners. It means the coalitions are inherently fragile in a fluid and uncertain political milieu. They have to continuously negotiate with and accommodate each other due to conflicting priorities and interests. If the differences are not reconciled, the coalition breaks down, lots of mudslinging ensue, and a new alliance is cobbled again for gaining power, privileges and money. In the absence of a firm commitment either to an ideology, long-term national perspective, or within-party democracy, there is hardly any space for working with differences. Differences,

[30] The ADR (Association for Democratic Reforms) Report, May 13, 2013. http://adrindia.org/content/nexus-between-elections-crime-and-money-ten-years-election-watch.

[31] *The Times of India*. The Records Bureau on Crime in India 2012. Report on Jun 4, 2013.

even of personal nature, lead to depart and form a new party where the boss has the sole authority to impose personal loyalty internally and bargain with others.

Some saw in it a deepening of democracy (Khilnani 1999; Singh and Mishra 2004). Indeed, the span of political activities has expanded, more people are politically active than before, and some of the crucial local and regional issues that were likely to be ignored otherwise are being addressed. Further, there has been some decentralization of power from the centre to the states. Conflicting parties often share a common rhetoric (e.g. development), and occasionally agree on crucial policy decisions (e.g. RTI, Right to Information Act). But more often, they keep fighting to the extent that national issues of profound importance are left uncared for, crucial decisions are deferred and delayed, if made are not implemented, watered down or implemented perfunctorily. Only populist schemes or insignificant decisions get through. Overall, there is a milieu of indecisiveness and inaction or expediency and mutual back scratching.

Fragmenting political parties may be a symptom of a deep-seated cynicism of Indians about each other. Varma (2004) observed that "Indians have an inherent suspicion of collective altruism, and are not willing to dilute their exuberant commitment to personal profit, even if the larger public good dictates otherwise" (p. 86). If others are not committing to common interests, they argue, why should they? Why not fight like others for their own interests? Such a mindset leads to promote one's own not-so-enlightened selfish interests and oppose others—even when the others are right or working in good faith and common interests. The result is a lack of discipline, not only in party politics, but also in the other social transactions. It is often alleged that too much of democracy is hurting national progress. Long back, Mahatma Gandhi gave to the nation a weapon, *satyaagraha*—a call of truth and justice to fight alone, if necessary, against the mighty British empire by breaking their rules, disobeying their orders and not cooperating with them in nonviolent ways. *Satyaagraha* now comes handy whenever an individual or a group feels aggrieved or deprived—rightly or wrongly. There is a fine line of demarcation between the "call of truth and justice" and the "impulse to safeguard or pursue one's interests". Unfortunately, the self-constraint necessary for nonviolence gets lost in either of them. The net result is that there is too much fragmentation in Indians' ways of addressing to crucial societal issues caused by unnecessary oppositions, conflicts and fights not only in political but also in most other public domains. It seems a common thread—unbridled self-interest, lack of concern for others and disregard for superordinate goals—connects corruption, politics, conflicts and violence.

9.4 Integrative Reflection

The mindset is embedded in the milieu that is broadly differentiated into inner and outer layers. The inner layer consisting of *desha* (place), *kaala* (time) and *paatra* (person) has a deeper impact. It accounts for a great deal of variations in everyday thought and behaviour. The outer layer is a composed of the major societal factors

that are organized into broad streams of influence on how Indians *generally* think, feel and behave. The factors at the inner and outer layers interact within as well as between the layers to create a complex, dynamic milieu that is tempered by the cultural heritage having roots in ancient religio-philosophical thoughts and historical experiences. Indians navigate by shifting their thought and behaviour in this double-layered, multifactorial space to survive in adverse and prosper in favourable situations. They yearn to be idealistically oriented, aspire to achieve and excel in whatever they do, and but often settle for low quality and dubious means to serve their selfish, short-term and sub-optimal interests.

Two sets of such factors of the outer layer are identified so far in this chapter. They are *socio-economic and political conditions*, which unveil a huge dark shade of the Indian milieu and the *globalization* that opens a new window of opportunities and possibilities but also carries some hazardous side effects. The third, *cultural heritage*, which is shown to have both functional and dysfunctional properties throughout the book, permeates both sets of factors infusing regressive as well as progressive ideas and ideals. The impact of the interplay of factors needs some attention.

Socio-economic and political conditions cover caste hierarchy, poverty and poverty syndrome, corruption, conflicts and violence, and fragmenting politics. They function as constraints negatively impacting the inner layer. They tend to narrow the boundaries of *apane* (in-group) and increase the distance from *paraye log* (out-group), exaggerate the superiority of *bade log* (having greater power, money and material possessions) and denigrate *chhote log log* (lesser people), evoke survival instincts and induce selfish and short-term measures. They make Indians not only settle for poor quality performance and nepotism, but also lead them to adopt corrupt practices, oppose others unnecessarily, engage in conflicts and result in social pathology. In instances where the constraints are less restrictive and the cultural heritage is inculcated more strongly during early socialization, Indians subscribe to traditional lifestyle, conform to social norms and engage in religious practices, seek spiritual growth, prefer harmonious social relationships. When the constraints are weak and ambitions high, Indians with better education, health and income take advantage of globalization to achieve heights of excellence in whatever they do. They can even face odds and make a difference for themselves and others around them. They are the entrepreneurs in various domains of life, and some among them turn to promote social revolution. However, those who are unprepared to avail of new opportunities feel marginalized. They watch the successful with envious eyes and often resort to dubious and unethical ways to compensate. Different patterns of reaction to socio-economic and political conditions are not reflective of different types of Indians; but the same Indians manifest the patterns in different degrees under different circumstances.

Globalization was initiated in the economy in the 1990s when it was opened to international market forces. It gradually spread to other domains ranging from food and fashion to lifestyle and world view. Although India was a global player during ancient times (Kumar and Sethi 2005), the recent globalization is a Western import that has two major facets: Capitalist world view and democratic values (see Box 9.2).

Box 9.1. Joseph Stiglitz on Globalization

Nobel Laureate, Stiglitz in his book, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (2002), wrote: "Behind the free market ideology there is a model, often attributed to Adam Smith, which argues that market forces—the profit motive—drive the economy to efficient outcomes as if by an invisible hand. One of the great achievements of modern economics is to show the sense in which, and the conditions under which, Smith's conclusion is correct. It turns out that these conditions are highly restrictive. Indeed, more recent advances in economic theory … have shown that whenever information is imperfect and markets incomplete, which is to say always, and especially in developing countries, then the invisible hand works most imperfectly". It indeed leads to crony capitalism (quoted by Rossi 2002, p. 293).

The capitalist world view hinges on the meta-value of earning *money* that is pursued by the strategy of *monetization* of all goods and services for exchange through market mechanisms in order to make maximum profit. The core concern is to serve "enlightened self-interest" (Smith 1776/1994) that stimulates entrepreneurship, driving people to explore, take risks, compete, achieve, excel, innovate, overstretch and even burn out. They override odds, create new opportunities, accumulate wealth, push up the GDP, improve conditions of living and indulge in consumerism. The capitalist world view evolved over time in the West as a function of socio-cultural-economic experiences arising out of unlimited natural resources, fewer people, industrial revolution, Protestant ethic and so on. The capitalist world view is supported by individualism, egalitarian and humanitarian values, regulated largely by well-established formal institutions and bound by clearly spelt out legal contracts. Western economies are large and capable of absorbing many aberrations of capitalism.

Socio-economic and political conditions in India, on the contrary, are much more restrictive. Resources are limited for over a billion people. Democracy is plagued by the criminalization and fragmentation of politics. Infrastructure is weak. Many laws are still a colonial legacy. The judiciary is independent but so overstuffed with millions of pending cases that justice is delayed for years. The legal system has so many layers and loopholes that the rich and the powerful rarely get convicted. There is a strong belief that the new achievers, irrespective of whether they are in business, administration, health, education, religion or politics, cut corners, bypass rules and regulations, collude, grab resources and use fair or foul means to accumulate any amount of wealth and power. Most of them do not only live lavishly, but display their power and wealth even to a vulgar extent in order to flaunt, through their hierarchical lenses, their superiority, and worse, to demean

others. They oblige and demoralize *apane log* only to turn them into sycophants, exploit *paraye log* and arrogate themselves as role models for the rest of the society.

Interestingly enough, a growing number of Indians from the same stock of achievers are drawing on Western humanitarian and democratic values of freedom, autonomy, transparency in public conduct and common causes. They are opposing, though in a diffused form, corruption, violence against women and marginalized groups, bad governance, encroachment on individual freedom and other social evils. As their number grows and assumes a critical mass, they are creating pressure for transparency in governance, curbing criminals and moving forces towards inclusive development.

The cultural heritage moderates the effects of socio-economic conditions and globalization by injecting idealistic as well as conservative and ritualistic ideas and influences. Cultural heritage, as argued in Chap. 1, has continuity through oral traditions that contextualize Indians in "the vitally alive, richly complex mythology" (Roland 1988, p. 253). Mythology contains a variety of characters that Indians identify with or distinguish from, and the events that they see being enacted in some form or other in their day-to-day life (Roland 1988, p. 96).

Interestingly, even Gods and Goddesses are found to have serious vices and the most vicious demons manifest sparks of virtues. Moreover, vices, howsoever enjoyable and gainful, are required to be given way to virtues that are presented as the perennial sources of real joy (*aananda*). Thus, the belief is that all human beings have a mix of vices and virtues; one has to live with vices but should rise to virtues. That is, even the most corrupt, caste-minded, mean, violent and impulsive persons have in them the ingredients of humane qualities that may express in ethical and prosocial behaviour, and the most upright, open-minded and altruistic persons may slide down on a greedy path. Most often, however, they oscillate between vices and virtues depending on pressing contextual factors. Given this reality, the cultural ideal is to try to contain animal impulses and to live by higher human values. Thus, self-improvement is the running preoccupation, which in the various combinations with other factors, presses most Indians for accumulation of wealth and power, excellence in achievements, realization of humanitarian values, spiritual pursuits or oscillating between all these polar ends.

In sum, the interplay of immediate and larger contextual factors to which Indians are exceedingly sensitive leads to a highly variable mindset. The same Indians could be idealistically oriented, achievers and innovators, manipulators and selfish depending on how they construe the contexts at a particular time. The central dictum is to strive to be virtuous while living in vice.

9.5 Summary

Indians are highly sensitive to their milieu, which largely shapes their mindset. The milieu has two tiers with each having multiple factors. The inner milieu consisting of *desha* (place), *kaala* (time), and *paatra* (person), has been described

in Chap. 8. The outer layer has three broad sets of factors. The first consists of caste, poverty, corruption, conflicts and violence, and fragmenting political parties. Together they create highly adverse conditions of living, which constrains how Indians narrowly define who their *apane log* are for bestowing due and undue favours and discriminate against those whom they perceive as *paraye log*, prostrate before *bade log* (rich and powerful) and denigrate *chhote log* (lesser people), seek short-term gains, give and take bribes, change allegiance, show callousness and cruelty, violently react and reveal lack of discipline in public domains. The liberalization of economy since the 1990s, however, has started globalizing the Indian landscape leading to new opportunities and the rise of entrepreneurship that have resulted in growth and development in all walks of life. However, the benefits are confined largely to a smaller number of high achievers, the majority of whom are getting disproportionately rich living a lavish life, showing their wealth to a vulgar extent and demeaning the lesser people. Disabling influences both from adverse conditions of living and globalization are being somewhat moderated by the Indian cultural heritage that allows people to earn money, enjoy the pleasures of life, but then to transcend them to realize higher values and function in prosocial ways by pursuing the cultural ideals. Thus, Indians navigate back and forth in this two-tiered multifactored milieu where they live in vices while yearning for being virtuous, and sometimes indeed succeeding to some extent.

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Chapter 10
Epilogue

10.1 Potentials and Problem of the Indian Mindset

Indians have an edge over many other nationalities in the world that is globalizing fast. In the globalizing world, people from different places, demographic backgrounds and mindset meet, interact, work or live together. They have to converge enough in their thought and behaviour in order to relate and deal with others. This requires stretching of their own beliefs, values and norms, which, however, tend to resist deviations beyond a point. People are used to living in their cultural comfort zone and are generally unwilling to deal with the unfamiliar. Thus, there are forces towards convergence into a global mindset and a pressure to retain one's own mindset. The delicate balancing process requires people to cultivate competence to shift their thought and behaviour in order to accommodate the familiar and the unfamiliar in the multicultural globalizing milieu.

Indians are culturally conditioned to strike such a balance. They are highly receptive to pick up signals from the surrounding milieu. They carefully assess a situation for its utilitarian values now or in the future, judge when to be silent or speak out, act helpless and dependent or start exerting and dominating and wait patiently or spring into action for a quick kill or to grab a fleeting opportunity. They are tuned to sense others' moods and motives. They collect readily others' expectations, ideas, likes and dislikes and add them to their own, not necessarily to accept them as their own, but to keep them in a compartment with a tag that they belong to so-and-so. They maintain many such compartments because of their pluralistic mindset believing that there are differences in the world and that they have to live and take advantage of such differences. Therefore, they selectively retrieve, combine their own and others' ideas and present them either to appease and ingratiate, support and validate, or dominate and exploit others. There are reports (Sinha 2004), for example, that Indian managers in a Korean organization behaved like Koreans. They stayed at work overtime, even stood before their offices in the morning, exercised and shouted company slogans like Koreans. On the contrary, Indian managers in a Swedish company left the office right on time, walked to their subordinates' desk if needed, and behaved in many other egalitarian ways like their

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Swedish expatriates. In an American company, Indian managers were informal like their counterparts, calling their superiors by their first name and being participative in team deliberations. Not that they genuinely liked or believed in all that they were doing, but felt it necessary to comply with organizational systems and norms and to work amicably with expatriates. The same Indians simultaneously behaved in typical Indian ways with their compatriots. They were able to do so because Indians have the orientation to collect all kinds of diverse and discrepant ideas and to use them to serve their purpose. It is often conceded that, "There is not a thought that is being thought in the West or East that is not active in some Indian mind" (E. P. Thompson cited by Tharoor 1997, p. 9). In fact, they are active in most Indians' mind. Some they introject and integrate, while others they keep to use purposefully.

Indians have a mental frame to do so. The frame is well differentiated, much more finely for other Indians than other nationalities. Indians share the same overarching worldview that is held by two major coordinates: How they perceive other Indians and what their own dominant interests are at a particular time point and in a specific situation. The perceptual frame has two extremes ranging from *apane* (own with affinity) to *paraye* (others with no affinity), each further differentiated into *bade* (superior) or *chhote* (lesser) *log* (people). Indians are positive in many different ways for *apane* and negative for *paraye log*, patronizing lesser ones and seeking patronage from superiors if they are bound by affinity. The same Indians, however, succumb and surrender to more powerful and exploit the lesser others if there is no affinity between them. Because others are employing a similar frame, the interactions between Indians are highly complex with many nuances and a long-term perspective. Indians carefully evaluate each other's usefulness now and in the future to maintain a relationship for unknown eventualities and exigencies. In order to do so, they slide back and forth between the extremes of both spectra by way of creating a façade of *apnaapan* (affinity) while negotiating for the best outcome. What is the best outcome depends on the second coordinate: Whether they are being driven by the money and power motive, a need to achieve distinctions and excel in performance, or seek spirituality. These impulses and concerns are overlapping and Indians slide back and forth between them, changing their priority. Sliding along two coordinates creates immense possibilities as well as enormous problems for Indians.

They are further compounded by the larger socio-economic milieu and opportunities through globalization. The milieu is rather bleak and pushes Indians to regress towards the lower and negative ends of their frame of mind. Poverty and caste are the basics while other constraints such as corruption, violence and criminalization of politics emerged out of the consequences of the basics and further afflict the mindset. They led to the widespread beliefs that power lies in wielding it without any concern for norms or others, money can buy anything and everything, and achievement and excellence depend on personal connections and dubious measures. New opportunities have resurrected entrepreneurship, which combined with beliefs about the milieu, are creating a national scenario with a small elite of fabulous wealth,

achievement and excellence; millions of others who are enjoying incremental success, but are still uncertain about their future prospects; and the rest whose aspirations are soaring so high that they cause more frustrations than satisfaction of their marginal gains. It creates a mindset of optimism and opportunism as well as inequality and insecurity. Interactions that result from such a mindset tend to take a downward spiral to suboptimal outcomes for both individuals and the society at large.

Have traditional cultural ideals disappeared in this milieu? Not exactly. The cultural ideals are to live life fully, earn wealth, enjoy earthly pleasures, meet social obligations and then transcend them to rise on spirituality. It so happens that the majority—from the elite to masses—is still running after money, power and position and is preoccupied in taking care of their family and friends. But they still nurse a yearning for spirituality. They engage in various religious practices, rites and rituals, charity and so on, hoping to escape into spirituality at least temporarily. There are others, though in minority but still in a sizable number, who strive to improve their personal qualities and resources and put them to the service of the community through social entrepreneurship and other social causes. Still others seek spirituality in their private lives through meditation and yoga, believing that their inner transformation will radiate in the people around and upgrade the quality of life in the community. They all live an earthly life full of vices and many other virtues, and move in and out of spiritual modes for varying durations. Even those ascetics who claim to have dedicated their whole life to religious and spiritual pursuits are infected with earthly temptations. In other words, spirituality pulls Indians up, though they keep sliding down to the mundane.

Most other nationalities that Indians frequently interact with are probably less complex and much more straightforward. They tend to say what they believe and act accordingly. They follow societal systems, legal contracts and role prescriptions. Indians find it easy to deal with them. The success of the Indian diaspora is the evidence. Indians can put themselves in a foreigner's mindset and so behave in a manner as to let the latter feel comfortable with them. They are often hurt by foreigners' impersonal and contractual behaviour, and are enamoured if they reach out to Indians in a personalized way. Many Indians feel inferior, because of the colonial legacy, to those who are from an economically advanced background. They attribute all kinds of real or imagined qualities to them and keep trying to prove themselves worthy for their approval and recognition. However, once an Indian proves to be superior, he or she takes the liberty to start dominating them or subscribing to a personal agenda. Foreigners are often baffled. They find it difficult to keep their interactions with Indians egalitarian and equal. They generally find Indians amicable, capable, innovative, but rather elusive and secretive.

In sum, despite immense possibilities, most Indians often sub-optimize their outcomes because of the mindset that is afflicted by a depressive milieu and this further degrades the milieu. Is there a way to get out of this vicious mindset-milieu circular causation and move on to a positive trajectory?

10.2 Ways of Putting the Mindset on a Positive Trajectory

Attempts to inject a positive synergy between the milieu and the mindset may be made at both interpersonal and societal levels. It is easier at the interpersonal level than at the societal level, though the latter is essential to sustain the former. People everywhere isolate individuals, irrespective of their collective attributes, to define and establish a mode of relationship that is based on personal experience and is aimed at serving individual interests. An Indian, for example, may typically perceive most Indians as corrupt, selfish and caste-minded, but can make an exception about his next-door neighbour, who he thinks is very receptive, helpful and friendly. The neighbour is a kind of psychic sanctuary from whom he or she seeks solace and security in the otherwise degraded milieu. That sanctuary, however, is not enough. People have to reach out to and interact with those who belong to different backgrounds and the larger milieu. How can they do so?

They need to have a psychological contract with two major clauses: A clear role demarcation with the ethos of trust and transparency, which are to be supported by frequent articulation and sincere feedback. Considering the sliding nature of the Indian mindset, a range of expectations about each other's rights and obligations has to be evolved in order that the role partner does not slip out of role boundaries. Indians generally feel constrained by role demands unless they are blended with the positive affect of affinity. Hence, one has to start with trust and transparency in his or her own dealings, but neither unconditionally nor abruptly. It has to be finely calibrated and gradually practised by checking how the counterparts reciprocate. There may be lapses or intentional testing of each other, which have to be sorted out through constructive feedback. Indians are not used to cut and dry feedback. The feedback has to be cushioned on positive elements of interpersonal experiences and explicitly professed to build better relationships. The progress is not quite likely to be linear or without any hiccups, but it does work, in the experience of the author, over time.

Upgrading the larger societal milieu for leveraging the mindset is much more difficult. It needs (a) a movement that arises out of a crisis that threatens people at large and arouses them to do something radical about it; (b) an ideology that channels mass energy to seek an alternative worldview; and (c) the leaders who can blend the two to effect a transformation. The crisis has indeed hit the country. Corruption, collective violence, fragmented politics, inadequate infrastructure, aggravating inequality and vulgar display of wealth amidst pervasive poverty are frustrating. People are fed up. Opinion leaders have emerged. Many, mostly the young and educated, see society losing the values of harmony, human rights and dignity, gender equality, tolerance of differences and so on. They have set the wind blowing. Some are turning into social entrepreneurs. Others are forming groups and associations for fighting corruption and reforming democratic practices. They resort to RTI (right to information) to sensitize people to what is going wrong in high places. There is some change in the milieu leading some criminals, including a few powerful politicians, to being punished, judiciary to actively interpret the laws and the upright bureaucrats to stand up more firmly on ground. But the

movement is still in the making, people's interests are diffused and the leaders in civil society are divided.

A major reason for the tardy success is the ideology that the country has imported as a part of globalization. It is the capitalist mode of development where money-making through market forces is believed to be the most efficient instrument for socio-economic transformation. Creating demand by advertising and instilling a craze for more and more products and services is the spirit of this capitalism. Self-interest, which is expected to be enlightened, is the driving force. The model is now being questioned even in the citadel of capitalism (Stiglitz 2002). The model serves, it is argued, only when societal conditions are conducive. In the Indian condition, it combines with the old landlordism of exploiting others and extracting money for vulgar display. The two—capitalist mode and landlordism—degrade the milieu and pollute the mindset. The need is to redefine the conception of an ideal life by making an axiomatic assumption that consumerism is not lineally related to either happiness or wellbeing (Sinha 2013). Money is of course needed for meeting basic needs and comforts, but beyond a point it dehumanizes the mindset and causes many physical and mental problems. Austerity rather than unlimited material progress is the direction that some Western scholars are suggesting for the wellbeing of people (Witkin and Shuman 2008). There is an urgency to make deliberate efforts to instil austerity in the Indian mindset by transforming the societal milieu. Once consumerism makes space for austerity, other human values will readily return in the mindset.

This is difficult in the face of smothering capitalism, but worth trying. Indians are particularly privileged to have ancient ideals of transcending earthly temptations. Common people still have its traces in their mindset. However, this needs to be turned into a movement. Change agents can initiate public discourse and debate that the so-called "argumentative Indians" (Sen 2006) can focus on to create mass awareness and pressure for a new policy frame for governance and development. Once a policy frame is in place, reward and incentive systems in the society can be so formed to replace money by recognition and appreciation and honour for excellence. More effective will be to introduce it as a part of the education systems in order to make children learn about its significance. It will take time, but the tables can be turned.

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Glossary of Hindi Words and Their English Equivalent

aadi shakti eternal power

aanand joy

aanandamaya kosh joyous self

aapat kaala time of crisis

aasan bodily postures

aastika orthodox

aatman or aatma soul

advaita monism

agni fire

ahamkaar Ego

ahimsa non-violence

annmaya kosh physical self

apanaapan affinity

apane own, ingroup

apsara divine dancer

ardhanaarishwar half man and half woman

arth wealth

avatar incarnation

avidya ignorance, wrong knowledge

baapu father

bakshish tips

bade log superior, powerful, rich people

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bedi sacrificial arena

bhajan devotional song

bhakta devotee

bhakti devotion

bhakti maarg devotional tradition

bheda dissension in adversary

bhoodaana giving away land to deserving one

bund forced closure

buddhi intellect

chaandal lowest caste

chakra wheel

chitta dispositional mind

chhote log lesser people, of lower status

crorepati billionaire

daalli precious gifts

daam reward, bribe

daana offerings, donation, charity

daasa-parampara tradition of slavery

dalit oppressed

danda coercive ways

darshana glimpse, perception,

dastur customary

desha place, context, country

desha-bhakti devotion to country

devadasi girl dedicated to a temple

dhaarana concentration

dhaatu substance, matter

dharma religion, duty, that which holds the society

dharma-sankat dilemma about what to do

dharmashaastra science of religion

dhiraj patience

dhyaana meditation

dosha deficiency

***drashta* bhava** observing orientation

dwait dualism

godaana offering of cow to *Brahmin*

gotra family lineage

grihastya householder

guna temperament

guna of raajas temperament manifesting passion, energy, physical vitality

guna of sattva temperament manifesting light, purity, subtlety

guna of taamas temperament manifesting inaction, impurity, lethargy

himsa violence

Hindutva tributed characteristics to Hindus by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)

hom offering to fire during religious ceremony

jaati caste

jajmaani priest-householder relationship

jap recitation

jeevandaana offering of one's life to someone or let free the one who is to be killed

jiva being

jivaatman living being

jnaana knowledge

jugaru improviser

kaala time

kaalchakra wheel of time

kaama sensuous and sexual pleasure

kaivalya total and permanent transcendence of self in pure consciousness

kanyadaan offering of daughter to the groom in marriage

karma conduct

kirtan collective recitation of prayer

kosh sheath, self

kripa blessing

kriyamana reactions to the outcome of conducts

ku-dharma bad religion

kurma tortoise

linga phallus

loka world

maai-baap paternalistic

maama maternal uncle

manas mind

maaya phenomenal reality

maharaja emperor

mazars sufi shrines

manana reflection

manatas offerings for getting blessings and favours

manomaya kosh sensory self

matha place of worship and meditation

matsya fish

mitra friend

mlechha barbarian

moksha salvation, release from cycle of birth, freedom from suffering

naari woman, wife

nazarana presents

nirdwandwa free of doubts and dilemma

nishkaama karma conduct without concerns of outcome

niyama routine of practices

oj vibrant energy

paatra person

panchayat local government of cluster of villages

parakhiye evaluate

paraye others, outgroup

parda veil

parloka world beyond this world

parmaananda divine bliss

parmaatma supreme being

praana vital breath

praanamaya kosh self-expressed in vital breath

praanayama breathing exercises

prakriti nature particularly material nature

praarabdh karma likely effects of conduct

pratha practice

pratyahara introspection

punya religious credit

putra son

raajyadaana giving away a kingdom

raasa lila dance and drama of love

raashtra nation

raktadaana giving away blood

Ramrajya rule of Lord Rama

rekha line, demarcation

rishi sage

saam conciliation

saamant hindu feudal lord

Saankhya enumeration, school of philosophy

samadhi transcendence of self in pure consciousness

samsara world

samskaar orientation caused by accumulated good and bad conducts

sanaatan eternal

sanchita karma effects of accumulated conduct

sanyaas renunciation from world

sarvabhuta all creatures

sati pratha practice of wife burning on husband's pyre

satya truth

satyagrah call of truth and justice to fight

shaastraartha dialogue and debate, explicating meanings of religious texts

shaivites followers of Lord Shiva

shava corpse, lifeless,

shivam goodness

shrambhakti devotion to labour

shravana listen

sloka hymn

sneha-shradha affection-deference

sthitaprajna composed

sthul gross

suba province

subedar head of a province

sudras lowest castes

sukhma subtle

sundaram beauty

surya sun

swa self

swaadhya self-help

tapa to burn, to undertake ascetic practices

tapasya ascetic practices

tirtharatan pilgrimage

trigunatita transcendent of all three temperaments

tyohar festivals

vaamana dwarf

vaayu air

vaishnavas followers of Lord Vishnu

vajra thunder

varaha boar

varna earlier form of castes

vidya knowledge

vijnanamaya kosh cognitive self

vrat fasting and pooja

yajna religious ceremony

yama mental attitude

Yug time period

yuddha war

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