



ISSN: 0975-833X

RESEARCH ARTICLE

MANAGEMENT OF DIVERSITY IN INDIAN COMPANIES

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 18th August, 2012

Received in revised form

20th September, 2012

Accepted 25th October, 2012

Published online 21th November, 2012

Key words:

Ancillarisation, Bargaining,
Constitution,
Customize Collective,
Heterogeneity,
Minorities Commission.

ABSTRACT

Diversity as "difference, unlikeness, variety and multiformity. Exploration of assumptions, beliefs and attitudes concerning diversity would provide us insights on the preferences of the members of an organization for similarities or differences, homogeneity or heterogeneity, otherness or inclusion. Of course, it is not always necessary that individuals and groups look at them in a dichotomous way and instead feel comfortable with both. The purpose is to explore the existing notions of members of an organizations and examine whether they consider diversity as adversity or advantage. It is possible to hold three views about people: all are alike, some are alike, or not two are alike. The purpose is to explore what is our view and what is the basis governing our own assumptions beliefs and attitudes so that, if need be, we modify them to overcome biases, prejudices and stereotyping.

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INTRODUCTION

The common refrain about India is that, "it is such a diverse country whatever we say of it, the opposite is equally true." "In India", Stern (1993) observes, we will find "a society that has, like Europe's the diversities of a continent and the unities of a civilization". Such is the measure of the magnitude of the nature of diversity in Indian Society whose features Indian industry had inherited. In India, generally speaking, the Weaknesses of societal diversity such as caste, for instance, are superimposes on its business and industrial organizations and exacerbated. The market place and workforce in India is becoming more diverse every day. In fact, workplace diversity is considered a major challenge and opportunity for human resource management. It makes integration both difficult and easy depending upon how diversity is viewed and made use of. The sources of diversity and its uses make a difference to what it means and how it impinges organizational purpose and human behavior at workplace and beyond. Workplace diversity in India may have been partly inherited from centuries of customs and practices, partly imposed from colonial heritage and largely acquired through corporate omissions and commissions. They have implications for global competitiveness and for managing human resources in 1990s and beyond.

Why Diversity Is Important

There are several reasons why organizations in India must pay attention to diversity. The Hudson Institute's Workforce 2000 report stirred the hornet's nest in the U.S. People started

realizing that they were fishing half the pond and the work in America cannot be designed for the 18 per cent white males only. The glass ceiling was uncovered. One out of four large companies started having diversity programmes, diversity training and even diversity directors. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has its hands full. It is not just the blacks and whites, males and females, but other forms of discrimination including those with AIDS and disabilities began to surface. Belatedly America awoke to the problem from all angles and there is hectic activity and resultant chaos in the diversity racket in the USA. Ironically American companies are "demand if they pay attention to diversity and they are also dammed if they don't. Reasons why companies must manage cultural diversity so as to gain competitive advantage. They are :

Cost Argument

As organizations become more diverse, the cost of a poor job in integrating workers will increase. Those who handle this well will thus create cost advantages over those who don't.

Resource – Acquisition Argument

Companies develop reputations on favorability as prospective employers of women and ethnic minorities. Those with the best reputations for managing diversity will win the competition for the best personal. As the labour pool shrinks and changes composition, this edge will become increasingly important.

Marketing Argument

For multinational organizations, the insight and cultural sensitivity that members with roots in other countries bring to the marketing effort should improve these efforts in important

ways. The same rationale applies to marketing to subpopulations within domestic operations.

Creativity Argument

Diversity of perspectives and less emphasis on conformity to norms of the past (which characterize the modern approach to management of diversity) Should improve the level of creativity.

Problem- Solving Argument

Heterogeneity in decision and problem solving groups potentially produces better decisions through a wider range of perspectives and more thorough critical analysis of issue.

System Flexibility Argument

An implication of the Multicultural model for managing diversity is that the system will become less determinant, less standardized, and therefore more fluid. The increased fluidity should create greater flexibility to react to environmental changes.

Sources of Diversity

The sources of diversity are many in India where tradition co exists with modernity. Here we discuss salient aspects of demographic, social cultural, techno economic and organizational factors that account for diversity in Indian context.

Demographic Aspects

Population Characteristics

The population of India has grown from 238.2 million in 1901 to 361.1 in 1951 to 846.3 in 1991 and over 940 million in 1996. The ratio of females to males is declining from 972 in 1901 to 946 in 1951 to 927 in 2000. The birth rates and the death rates have been falling, the latter more steeply than the former. The life expectancy of both males and females had more than doubled during the corresponding period, from less than 24 years in 1901 to over 57 in 2000. Analysis of 2001 census data reveals that the average family size among urban educated households is declining, with the extended joint Hindu family giving way, over the years, to nuclear family consisting of wife and husband and immediate children. But the average number of dependents among these households is increasing due to migration of friends and relatives from rural households to urban areas in search of livelihood. This is supposed to be increasing interaction between rural and urban households in India and facilitating.

Age

During 1987-1988 and 1999-2000 the proportion of the population below the age of 15 is increasing both among males and females in urban as well as the rural areas. The exception, however, is with regard to rural males in the age group 60 and above. Age mix diversity is found in organization which has had a long history. Such diversity is more glaring in such companies (a) which nearly stagnated for several years and suddenly experienced growth; (b) which are affected by mergers, acquisitions, etc.; and (c) which do not have a long term human resource plan and did not have steady in flows or out flows of personnel. Such diversity can be handled well by

long term human resource plans, steady recruitment and measures to check erratic trends in employee turnover, etc.

Education

In India the quality of the skilled labour is good. The proportion of skilled labour in the total labour force of the country being too small, there is a general dearth of skilled persons. Low literacy (52% as per 1991 census) and skill obsolescence heightens the technological lag even in the modern firms. The mismatch between acquired and required skills is evident by the rise in the educated unemployed on the one hand and the general dearth of skilled personnel on the other. The human resource or industrial relations system which operates in a country is, to a certain extent, a reflection of the social system in which it operates. Diversity in the social system could be either diversify or synergic, depending upon how it is viewed and made use of. Caste, religion, region, language, sex, age, and other demographic aspects are among the sources of diversity in any setting. Demographic changes affect several facets of organizations. Good management can contain the divisiveness that such diversity may contribute to, and instead, promote integration by accomplishing unity in diversity, bad management will exacerbate the same. With the result we have four broad levels of hierarchy, Class I (senior managers), Class II (middle and junior managers), Class III (clerical and skilled production and no production workers, non executive supervisors), and Class IV (unskilled production workers, sweepers etc.) that broadly reflects the diversity in Indian organizations.

Socio Cultural Aspects

Religion

Religion has and continued to play a significant part in the evolution of human civilization and culture. Religion comprises a set of organized beliefs that bind people in a close knit society. India is a secular, multi religious and multi cultural country. Hindus account for about 83 per cent of the population and Muslims another 13 per cent. All other religions together account for the balance, as per 1991 census. In India it is quite common to express their identity by the set they belong. Communal consciousness and their political manifestations from an inseparable integral part of India culture. And, this is exacerbated by the geo political considerations in South Asia, the bloody separation of the subcontinent at the time India became independent and subsequent developments. The effects on business and industry were similar, though varied in terms of proportion. There is a certain amount of occupational segmentation in some parts of India on religious and caste lines which creates difficult situations for commerce and business in times of border disputes across the country and within the country.

Caste

Caste has always been a major source of diversity in Indian society and therefore in Indian organizations. There are about 3,000 castes in India and each caste is a social unit in itself, its structures differing in each case. So strong is the networking that even a change in religion does not alter an individual's position in caste structure. The recent controversy over extension of caste based reservations to "Dalit" (underprivileged) Christians is one such manifestation. Even

among Indian Muslims, caste groupings are known to exist. Several factors have contributed to the emergence and development of caste system in India which, as Hutton (1980) puts it, led to "exploitation by a highly intelligent but by no means entirely altruistic hierarchy which had evolved a religious philosophy too subtle for the mass of the people." The social weaknesses of the caste system are superimposed in the organizational hierarchy.

Commitment to Social Equality

The Constitution of India allows affirmative action through reservations in education and employment. The Constitution also recognizes the principles of legal equality as a basic individual right. The directive principles of State policy underscore the Constitution's commitment to social equality. As Faundz (1994) observes, the main challenge the Supreme Court has confronted concerned "reconciling formal legal equality as an individual right with substantive equality as right with substantive equality as a right attached to a group of classes citizens". Articles 4 to 8 list the rights of equality under the Constitution of India which drew its inspiration fully from the Universal Human Rights Character. Article 14 recognizes the fundamental right of equality before the law and equal protection of law. Article 15 prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, sex, caste or place of birth. The Constitution, however, provides for adequate, not proportionate representation.

Affirmative Action

The Constitution of India provides for affirmative action through job reservations are based on caste plus socio economic backwardness. So, far, such reservations were restricted to government run or government aided institutions and not the private sector as such. Some states attempted to reserve more than 75 percent of the positions in education and employment to certain groups. Notwithstanding the abuses, the progress made in affirmative action is impressive. It is another matter that the progress still to be made to make equality a reality is stupendous. Public sector has been at the forefront in minimizing such biases. Literacy, industrialization, modernization and affirmative programmes also contributed to breaking such nexus between caste and occupation. In several large public enterprises it is not unusual to find different departments being dominated by people belonging to a particular region or caste. Even trade unions in certain metropolitan towns are beginning to be organized on caste lines. Over the years, this has been changing and the social profile of the union leaders is broadly beginning to reflect the social composition of the workforce.

Gender

Indian constitution seeks to establish an enlighten and egalitarian society. It gave its run women adult franchise and the rights to property, equal access to education, and equal right to run for public office. The laws do not discriminate against women. Yet, the reality is different. The ratio of women to men is declining. Though women constitute roughly half the population the literacy rates among women is much less than that for men in most states. An analysis of the data on the distribution of main workers by occupation and education and sex as per 1991 census reveals that the representation of women in various formal sector occupations is abysmally low.

Women are predominantly engaged in informal sector activities where wages and working conditions are inferior, largely unsecured and mostly devoid of social security benefits. The percent of females joining the workforce increased from 14 percent in 1971 to over 23 percent in 2001. But their representation in decision making roles continues to be low, as indicated in an empirical study of media organizations.

Language

The total number of languages spoken in India is a matter of debate. The 1961 and 1991 censuses had listed 1,652 languages as mother tongues spoken in India. These were grouped by linguists into 180 languages that evolved from the following six different ethnic groups that entered India since the dawn of civilization. Linguistic difference adversely impinges, to an extent, upon labour mobility. Concern for preserving a larger share of jobs for locals particularly in public employment was aggravated due to realization about glaring regional disparities, assertion by regional forces, the short term political calculations of governments at the state level and other parochial considerations. Knowledge of regional language is considered a must in recruiting managers particularly personnel and industrial relations managers at junior and middle levels. The ethnic diversity in India is manifest outwardly through the principal languages spoken in its various linguistic states. Check the workforce distribution in any organization in terms of the representation of males and females in various departments or functions and levels of the organization. Find out whether the distribution is fair in view of the fact that women constitute about 50 percent of the population, and identify the steps the organization needs to take if there is to be a more balanced representation for men and women.

Tech-Economic, Legal And Organizational Aspects

Parallel Co-Existence Of Different Technological Ages

In India it is seen that modern technologies co exists with old technologies. Ancillarisation and subcontracting apart, for a variety of other reasons a multitude of linkages between the formal and informal sectors of the economy provide glaring paradoxes, the presence of islands of prosperity amidst filth and squalor; muscle workers and mind workers at the same cargo terminal; etc. The key workplace diversity issue here is the parallel co-existence of different technologies in juxtaposition to each other in close proximity where people differ not in terms of making things and earning their livelihood, but also how they live their lives. There are other types of problems also which are rather peculiar to the third world countries. For instance, an unskilled worker in high tech firm works in air conditioned environment for eight hours. The remaining 16 hours he spends in a climate 41 degrees temperature. In an electronics firm there is 15 minutes cleaning off process through air filters before a person enters workshop at the start of the shift operation. But during the rest of the day when the person goes out for coffee or lunch and returns to workplace the same "purification" process is difficult to insist upon. These are perhaps cultural issues in an organization context. But the phenomenal diversity between organizational environment and the outside environment has immersed implications for work culture workplace governance arrangements.

Individual and Regional Economic Imbalances

India is a rich country of poor people; the economists bring out the glaring difference in income and consumption patterns in India by their five tier description of the Indian market as following:

- **The very rich** : 1million households (6 million people) with
- **The consuming class** : 30million households (150 million people)
- **The climbers** : 50million households (275 million people)
- **The aspirants** : 50million households (275 million people)
- **The destitute** : 35million households (210 million people)

The economists made the above classification on the basis of their ownership of consumer durables and consumption of non durables. They estimate 25 percent of Indian householders live in poverty. Significantly they found that “similar incomes in different parts of the country do not represent similar levels of purchasing power. The goods and services which people buy, as well as their prices, vary a great deal around the country. In big cities, the cost of transportation and housing are very high compared to smaller towns or cities. There are also additional costs because of the need in larger towns or cities to conform to peer levels in terms of dress, furniture etc. This requirement declines in small towns and is almost nonexistent in villages. That is why we prefer to conceptualize the structure of the market on the basis of consumption rather than merely incomes. “Even the world bank has begun to rank countries not only in terms of the per capita income measured in, say, dollar terms, but also in terms of purchasing power of the money. Regional imbalances have accentuated in some parts of India, over the years it produced unstructured situations in several states where not only managements and unions, but also the local district and state administration lost control. Unemployment and poverty led to pressure for employment of locals, even at the level of chief executive in central government companies. In several all India corporations which are affected by prolonged disturbances and regional struggles leading to occasional kidnapping and killing of key executives, expatriate experts and trade union leaders. In these companies, transfers and performs on an all India basis has become a major problem.

Legislation

The plethora of legislation resulted in diversity in its applicability at enterprise level. For instance, let us consider the case of the state owned public sector steel company, Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), which has plants in more than four states and marketing operations throughout the country and abroad. The regular production workers and other non production workers in all the plants are covered by the Industrial Disputes Act for purposes of resolution of collective disputes, etc. They are covered by the Factories Act, for the purposes of provisions concerning safety, working environment, etc. The company (SAIL) has over 220 trade unions. Production workers, office staff, supervisory staff and professional employees’ up to senior management staff (two

levels below the Board of Directors) are unionized. The trade unions of professional employees that organize even senior executives are euphemistically called officers associations. Most of the 220 odd trade unions are affiliated to nearly 18 national “federations of trade unions. The recognition of trade unions by the employer are governed by different stage legislations in different states where the plants are located. For many years the recognition of trade unions in various mines owned by the SAIL was governed by tripartite declaration called, the code of Discipline (1957). But even the Code of Discipline became virtually defunct. Even where laws were enacted by the Central Government, their administration is in the hands of the state governments concerned, except in public governments vary from state to state depending upon the specific aspects of the situation/case and also the political equations governing central state relations. The company being owned by the Central Government, the response of an opposition ruled from that of a State Government where the same party that rules at the central level happens to be in power.

Institutions For Promoting Diversity

India has setup, through separate acts of parliament the following five commissions to deal with relevant issues of diversity:

- Human Rights Commission
- National Commission on Women
- Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Commission
- Backward Classes Commission
- Minorities Commission

Subsequently several stage governments have also set up commissions for minorities, other backward communities and women with a view to recommend/formulate/implement measures for their upliftment. Over the years, these commissions have been acquiring greater teeth and judicial power. The 1996 general election manifestoes of several parties promised that if they from the government, they would give statutory powers and improved resources to the Human Rights Commission and other commissions.

Structural Adjustment Reforms and Diversity

As a result of structural adjustment reforms, introduced in the economy since July 1991, restructuring is taking place at macro, micro and mesa levels. The macro level reforms covering various facets of corporate governance (legal, fiscal, monetary, licensing, and other regulatory arrangements) have led to sectorial reforms at industry and enterprise level. Mergers and acquisitions are taking place on a scale that was unprecedented in the post Independence era. These events have added a new dimension/source of diversity in Indian enterprises. For instance, when the New India Bank merged with the Punjab National Bank in 1993, the major issue was a loss of identity for the employees of New India Bank. Since, it was felt that New India Bank had surplus staff in its headquarters and the headquarter itself has become redundant more than 1000 officers and other staff were transferred out of New Delhi with one stroke of pen. This was perceived as being discriminatory by the employees of the New India Bank who are already suffering from the loss of identity. Hectic collective

bargaining and a maze of court cases followed and the discontent is simmering.

Nationalization and Diversity

In the late 1960s and mid 1970s when about 20 banks were nationalized, the government decided to have a semblance of uniformity in their pay, benefits and service conditions. It appointed a special committee to recommend on the related matters. Though it was not easy, eventually, after protracted negotiations with the bank employees unions and bank officers associations some semblance of uniformity was finally achieved. However, in two other sectors where nationalization took place, there was a stalemate. When Esso and Burmah Shell were taken over by the Government to form a new Corporation called, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) in late 1970s, the Government of India wanted to bring the service conditions of the employees of the BPCL on par with other oil companies in the public sector. There was stiff resistance from the unions. Finally, as a unique case, the Government had to introduce a special Bill in the Parliament and enact a legislation concerning the service conditions of the employees of BPCL, however, have not taken kindly to the situation and had moved the court. But due to enormous diversity and complexity of the situation in different mines within and among various subsidiaries, till date uniform standing orders became elusive.

Collective Bargaining and Diversity

Collective bargaining is increasing the diversity at workplace if some of the agreements signed in the wake of adjustment reforms. Two tier wage systems are becoming the norm, in Western India through wage settlements. The workers' unions in the metropolitan cities have been in several cases, signing higher emoluments for existing employees and relatively lower emoluments to those who are newly recruited either in the same workplace or at a different place/plant. Some of the collective agreements signed in recent years also provide for weighing allowances and benefits to seniority of service. Also, some benefits are linked to attendance. Whether this will bring in disunity among trade unions and workers remains to be seen.

Company Practices

In this section we review the special features/problems and approaches of two organizations in regard to diversity. They provide insights into the complex and diverse range of problems and approaches already underway. It must be added, though, that diversity is still considered even by decision makers in many organizations as a US (American), issue, not an issue that concerns us.

Electronics Company

This is a US multinational in electronics industry with extensive operations throughout Asia as well. This is the first company in India to have had a Diversity Training Manager for South and South East Asia at the level of Vice President. The company believes in "Creating an inclusive work environment that values and benefits from different human attributes, experiences and enables all employees to develop and contribute to their full potential." The company has a three stage programmed on diversity management. Stage I is

creation of awareness with top management commitment. Stage II is creation of an inclusive climate. Stage III is where the company and executives will set goals and targets and work towards their realization. The focus here will be on the identification of diversity dimensions, establishment of matrices and goals covering aspects such as workforce profile, hiring data, promotions data, attrition data, employee satisfaction and formal complaints or grievances. Diversity learning in the organizations will be reflected in employment practices, with due emphasis on seeking work life balance. When the company began to share its concern and plans for diversity management, the initial response even from senior managers was one of disbelief. Most considered it is a "US" (American) issue and not the one that concerns "us". It was not seen as a business need. In less than two years, however, there is a welcome realization that diversity is critical to business success in all functions, all levels and all business.

Hotel Chain

This is the hotel chain of a highly diversified company which is part of a British multinational. The Indian companies' business growth and diversification successes surpassed its parent company's records in the past two decades. The company has hotels in metros as well as semi urban places of cultural heritage and touristic importance. Workforce diversity issues are considered a major problem in its semi urban locations than in metros. For instance, in one of the five star hotels in Northern India and another in Southern India located at places where feudal attitudes are still pervasive and caste differences critical, the interplay of informal caste groups significantly affect interpersonal relations, work assignments supervision and discipline, among others. This bred divisions and dissensions among amole and within employees belonging to different caste groups. In one location, several people belonging to a dominant community in the region were hired for junior positions as well. The hotel faced immense problem in making such employees undertake certain tasks considered menial them. Also, disciplining such employees became a problem because any action against an employee belonging to a dominant community considered as aggression on the community itself.

It is difficult for any manager who is perceived to be prejudicial (whether one is really or not) to the dominant community to survive and manage things. It took a long time for the hotel management to deal with the problem, but before they could do it, they had to do some ethnic engineering by way of more balanced workforce diversity in the place, over the years. In the other location, the employees belonging to some castes considered "low" are prevented from having food along with employees belonging to some other castes with notions that their castes are "high". They not only share the same dining table in staff dining area, but are preventing from using common cutlery or serving themselves from the dishes laid on the serving table. Some "high" caste person serves them and the supposedly the dishes lay on the serving table. Some "high" caste person serves them and the supposedly "low" caste persons take a used paper instead of a bone china plate that all others use, hold it before the person in charge of the service table, collect his/her share of food as if one is seeking a biksha (free food out of gratis than entitlement as a company perk), go out in to the open fields, take shelter under a tree and eat it, often in the company of stray dogs and other

animals or birds and being subjected to the vagaries of weather that could be either extremely cold or extremely hot. For many years, such humiliating treatment was tolerated. But, over the years awareness levels improved due to television, press and other media. Before such practices led to ugly incidents pitting one group of internal customers against the other, the management became sensitive and initiated measures to gradually remove such abhorrent practices. To begin with, a separate table was laid in the dining area itself where such employees were encouraged to take food and some of the senior executives belonging to other caste groups were induced to give company. After weeks later, the employees considered to belong to "low castes" were asked to serve food to other caste groups. The latter were told that the hotel could not tolerate discrimination any longer because they not only conflicted with the value system that the hotel wanted to encourage but also was unlawful. The employees, of course, had the freedom not to eat. In the beginning there was resistance and grumbling. But, over a few months, people got used to it and every one began to eat together.

Approaches To Dealing With Diversity

The major challenge of diversity concerns the need and the ability of organizations and societies to seek and achieve unity in diversity. It lies in organizational resilience to develop non discriminatory human resource and industrial relations policies. The differences in religion, caste, language, gender, race, perspective, personaliy, styles, values, feelings, etc., need to be honoured and encouraged and not merely tolerated. In India, the major problem is the pervasive influence of ethnic considerations in decision making and organizational processes. This problem needs to be understood in relation to the need to customize, than standardize, personnel policies, etc., so that the needs of a diverse workforce are reckoned and dealt with appropriately. The pluralish in personnel policies that the diversity in Indian context produces has often resulted in questions about equity and equality hat are guaranteed under law becoming a casualty in practice due to domination of tradition over moderniy and the "relative weakness and tradiness of the formation of modern elites in India.

The occupational structur of the workforce and the decline in employment intensity in agriculture and manufacture have created new pressures to maintain employment for the sake of maintaining employment, more so, in view of the absence social security arrangements. The focus is now shifting slowly to consider whether and how income protection can be afforded without job protection and associated rigidities at the workplace. Various groups n the society are trying t make the best of their diverse social base to seek special treatment in education, employment, etc. In some sense diversity became divisive too. It resulted in a quest for backwardness in anticipation special priveleges and concessions rather than a pusuit of excellence in the context of the shift towards market economy orientation and globalisation. Innovative organisations are seeing market place nad workforce diversity as key organisatioanl issues and are purposefully responding with strategies designed to integrated issues into their broader strategic objectives related to products, markets, resources and capabilities. A major preoccupation for HR/IR is to cope with the challenges of redundancy and retention, finding a balance between protecting unproductive jobs and creating more and better jobs. For, unemployment, powerty and sustainable

development have become the principal goals of social and economic development, not just in India, but the world over. The available portents are jobless growth in agriculture and manufacturing. The notion of technological determinedness in certain sectors (e.g., cargo handling, banking, etc.) raises issues concerning choice and discretion, if any, that the social partners have in preserving jobs regardless of the changes in technology, competition, etc. It also questions the capacity of any or all of he social partners in preventing the dicline in employment intensity, particularly, in agriculture and manufacturing.

Productivity improvement is also a major challenge. In a protected, sheltered cost plus market, doing less with more meant creation of more jobs, with customer and the exchequer paying the price of inefficiencies in resource use. But, with globalisation, the paradigm shift to doing more with limited sources became inevitable. The effect of affirmative programmes on individual motivation and organizaitional performanc are hotly debated without much empirical basis. Major decisions on privatization, etc., are halted on considerations because such decisions wre seen to affect certain groups of workers more than the others in view of the effects of the past linkage between caste and occupation. A classic case concerns the aborted attempts to privatize catering and cleaning services in the Indian Railways. Social pressures built on regional disparities are hindering and influencing organizational decisions on recruitment, placement, transfer and promotions. It depends, as some critiques have already done in other contexts, whether we consider diversity and part of the problem or part of the solution. It is clear, though, that the solution of the problem itself should not be the source of another problem. Much depends on whether we are addressing ourselves ot diversity issues from an exploratory framework or from a normative framework. There are clearly dangers in jumping to an analysis based on normative framework without adequate exploration and understanding of the subject in specific cultural contexts.

Conclusion

Till early eighties, the domain notion in Indian industry was that "differences are only skin deep" and the undrlying homogeneity is what really matters. The nineties saw a different trend. Today, diversity is not merely a challenge, but also affords opportunity . In order for people who feel who consider themselves as the "odd" persons in the team feel welcomed in the workplace, their differences should not only be recognized but also valued. It is need to consider diversity in a much wider sense than is the normal practice in academic literature on the subject. Diversity at workplace I not merely a function of demographic dynamics and differences but also the divergent elements within he social system. In the third world countries, the divergence between organisational environment and social environment of the community in which the employees live and spend a greater part of their worklife accounts for further complexity in understanding the diversity phenomenon. Also, diversity at workplace can be hightened or reduced through the kind of institutions in the society which the organisation functions.

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