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Brahmanical Idealism, Anarchical Individualism, and the Dynamics of Indian Negotiating Behavior

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ABSTRACT The article analyzes the implications of the Indian mindset on the dynamics of Indian negotiating behavior. I argue that the constructs of Brahmanical idealism and anarchical individualism capture the nature of the Indian mindset. Brahmanical idealism reflects the tendency of the decision makers to seek the most perfect solution. Any discrepancies between the realities of the external world and the logic of the inner world as manifested through a search for the ideal solution are not problematical for it is only the inner world that defines the true reality. If Brahmanical idealism focuses on the purity of the mental world, anarchical individualism lays emphasis on the primacy of attaining the ideal solution through absolutist forms of interpersonal behavior. That is to say, since each individual is engaged in searching for the ideal solution, and furthermore, as each individual's ideal solution is either no better or no worse than that of their counterpart, the attainment of this ideal is problematic because under these conditions cooperative behavior is a rarity. In this sense, anarchic individualism fragments rather than enhances total effort, thereby draining energy away from the system. I analyze the impact of this mindset on the Indian negotiating dynamics and outline the implications of the framework developed here for the theory and practice of cross cultural management. Implications for negotiating with Indian businesspeople are also discussed.

KEY WORDS • bridging differences with Indians • cultural influences • India • mindset • negotiating behavior

India is now emerging as a major player in the world economy. The growth rate of the Indian economy has increased from a dismal 3%–3.5% in the 1970s to 6%–7% in the

1990s. With a middle class in the range of 250–300 million people and the economic reform process well under way, India has begun to attract increasing interest from

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foreign investors. International firms are being lured to India by the prospect of selling in a market with a vast untapped potential. Whatever the specific mode of foreign entry (licensing, joint venture, wholly owned subsidiary, etc.) international investors face the necessity of negotiating contractual agreements with their Indian counterparts – whether they are Indian businesspeople, representatives of the bureaucracy or a combination of both.

Negotiation has been typically conceptualized as a process by which actors seek to reconcile their conflicting goals (e.g. Carnevale and Pruitt, 1992; Neale and Northcraft, 1991). International business negotiations bring together actors who have been socialized in different cultural traditions and with different levels of international exposure. These negotiations also involve interaction between actors at multiple organizational levels and unfold in an environment that is often changing. The complexity of these negotiations is well captured in Weiss's (1993) RBC framework in which he explicates the intricate interdependency that exists between relationships, behaviors and conditions. The relationships, behaviors and conditions encapsulate a wide range of macro- and micro-level variables, such as the nature of the political systems, industry structure, corporate and national cultures, personality predispositions of the key negotiators, and the extent of time pressure, if any. This is by no means an exhaustive list of the potential variables that may be in play here but it highlights the complex intricacies in explaining the processes and outcomes of international negotiations.

The task that I attempt in this article is a more limited one. First, I seek to assess the impact of only one variable – namely, national culture – on negotiation processes and outcomes. I am looking at only one piece of the larger puzzle but it is an important piece given that it is now widely recognized that the process of negotiation is culturally

variable, with different negotiation scripts being dominant in different cultures (e.g. Brett, 2000; Cohen, 1997; Kumar, 1999a; Leung and Tjosvold, 1998; Weldon and Jehn, 1996). The negotiation scripts prevalent in a given culture reflect the underlying values/beliefs that are intrinsic to that culture.

A wide variety of studies have shown that differences in negotiation scripts either affect the efficiency of the intercultural negotiation process and/or the integrativeness of the final agreement (e.g. Adair et al., 2001; Adler et al., 1987; Brett and Okumura, 1998). Second, while there have been a number of studies that have explored the behavior of negotiators from different cultures, only very limited attention has been paid to the underlying reasoning processes extant in that culture (Gelfand and Dyer, 2000). Theorists have often relied on the classificatory schemes developed by Hofstede (1980) and/or Schwartz (1994) in exploring how culture influences negotiation processes and outcomes (Kopelman and Olekalns, 1999). While the research undertaken within this stream of work has undoubtedly furthered our understanding of intercultural negotiation there is clearly a need to better understand the mental frames and/or the reasoning processes shaping behavior. Thus a major objective of this article is to analyze the mental frames that are shaping the behavior of Indian negotiators and to explore their implications for the development of the negotiation processes.

Relatedly, it is also worth noting that while there is a considerable amount of conceptual as well as empirical work documenting the way that the Japanese, the Chinese and/or the Koreans negotiate, there are few, if any, conceptual or empirical studies highlighting the negotiating behavior of Indians (for an exception see Cohen, 1997). This is an area that has traditionally been under-researched by management/organizational scholars and for this reason it is deserving of

attention. My objective in the article is therefore to analyze the nature of the Indian world view and to explore its implications for the evolution of the negotiation process in the Indian socio-cultural context.

It is worth noting that India is a vast country with many regional and sub-regional variations. Given these differences is any generalization about the Indian world view possible? Although I acknowledge the existence of these differences, I also note that there is an essential unity in India stemming from a shared world view, namely that of Hinduism. More than 80% of the population in India are Hindus. Scholars note that the cultural legacy of Hinduism is deeply ingrained throughout the country (e.g. Almeida, 1996; Smith, 1991). My analysis of the Indian world view, therefore, stems primarily from the structure of Hinduism. The analysis is most broadly applicable to the Indian elite who hold managerial positions in business and industry. Although the elite have, in varying degrees, been influenced by exposure to western influences, such an influence represents secondary socialization, and while it is certainly likely to shape some aspects of Indian managerial behavior, it is very unlikely to have completely negated the influence of primary socialization (e.g. Saha, 1992; Sinha and Kanungo, 1997).

It is important to note that while this article focuses on Indian negotiating behavior, it also makes a contribution to cross cultural theory as well as to the practice of cross cultural management. The essential argument being advanced here is that culture is the lens through which members of a culture perceive the external world. Although this insight is by no means novel, there has been insufficient emphasis given to the role played by mental frames in shaping how individuals from different cultures perceive and respond to the external reality. The tendency has been to view culture as behavior, as opposed to viewing culture as a meaning system. Redding (1993), for example, raises the issue

as to whether Hofstede's dimensions adequately capture the interpretative aspects of culture, and it is this gap that I seek to redress here in the context of negotiations. It is important to note that while the focus in this article is on India, the approach being advocated may be used to study other cultures.

At the same time, the article also seeks to explicate the linkages between the dominant world view extant in a given culture (India) and the negotiating style that appears to be characteristic of that culture. In doing so, I am attempting to provide a culture-based explanation, rooted in the Indian world view, as to why Indian negotiators behave in the manner that they do. The focus is not merely on description, but, above all, is on explanation that links the cultural world view of the Indians with the key strategic challenges confronting all negotiators. In the process, I am integrating culturally specific insights as manifested in the schemas dominant in a given culture (in this case India) with existing negotiation theory to develop a portrait of negotiating behavior in India. The article thus has the potential of not only contributing to the field of cross cultural management but also to negotiation theory, in that it demonstrates that cultural context has a powerful impact in delineating the boundaries of negotiation theory.

In an increasingly interdependent world, the ability to negotiate well is an important managerial skill. Managers negotiating across cultural boundaries face the challenge of navigating through a culture that may be alien to them. It is argued here that an understanding of the mindset of the individuals one is negotiating with is a prerequisite for successful negotiations. With this in mind, I have attempted to outline the essentials of the Indian world view. A better understanding of the Indian mindset will enable foreign investors seeking to do business in this country to adjust their negotiating strategies accordingly. They may also be less

surprised by Indian behavior that may appear alien to them, and for this reason may be able to handle the complexities of the negotiating situation more adeptly.

This is a conceptual article in which I set out the main features and the implications of the Indian world view for the negotiation process. I begin the article by sketching out the relevance of managerial cognitions in shaping negotiating behavior, then outline the nature of the Indian way of thinking and tease out its implications for the negotiating process. The article next highlights the influence of contextual variables that either amplify or dampen the impact of the world view on negotiating processes and outcomes. I conclude by outlining directions for future research and highlighting managerial implications.

Managerial Thinking and Negotiating Behavior

There is by now a considerable amount of evidence suggesting that managerial thinking plays an important role in shaping the negotiating dynamics (e.g. Bazerman and Carroll, 1987; Bazerman and Neale, 1992; Brodt and Tinsley, 1998; Thompson, 1998). Implicit in this line of research is the recognition that the way individuals define a situation is an important determinant of how they react to them. A number of scholars have demonstrated the impact of managerial thinking on negotiation processes and outcomes. Negotiators often engage in non-rational escalation of commitment (Staw, 1981); assume that negotiations are zero sum in character (Bazerman et al., 1985); ignore their opponents' cognitions (Carroll et al., 1988); are susceptible to salient information (Neale, 1984), and are subject to framing biases in negotiations (Bazerman et al., 1985).

The way in which individuals construct definitions of situations is influenced both by cognitive content as well as by the underlying cognitive processes. A widely held assumption

in cross cultural psychology has been that while cognitive processes are similar across cultures, cognitive content demonstrably varies, but this sharp differentiation between the two may no longer be tenable (Nisbett et al., 2001). These authors point out that cognitive content and cognitive processes are mutually reinforcing with the result that 'a given stimulus situation triggers quite different processes in one culture than in another' (Nisbett et al., 2001: 306). The one crucial implication of this distinction is that to understand how members of different cultures perceive reality one must attend to cognitive content and cognitive processes simultaneously. What I intend to do is therefore to outline the nature of the Indian world view and show how this has shaped the Indian negotiating style.

The Nature of the Indian World View

The Concept of Brahmanical Idealism

In recent years a number of scholars have sought to explore the nature of the Indian world view (e.g. Dumont, 1970; Gopalan and Rivera, 1997; Kakar, 1981; Lannoy, 1971; Moddie, 1968; Nakamura, 1964; Nandy, 1980; Roland, 1988; Saha, 1992, 1993; Sinha, 2002; Sinha and Kanungo, 1997). Sinha and Kanungo (1997) suggest, for example, that Indian managers exhibit a primary mode of behavior that is traditional in character and a secondary mode of behavior that has been acquired from the importation of western management practices. Thus, while the primary mode of behavior reflects the prevalence of traditional Hindu values such as collectivism and high power distance, the secondary mode reflects the inculcation of values such as individualism and pragmatism. Whether the Indians choose to exhibit a primary or a secondary form of behavior depends on the context of the situation. The

author/s conceptualize context in terms of *desh* (place), *kal* (time) and *patra* (person). This framework, as the author/s point out, may help to explain the inconsistency in Indian managerial behavior.

Roland (1988) explores the Indian world view from the standpoint of self. He draws a distinction between the familial, the individual, and the spiritual self. The familial self highlights the interdependence between individuals; the individual self focuses on the fact that each individual is unique and autonomous from others; the spiritual self focuses on the individual's attempt at uncovering the deeper reality. Roland (1988) maintains that the Indian self is primarily a combination of the familial self with the spiritual self.

Kakar (1981) notes that Indian cultural ideals discourage individuals from displaying initiative and/or undertaking voluntary action. According to Kakar (1981) Indians look to elders to provide guidance for action. Like Roland, Kakar emphasizes the importance of the familial self in the Indian socio-cultural context and delineates some of the implications of this self-conception. He notes (1981: 38) 'The Hindu view of action is necessarily a conservative one; it harks back to a "golden age", and harbours the sceptical conviction that social change is superfluous, an importunate deviation from traditional ways.'

The work of Sinha and Kanungo (1997) and Sinha (2002) focuses on the content of the Indian managerial mindset and its implications for behavior, while Kakar (1981) and Roland (1988) seek to explicate the essence of the Indian self. Although these frameworks have made an important contribution and have deepened our understanding of Indian psychological orientation, they have not explicitly focused on the thinking processes underlying the way that Indians perceive the world.

The work of Lannoy (1971), in contrast, focuses on the processes of Indian thinking. According to Lannoy (1971) Indians follow a

non-sequential logic in which actions are judged primarily for their own sake rather than for the effect that they produce. As he notes (1971: 289): 'All work contains its own satisfaction. The present should not be regarded as a means to future satisfaction.' The human ideal is to escape from the constraints of time. In essence, the highest purpose in life is to discover the nature of the ultimate reality by overcoming the constraints of the here and now. In a psychoanalytical study of Indian society, Kakar (1981) notes that the Hindu culture stresses the importance of merging with the 'other' as opposed to remaining separate from the 'other' in arriving at the ultimate reality. As he (1981: 36) notes 'Hindu culture is governed in these matters not by a belief in the golden mean but by a staunch belief in the golden extreme.'

The ultimate reality is incapable of being understood through rational means. This reality, as Jain and Kussman (1994: 96) note, has 'no form and no name'. Even though this ultimate reality is incapable of being discovered through rational/analytical means, the normative implication is that individuals must seek to uncover it for, as Jain and Kussman (1994: 96) note, 'The deeper the level of reality the more fully one participates in the truth of being.' This mode of thinking encourages individuals to strive for the unattainable ideal while simultaneously recognizing that this attainment may be all but impossible. To quote Lannoy (1971: 293): 'There is no room in this scheme for the modern idea that man is the subject and agent of history; there is no admissibility of the possibility of ameliorating the human condition, nor confidence in the ability to master a hostile environment.'

Nakamura (1964) points out that the Indian process of thinking is idealistic in the extreme. As he notes (1964: 136): 'There is a tendency among the Indians, divested in general of the concept of a perceptible objective order, not to differentiate too sharply

between the actual and the ideal or between fact and imagination or fantasy.' He further points out that Indians never take any concerted actions to curb what he calls an 'extravagant development of fantasy'. The fantasy in which the Indians engage is 'free, boundless, and extravagant, and often goes to extremes' (Nakamura, 1964: 142). Interestingly enough, even though Indians are prone to fantasizing in an extreme manner, they are very passive in acting on their fantasies (Nakamura, 1964). One interesting implication of this mode of thinking is that while Indians may be relatively quick in setting up excessively high imaginary ideals that they would like to realize, they are not troubled by their failure to realize them.

Nakamura's comments are echoed by Moddie (1968), who suggests that Indians are too prone to strive for absolute perfection. Their approach to problem solving is much too grandiose to result in concrete solutions to concrete problems. Moddie (1968: 5) notes that there is

a penchant for the choice of absolute in thought and behavior. In the sphere of intellect we expect easy Upanishadic perfection rather than realizing that in real life progress lies between imperfection and a little less imperfection.

In a commentary on the Indian planning process the noted political theorist Lucien Pye (1985: 143) points out that 'Indian politicians showed a marked propensity to indulge in enthusiastic planning, utopian speculation, and wishful thinking, while usually failing to carry out the implementation: virtuous talk, big plans, but little delivery.'

In a similar vein Irvine (1998: 38), while commenting on the attitude of India's elite towards economic reform, notes

What emerges is a yearning for an economic third way somewhere between laissez faire capitalism and the planned economy. This manifests itself in opposition to most Anglo Saxon notions of sensible economic management rather than looking for workable alternatives.

He further observes that the Indian elite, while critical of the errors made by others in the pursuit of economic liberalization, are much less inclined to acknowledge the limitations inherent in their own system. It is almost as if the conception of an imaginary ideal implies that its realization in practice is all but inevitable. The economic reform process initiated in 1991 may have initiated the foundations for attaining a better balance between thinking and action, but while it may still be too early to form an overall judgment about the emergent change, the early indications are not overly encouraging.

In a study of the development of independent power production in India Rufin et al. (2003) note that while the policy makers recognize the need for stemming the power shortage and also accept the need to provide the appropriate incentives to investors, the implementation process has been much too slow for the necessary goals to be realized. These author/s point out that while the policy makers' target was to increase power generating capacity by 10 000 MW over the period 1991–2000, in point of fact the additional increase was only 2000 MW.

The Indian mindset has been described as rooted in the fundamental principles of 'Brahmanical idealism' by Kumar (1999b). The conception of Brahmanical idealism has a number of different aspects. First, it underscores the importance of uncovering the ultimate reality, no matter how difficult this might be. This is well exemplified by Kakar (1981: 34) who notes that the cultural ideal

has as its goal the liberated, rather than the successful, or the achieving man; which emphasizes the possibility of man's realization rather than his salvation, which considers the exploration and enrichment of the inner world of experience a vital life task; and which relies on a practice of a cultivated subjectivity and introspection to gain knowledge of the self and the world.

The concept also highlights the importance of cultivated subjectivity in uncovering this ultimate reality. The one crucial implication of this is that Brahmanical idealism represents an introverted form of thinking. Actors are engaged in wishful thinking that may be divorced from empirical reality to an excessively high degree. In other words, the inner thought processes are not viewed as very distinctive from the external world. While all individuals everywhere may need to draw such a distinction, if for nothing else than for survival, the degree to which the two are separated varies across cultures (Lillard, 1998). One crucial implication of this is that external reality is rationalized rather than dealt with very directly in a pragmatic, hands-on way. Within the Indian cultural context Gopalan and Rivera (1997: 163) citing Husain (1961) note 'Action is ranked inferior to knowledge and behaviors seeking truth, harmony, and unity are given priority over focusing on practicality and reality.' This stems in large part from the actors' recognition that what can be made into a reality in the inner self-contained world of the individual, is at the same time the true definition of reality (Saha, 1992). It is also worth noting that the idealistic mindset is also a self-validating one, in that, if the ideals are not met, it does not bring into question the validity of those ideals. Indeed, the failure to attain the ideals may make the individuals even more determined to realize them.

The Concept of Anarchical Individualism

If Brahmanical idealism focuses on the purity of the inner world, anarchical individualism lays primacy on attaining the desired ideal through rigid adherence to absolutist forms of interpersonal behavior. Although India has traditionally been characterized as a collectivist society (Hofstede, 1980) in which the family is central, Indians have an individualistic streak which is most evident in interaction with out-group

members (e.g. Derné, 2000; Kakar, 1981; Sinha, 2000). Indians have found it difficult to form in-groups beyond the extended family and the caste community, although it needs to be said that even within the extended family and the caste, cooperation may not always be easily forthcoming (Roland, 1990). Indeed, as Nandy (1980: 121) notes: 'The difficulty the Indian society has always faced in managing large scale organizations is an offshoot of the Brahmanical world view, and its strong emphasis on unconditional anarchic individualism.'

In anarchical individualism, individuals undoubtedly act out their personal views, but find it difficult to engage in mutually coordinated action to achieve shared goals. While cooperation between individuals may be problematical in individualistic cultures everywhere, this lack of cooperation is particularly pronounced in the presence of anarchical individualism. Gupta (2002) points out that cooperative behavior and teamwork among Indians are extremely difficult. In a similar vein, as Das (1998: 11) notes: 'even in the most homogenous Marwari companies, brothers, and nephews incessantly fight with each other' (see also Roland, 1990, 1988). He further notes that while conflicts are common and endemic in all global firms, they are contained because otherwise the firms' competitiveness would be undermined. In India, on the other hand, as Das notes, conflicts 'tend to spill out'. It is the existence of anarchical individualism that renders the management of internal conflicts within Indian organizations most difficult. How is compromise possible when each individual not only thinks in absolutist terms, but also views their own particular definition of the situation as being the only 'right' definition?

Evidence of anarchical individualism is to be found in just about every domain of organizational and inter-organizational interactions. In 1998, for example, there was wrangling in New Delhi between the bureaucrats and the air traffic controllers concern-

ing the use of new air traffic control equipment (Kazmin, 1998). Controllers balked at the use of new radar and navigational equipment, even though it had been installed nine months previously. The attempts by the Airports Authority to persuade the controllers to accept the new system were certainly not successful during that period of time. The recognition that the installation of the new equipment would improve air safety did not speed up the internal wrangling between the parties, in spite of the fact that there was external pressure from the International Federation of Airline Pilots Association to install the new equipment given the fact that the system in place until its introduction was not considered to be the safest in the world.

Another fascinating example of the lack of teamwork within Indian organizations is the way that the Indian government dealt with the now bankrupt energy giant Enron. Following the initiation of economic reforms in 1991 the Indian government invited foreign power producers to set up new power generation plants in the country. Enron was one of the first foreign firms to respond to this invitation and it proposed setting up a power plant in the State of Maharashtra. After contentious negotiations a memorandum of agreement was signed in 1993 between Enron and the state government of Maharashtra, which at that time was led by the Congress party. The project was not without its critics who continued to complain vociferously about the lack of transparency in the negotiation process and the fact that the negotiated agreement was much too one-sided in favor of Enron. These criticisms notwithstanding, Enron started the process of constructing the power plant. In 1995, a new government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Shiv Sena came to power and one of their first actions was to order a fresh review of the Enron project. In a matter of months the new government cancelled the state government's contract with Enron on

the grounds that it was not in the best interest of the people of that state. Enron was undoubtedly not pleased by this turn of events and they threatened to take the state government to arbitration, as mandated under the terms of the existing contract.

In early 1996, the parties decided to sign a new, renegotiated, agreement. In May 1999 phase I of the Dabhol power project started producing power. Was this the end of the story? Evidently not. By December 2000 there was yet another change of government in the State of Maharashtra. On this occasion the Congress Party-led coalition (the party which had signed the original agreement with Enron in 1993) instituted a fresh review of the project on the grounds that the price of Enron's power was too high! This time around, the negotiations with Enron were to prove fruitless and by July 2001 Enron had decided to sell its stake in the Indian power project.

The point I wish to make is that whatever the merits or the demerits of the different agreements negotiated with Enron (and by all accounts there were many problems in the agreement that was negotiated), the different governments that came into power consistently critiqued the agreement that had been negotiated by the previous party. It is almost as if the different state governments were more interested in scoring points over their predecessors than in trying to strive for an agreement with Enron that may have had some durability. Most importantly the decision makers failed to consider the strategic impact of a continuing policy of inconsistency on other foreign power producers who were exploring the possibility of entering the Indian market. (For an in-depth examination of this case see 'Enron (A), (B) and (C)', *Harvard Business School*, 1997. The case has also received extensive coverage in the press.)

The Indian World View and Negotiating Dynamics

The Impact of Brahmanical Idealism

Theorists note that in negotiation there are four possible outcomes, namely (1) no agreement; (2) a victory for one of the parties; (3) a compromise; or (4) a win-win solution, i.e. a solution in which the joint benefits to the parties are greater than those obtained with a compromise (Rubin et al., 1994). Which of these outcomes emerges as a product of the negotiation process is often dependent on the aspiration levels of the parties, the rigidities with which the aspirations are held, the psychological biases that get intensified during the interaction, and/or the emergence of affect during the negotiation process (e.g. Barry and Oliver, 1996; Brett et al., 1999; Pruitt, 1981).

The aspiration level refers to the standard that the negotiator hopes to attain or exceed during the negotiating encounter. This standard defines the benchmark against which the negotiator assesses the success or failure of the negotiation. Psychological biases may be intensified during the negotiation process as a result of an idealistic mode of thinking. The negotiators may also experience negative emotions if the negotiation fails to produce the desired outcome and/or the process of getting to the agreement is an excruciatingly slow one. In this section I will attempt to outline the impact of Brahmanical idealism on (a) the aspiration levels of Indian negotiators; (b) the rigidity of the aspiration levels; (c) the intensification of the psychological biases; and (d) the emergence of emotions during the negotiation process.

Aspiration levels of Indian negotiators

A major implication of Brahmanical idealism is that aspiration levels (expectations) of Indian negotiators are likely to be very high. In searching for the ideal solution Indian negotiators are trying to realize their goals to

the maximum degree that is imaginable. This is both advantageous as well as disadvantageous for the Indian negotiator. On the positive side, high aspiration levels are essential for attaining integrative solutions (Follett, 1975). Without high aspiration levels the actors may settle for a compromise and in doing so leave gains on the table. High aspiration levels also prevent negotiators from being taken advantage of by their counterparts. On the negative side, high aspiration levels slow down the process of reaching an agreement (e.g. Bazerman et al., 1985; Pruitt and Lewis, 1975). In the extreme case they may persuade the other actor to withdraw from the negotiation process.

High aspiration levels may manifest themselves in two distinct ways (Higgins, 1998): they could represent either the maximization of positive outcomes (promotion focus) or the minimization of negative outcomes (prevention focus). While a 'promotion focus' is concerned with accomplishments, hopes, and aspirations, prevention focus is concerned with safety, responsibilities, and obligations' (Higgins, 1998: 16). In a negotiation context, a promotion focus could mean maximizing benefits from a negotiated transaction, while a prevention focus could mean minimizing the possibility of entering into unprofitable transactions. Although the impact of high aspiration levels using either the promotion or the prevention motivational orientation on negotiation processes has not been systematically tested either in a laboratory setting or in a field setting, there is some anecdotal evidence suggesting that high aspiration levels have brought both benefits as well as losses for Indian negotiators.

On a positive note, a Danish manager commenting on his interactions with an Indian agent noted that discussions with the Indian agent went on and on. The negotiated agreement took much longer to obtain compared with what is typical for Denmark. The Danish manager noted that the Indian agent was very clever and he was able to obtain the

best contract relative to other contracts the firm had negotiated in South Asia. On a less positive note, a shipping manager based in the United States noted about the Indians (Robinson, cited in Knee 1998: 3–4)

They have a tendency to badger one to the point of exasperation, when the average American, or European businessman will give in just to get rid of them or to move things along. Alternatively, they will stall when things are not going their way, until the silence becomes unbearable and you give in.

Rigidity of aspiration levels A related implication of this world view is that the aspiration levels are going to be relatively rigid, i.e. they may not change as readily as one might expect them to. The underlying logic is that flexibility in aspiration levels may compromise one's ability to attain the most desirable solution. Although theorists have maintained that goal rigidity is important in attaining integrative agreements, they have also made the additional argument that goal rigidity should be combined with flexibility of means if the negotiation process is to succeed (Pruitt, 1981). In other words, one must draw a distinction between ultimate and intermediate goals. A related argument has more recently been made by Brett et al. (1999), who have argued that negotiation is as much a process of goal discovery as it is one of getting what one wants.

Following this line of reasoning the author/s have drawn a distinction between higher and lower level standards. Higher level standards focus on interests, whereas lower level standards focus on positions. A focus on higher level standards offers negotiators a much better possibility of attaining their goals because they offer multiple pathways for goal attainment, whereas a focus on lower level standards constricts that flexibility. Implicit in this theorizing is the recognition that when negotiators find they are unable to attain their initially held goals and a discrepancy emerges, they may deal with

that discrepancy either internally (i.e. reformulating their goals) or externally (i.e. by inducing the other negotiator to readjust his/her expectations to move the negotiation process further along).

Given the rigidity of the aspiration levels, one would surmise that the Indian negotiators would deal with the discrepancy by trying to readjust the expectations of the other negotiator instead of trying to readjust their aspiration levels. This may be done either by asking questions, giving information, and/or being silent (Brett et al., 1999). There is some evidence to suggest that Indians maintain rigidity in their aspiration levels by taking the moral high ground (Cohen, 1997). There is suggestive evidence that the rigidity to which Cohen (1997) alludes encompasses both interests and positions, although this needs further empirical examination. England et al. (1974), in a study of Indian managerial values, noted that Indian managers have a strong moral orientation, a finding that has been reinforced by the work of Sinha and Kanungo (1997). After all, if one is taking a principled position, where is the room for readjusting one's expectations or aspiration levels? The implication of all this is that the rigidity in aspiration levels of Indian negotiators may either slow down the process of negotiations and/or may induce them to try to reshape the expectations of their counterparts rather than changing their own standards. One consequence is then that in some instances it may enable the Indians to get a better agreement than might have been the case otherwise, but in other instances it may be a case of missed opportunities.

Intensification of psychological biases

An idealistic mode of thinking may exaggerate the psychological biases that are often present in the negotiation process. Negotiation scholars note that over-optimistic confidence, reactive devaluation, divergent construal, attributional distortion, and non-

rational escalation of commitment to a course of action are psychological biases that often render negotiation problematical (e.g. Ross and Ward, 1995; Rubin et al., 1994).

Over-optimistic confidence refers to the tendency to overestimate one's chances of obtaining a negotiated agreement on one's own terms. In other words, negotiators who are over-optimistic often resist making concessions, or even when they make concessions may do so only grudgingly. An idealistic mode of thinking may exaggerate the likelihood of this happening because it leads to a tendency to pay less attention to the external environment, and in the process negotiators may overlook clues suggesting that their chances of prevailing on their own terms are not as high as may have been construed. A good example of over-optimism is the crisis that developed between India and China over disputed territory in 1962. Despite there being credible evidence that China might attack India if the latter did not end its aggressive operations in the disputed territory, the Indian policy makers were extremely surprised when China invaded India (Vertzberger, 1984).

Reactive devaluation is the tendency to devalue a concession simply on account of the fact that a concession has been made (Ross and Stilling, 1991). One would surmise that an idealistic mindset may heighten this tendency, because within this frame of thinking the very act of making a concession undercuts the principled logic of the position that the other negotiator was advancing. Divergent construals refer to the fact that the same information may be evaluated very differently by negotiators from the two sides. While this is present in almost all negotiations its salience is heightened when one of the negotiators has an idealistic mindset while the other's mindset is much more grounded in empirical reality. One consequence of this is that the different negotiators may find different cues salient in the environment, with the consequence that they may

not even agree either on the nature of the problem and/or on its origins.

Attributional distortion refers to the tendency for the actors to see their counterpart's behavior as reflecting their internal disposition, rather than situational contingencies (Ross, 1977). Given the lack of sharp differentiation between the internal and the external world, external cues may not be picked up and this may reinforce the tendency to make dispositional rather than situational attributions. Non-rational escalation of commitment refers to the tendency to persist with a course of action even in the face of mounting evidence that the action is not yielding the desired results (Staw, 1981). An idealistic mindset, motivated by the desire to attain the best possible solution, will aggravate this tendency, because the Indian negotiators are unlikely to be easily satisfied with an outcome that does not correspond to their expectations.

Emotional dynamics Negotiation researchers have begun to pay attention to the role played by emotions in the negotiation process (e.g. Barry and Oliver, 1996; George et al., 1998; Kumar, 1997). Emotions are high intensity affective states that arise from the actors' ability or inability to attain their goals (e.g. Lazarus, 1991; Oatley and Johnson-Laird, 1996). Given that negotiation is both a task as well as an interpersonally oriented activity, the emergence of emotions in the negotiation process is only natural. What implications does an idealistic mode of thinking have for the emotional experiences of Indian negotiators? First, given that Indian negotiators have high aspiration levels that are rigidly maintained, one would surmise that goal blockages are likely to be a fairly common occurrence. The implication of this is that Indian negotiators are likely to experience emotions frequently. However, if the goal blockages persist over time, they may well become attuned to them and for that reason either may not experience emotions

so frequently or the intensity of the emotional reactions may not be so high.

On the other hand it is quite conceivable that these negative emotional reactions may certainly induce Indian negotiators to take a fresh look at the realism of their aspiration levels, and that may bring about a change in their internal standards. The conditions under which either one or the other psychological processes dominates may well be an interesting issue to study. Second, it would be interesting to surmise as to the nature of the emotional reactions that are likely to arise among Indian negotiators. It is useful to look at this because different emotions have different behavioral implications (Kumar, 2004, forthcoming). Theorists have drawn a distinction between dejection- and agitation-related emotions (Higgins, 1987). Dejection-related emotions represent the absence of a positive outcome and are in the nature of frustration, disappointment, dissatisfaction, etc. whereas agitation-related emotions represent the presence of a negative outcome and are in the nature of tension, anxiety, fear, etc.

Given the focus of the Indian negotiators on obtaining the most ideal outcome, I would surmise that failure to obtain the desired outcomes is likely to generate dejection-related emotions. It has been argued that dejection-related emotions induce individuals to try harder to attain their goals, whereas agitation-related emotions induce them to escape or flee from the situation (Kumar, 1997). The one crucial implication of this is that in the immediate aftermath of an unsuccessful negotiation, Indians may intensify their efforts to attain their desired goals.

The Impact of Anarchical Individualism

There are many different kinds of negotiations; namely, negotiation between individuals, negotiation between groups, or negotiation within a group. In the case of negotiation between individuals, the choice and the

implementation of the negotiation strategy are dependent on the decisions made by the individuals themselves. In the case of intergroup negotiations, the negotiators representing the different groups face the challenge of satisfying the interests of their opposing negotiator as well as those of their constituents who they are trying to represent in the negotiations. Labor management negotiations, negotiations between a multinational firm and the host country, or negotiations between a host country and a non-governmental organization are all examples of intergroup negotiations. Intergroup negotiations in which the negotiators must seek to deal simultaneously with their counterpart and their constituents create the negotiator's dilemma (Lewicki et al., 1994). The dilemma arises because satisfying the interest of their constituents may impede the negotiators from concluding an agreement with their opponent, and likewise if the negotiator were to accede to the demands of the opponent, he or she would be likely to incur the wrath of the constituents.

Although the negotiator's dilemma is difficult to manage just about everywhere, the point that I would like to make here is that anarchical individualism makes the management of this dilemma particularly difficult. As outlined earlier, a major tenet of anarchical individualism is that cooperative behavior among individuals is a rarity. This has a number of different implications. First, it suggests that internal consensus is likely to prove extremely elusive. If so, how is a given organization able to articulate, much less implement, a coherent negotiating strategy when dealing with another organization? The difficulty that India has had in attracting foreign investment in the independent power industry since the onset of economic reforms in 1991 is in part due to its inability to formulate and implement a coherent negotiation strategy with outside investors (e.g. Rufin et al., 2003; Saez, 1998). Many investors became disillusioned and left the coun-

try. This is not the only sector in which problems have occurred. In the cellphone industry several foreign investors who had received licenses from some agencies of the government left the country because they failed to gain additional clearances (Treadgold, 1998).

The inability to attain and/or sustain an internal consensus means that it makes it less worthwhile for the other negotiator to continue to negotiate in this environment because it is unclear to him or her whether the negotiation process will bear any fruit at all. A number of foreign investors have expended an enormous amount of effort and energy in trying to get their projects cleared, but apparently to no avail. As the *Global Power Report* (2003: 7) notes:

But after a tumultuous decade, the country's IPP program crumbled in failure. Virtually all of the large foreign firms that participated in the program – among them CMS generation, PowerGen, Mirant, and AES corporation – have exited the Indian power market.

It is undoubtedly the case that these were complex projects which were highly visible, so attaining an internal consensus was probably even more difficult than might have been the case otherwise, but the general point remains – namely that anarchical individualism renders intra-group cooperation highly problematical. Anarchical individualism slows down the negotiation process, either because the Indian negotiating team takes a long time to formulate their strategy and/or due to the fact that they are unable to respond to their counterpart's offer in a timely way.

Second, anarchical individualism may impart a high degree of unpredictability in the negotiation process. While all negotiations are characterized by unpredictability, and complex negotiations perhaps even more so, anarchical individualism adds perhaps another layer of complexity to the process. I suspect that the more varied the negotiating team and the greater the number of players

in it, the more problematical anarchical individualism might be. Anarchical individualism may also detract from the negotiating team's ability to concentrate on the task at hand – much of their time and effort might go in either critiquing other team members or responding to criticisms leveled against them. This may distract them from truly trying to concentrate on developing an integrative solution to the problem at hand. Finally, internal disunity within the Indian negotiating team may convey an impression to the other party that they are not really serious about negotiations.

Overall Impact of Brahmanical Idealism and Anarchical Individualism

I have so far outlined the impact of Brahmanical idealism and anarchical individualism on the nature of Indian negotiating practices. While Brahmanical idealism shapes the expectations of Indian negotiators, anarchical individualism highlights the fact that consensus is often difficult to attain and maintain within an Indian negotiating team. The question therefore is: what is the overall impact of these dimensions on the negotiating process? While high aspiration levels may have the potential of generating integrative agreements, anarchical individualism may detract from such a possibility, and especially so in cases of intergroup negotiations. I would also surmise that rigidity in aspiration levels may have a positive or a negative impact on negotiation processes and outcomes, depending on whether it is interest-based or positional-based rigidity. Positional-based rigidity will be detrimental to successful negotiations, whereas interest-based rigidity may be more facilitative of a positive outcome, although the positive outcome may not necessarily emerge expeditiously.

More broadly, both Brahmanical idealism and anarchical individualism work to slow down the speed of the negotiation

process. The stability of the negotiated outcome may also be compromised by the presence of anarchical individualism in particular. Individuals and/or groups who are dissatisfied by a particular negotiated outcome may seek to reopen the issue. Given the slowness and the unpredictability at times of negotiating with the Indians, the ability to foster inter-organizational trust may be somewhat problematical, although interpersonal trust, if established, may be durable.

Contextual Factors Influencing Negotiating Behavior

While Brahmanical idealism and anarchical individualism have a powerful influence on Indian negotiating behavior a number of contextual factors may either amplify or dampen the impact of the Indian mindset. The contextual variables are (a) the nature of the organization; (b) nature of the opponent (i.e. a member of the in-group or the out-group); (c) task complexity; and (d) individual difference variables.

Nature of the Organization

Most Indian businesses have traditionally been family owned and this is still the case today, although some changes are under way as a product of the opening up of the Indian economy in the early 1990s. Decision making is centralized, with the head of the family being the primary decision maker. With centralization of decision making you may not see the presence of anarchical individualism at the highest levels, although it may still be prevalent at lower levels within the organization. Bureaucracies are a different matter. While bureaucratic agencies almost universally never cooperate optimally, the level of cooperation between such agencies has been particularly problematical in India. Saez (1998) points out that bureaucratic infighting between the central and the state governments has slowed down the formula-

tion and/or the implementation of policy. Consider the fact that, even with the initiation of economic reform, implementing a power project in India requires the foreign investor to obtain 43 clearances at central level and 57 at state level (*Business Line*, 2001).

Nature of the Opponent

Whether or not an individual is a member of the in-group or the out-group plays an important role in determining how Indians relate to each other (Sinha and Kanungo, 1997). Members of the same caste are members of the in-group, whereas members of another caste belong to the out-group. Within a caste group the family constitutes the basic in-group. One implication of this distinction is that anarchical individualism is unlikely to play a major role in shaping decision outcomes where the interaction involves members of the in-group. As Sinha and Kanungo (1997: 97) note 'Within an ingroup they tend to maintain good relationships, cooperate, care for each other, make sacrifices . . . etc.' In this negotiation setting Indians may also be much more willing to carefully examine the perspective of the other party instead of relying on their ideals in formulating and implementing their negotiating strategy.

Task Complexity

I define task complexity as consisting of (a) a priori integrative potential inherent in the negotiating situation; (b) the nature of the negotiation (transactional vs. dispute settlement negotiations); and (c) accountability pressures confronting negotiators (Kumar, 2004, forthcoming). The lower the a priori integrative potential of the negotiating situation, the more detrimental will be the impact of an idealistic mode of thinking on negotiation processes and outcomes. Transactional negotiations involve the fashioning of a new agreement between the parties, whereas dispute resolution negotiations involve the resolution of a pre-existing conflict (Brett,

2000). Dispute resolution negotiations are more difficult due to the presence of pre-existing emotions. An idealistic mode of thinking and anarchical individualism are likely to exacerbate the problems of a swift resolution in this situation. Negotiators are rewarded or punished by their constituents and this gives rise to accountability pressures. The more salient these pressures are in a given situation the more difficult it is going to be to resolve the problems. The greater the task complexity of a given negotiating situation the slower will be the process of negotiation and the greater the probability that it may lead to outright failure.

Individual Difference Variables

It is important to bear in mind that not all individuals in India will tend to think in highly idealistic terms or behave in a rigid way with members of the out-group. Differences in personality, life experiences, generational differences, and so on, may all contribute to variations in thinking patterns.

Conclusion

I have attempted to sketch out the impact of the Indian world view on the Indian approach to negotiations. I have argued that Brahmanical idealism and anarchical individualism help explain some critical dimensions of Indian negotiating behavior. The portrait of the Indian negotiator that I have attempted to spell out is a somewhat complex one. On the one hand the Indian negotiator has high aspiration levels, which is undoubtedly essential for attaining good outcomes, but at the same time, this negotiator may find it difficult to interact with an individual from a different agency should such cooperation be necessary for negotiating with an outside party. As has been argued, this combination often leads either to a slow pace of negotiations or to a failure because a foreign negotiator may find it hard to accurately gauge whether the negotiation process will be a

success or a failure. (The Indian negotiator, in contrast, may not necessarily give up so easily because he or she may be sensitized to this pattern of interaction.)

An intriguing question that needs to be fully explored is this: given that the Indian negotiators are often confronted with a discrepancy between the desired and the actual outcome, do they seek to resolve these discrepancies, and if so how? Perhaps the Indian tolerance for coping with discrepancies is higher than that typically found in western societies, and this may explain why a recurrence of this kind of behavior occurs. At this point this is pure speculation but surely it would help us to delve more fully into the psychology of the Indian negotiator. A related issue is the impact of an idealistic mode of thinking on the intensification of the psychological biases and the emergence of emotional dynamics. The linkages that I have attempted to draw here may well be worth testing through laboratory experiments and field studies.

What implications does this sketch of the Indian negotiation style have for foreign investors seeking to negotiate commercial contracts in India? It is crucially important to recognize that Indians are often looking for the best possible solution – they are less sensitive to the constraints imposed by time and outcome orientation (Gopalan and Rivera, 1997) and for that reason may be less willing to settle for anything other than an ideal solution. Negotiating with Indians, therefore, requires an excessive supply of patience as they seek to arrive at an optimal outcome. It is not a process that can necessarily be hurried along, and especially so when Indian negotiators wish to minimize negative outcomes. An extensive preoccupation with detail and what many may perceive to be an overcritical attitude are also reflective of the same idealistic mindset. You cannot directly challenge that mindset; instead, you have to educate them about the virtues of looking at the problem from an

alternative perspective, and if you are able to do that you are likely to be successful. But again this is not something that can necessarily happen during the course of a business trip.

It is also worth noting that Indians do not work well as a group at all; indeed, each Indian thinks that he or she knows best. As argued earlier, anarchical individualism is one of India's chief problems. This is undoubtedly a problem for you as well, as it complicates your effort in arriving at a negotiated settlement. There is not much that you can do here except to act in ways that lead to the emergence of an agreement that everyone can live with.

Finally, cross cultural theorists suggest that relationships are important in negotiating internationally (e.g. Adler, 1997; Cohen, 1997; Triandis, 1994). Although relationships are undoubtedly important in India, they are less important than in societies like China where *guanxi* plays an important role. The crucial implication of this is that while initiating and maintaining relationships may be to your advantage in India, it is by no means sufficient. What is crucial is the understanding of how Indians think and the implications for negotiating dynamics. It is such an exercise that I have attempted in this article. India is now emerging as a major player in the world economy and to fully capitalize on the opportunities here it is imperative to understand the mindset of the Indian negotiator.

Although the focus of this article has been on exploring the linkage between the Indian world view and Indian negotiating behavior, it also has broader ramifications. It suggests, first of all, that cross cultural researchers must pay greater attention to capturing the complexities of how managers think across cultures. While a focus on behavior is useful, it is insufficient for a number of reasons. First, a focus on behavior alone does not tell us the origins of that behavior. Second, the same behavior may originate from a number of different factors and, in the absence of a

good understanding of the origins of behavior, it may be difficult to fully comprehend the essence of a given culture. Third, the impact of thinking and reasoning processes is often multifaceted, unconscious, and has long-lasting consequences (see Nisbett et al., 2001 for an extended review).

It would also be useful to capture the complexities of managerial thinking in a variety of different strategic contexts. The strategic context utilized here involves negotiations, but they could as well involve other phenomena, ranging from more macro-level issues such as management of joint ventures/acquisitions or business-government relations, to more micro-level issues such as leadership/motivation. Finally, this article brings to the fore the importance of understanding the mindset of the other party when negotiating across cultural boundaries. Negotiation is essential to successful strategy implementation, and in a cross cultural context this requires that managers possess the ability to understand the mindset of the other party they are dealing with. This is a prerequisite for developing strategies that will be effective in the cross cultural arena.

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Résumé

L'idéalisme brahmane, l'individualisme anarchique et les dynamiques du comportement de négociation indien. (Rajesh Kumar)

Cet article analyse les implications de l'état d'esprit indien sur la dynamique du comportement de négociation indien. Les concepts d'idéalisme brahmane et d'individualisme anarchique sont utilisés pour capturer la nature de l'état d'esprit indien. L'idéalisme fait référence à la tendance des décideurs de chercher à atteindre la solution la plus parfaite. Tout écart entre les réalités du monde extérieur et la logique du monde intérieur tel qu'il se manifeste dans la recherche de la solution idéale ne sont pas problématiques puisque seul le monde intérieur définit la vraie réalité. Si l'idéalisme brahmane se concentre sur la pureté du monde mental, l'anarchisme individualiste met l'accent sur la préférence pour atteindre des solutions idéales à travers des formes absolutistes de comportement interpersonnel. Autrement dit, puisque chaque individu est impliqué dans la recherche d'une solution idéale, et que de surcroît, chaque solution idéale individuelle n'est ni meilleure, ni moins bonne que celle de leur contrepartie, atteindre cet idéal est problématique puisque dans ces conditions, le comportement de coopération est rare. En ce sens, l'individualisme anarchique fragmente plutôt qu'il ne favorise l'effort d'ensemble, ce qui provoque une dispersion de l'énergie du système. L'impact de cet état d'esprit sur le comportement de négociation indien est analysé et les implications de ce cadre théorique sont soulignées pour le développement des théories et pratiques de management interculturel. Les implications managériales sont identifiées pour la négociation avec des Indiens.

摘要

婆羅門的理想主義，無政府個人主義及印度談判行為方式的探討

Rajesh Kumar

本文分析了印度民族思想特點對印度方式談判行為影響。作者認為婆羅門理想主義的構成方式及無政府的個人主義體現了印度民族思想特點的實質。婆羅門理想主義反映了企業決策者尋找最佳解決問題方式的傾向。外在現實與由以追求最佳方式為特點的內在邏輯上的差異並不是問題的所在，因為是內在世界解釋外在現實。如果說婆羅門理想主義強調頭腦思想的純潔性，無政府個人主義則側重通過完全人際交往的形式來獲取完美解決問題的途徑。也就是說，由於每個人都致力於尋求最佳的解決問題的途徑，並且每個人的最佳途徑同其他人相比並沒有好壞之分，能否實現這一理想是一個問題，因為在這些條件下，合作行為要少發生。基於此種理解，無政府的個人主義行為因分散而不能成為整體的力量，其結果是整體系統中能量被消耗掉。作者在本文中分析了這個思想體系對於印度談判行為上的影響。同時作者也描述了發展出的理論框架在跨文化管理理論及實踐中的作用。作者也在對如何在同印度管理人員談判進行了探討。