Corporate reflections in a Hindu mirror

How insight in Hindu norms and values can help "Kessels & Smit, the learning company" in challenging situations during the set up of their entity in India.

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Corporate reflections in a Hindu mirror
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Introduction

1.1 A need for understanding perspectives

Working with and within other cultures is not self evident or easily organized. When borders fade away, cultures come up. Research and practice show that doing business in a particular nation requires a focus on a multi-dimensional understanding of its culture and business practices.[1] In the research on intercultural sensitivity, the Hawaiian social scientist D. Bhawuk concludes: *"It becomes clear that the reality of an increasing global marketplace underscores the importance of intercultural effectiveness for businesspeople the world over", p. 5.*[2] The vocal point of this study on bridging the gap between cultural differences was to show how understanding cultural differences and adapting to them is the key to success.

This thesis is focussed on working in India. It will examine the correlation between understanding the culture and working more productive with and within a different culture. 'Kessels & Smit, the learning company is an international group of fifty professionals with a passion for learning and development and is based in the Netherlands.'[3] Currently Kessels & Smit is establishing an entity of their company in India. They encountered cultural challenges during their previous work in India and found difficulties in how to understand the behaviour of Indians. By taking an experiential approach this study explores whether Hindu norms and values give insight in the patterns which Kessels & Smit had difficulties to cope with during the set up of their entity in India. Herein, this study shows how understanding the context and someone's beliefs helps to work more productively in that particular culture. The social relevance of this thesis is that it emphasizes the need for intercultural sensitivity in today's world. At the same time it has academic relevance because it stimulates to take an interdisciplinary approach to problems and illustrates the correlation between understanding culture and effective working which is not only applicable in the corporate world, but also in personal life.

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[1] D. Bhawuk *Intercultural sensitivity,* the journal of intercultural relations (New York 1996) *5*
[2] D. Bhawuk 5
[3] J. Kessels – *Kessels & Smit, the learning company* (Utrecht 1976)

1.2 The world is flat

The corporate world has changed. According to the American social scientist Phillip Brown diversity has become an integral part of business success. Enlightened self-interest has led companies to develop policies aiming at widening their recruitment and the development of talent within the organization irrespective of gender, ethnicity, race disabilities or social background. Because of this, companies have to become leaner, flatter, and more flexible, making them incompatible with the expectation of bureaucratic managerial careers.[4] The American writer Thomas Friedman argues in his book The World is Flat that globalization has led to increased interconnectedness among nations and we are much more interdependent than we were in the past. 'This interdependence requires us to work with people from different cultures, and it also requires many of us to live in cultures far away and quite different from our own. Despite the similarities offered by technology and urban centres, differences persist, and the vision of a homogeneous world is quite unlikely and perhaps flawed.[5]' This shows that the increasing connection between countries and the globalization among corporations does not mean that cultural differences are disappearing or diminishing. Friedman shows the opposite: "On the contrary, as economic borders come to fade, cultural differences appear, thus presenting us new challenges and opportunities."[6]

1.3 Intercultural sensitivity

In the article of Bhawuk: *Intercultural sensitivity in corporate world* he explains the concept of intercultural sensitivity: "It's is a concept which is frequently viewed as important in both theoretical analyses of people's adjustment to other cultures and in applied programs to prepare people to live and work effectively in cultures other than their own, p.7"[7] In his research he sees three aspects of international business that have been related to intercultural sensitivity: 'First, if people lack this sensitivity, they may be unsuccessful in accomplishing the goals of their overseas assignments. Further, the costs involved in calling back unsuccessful businesspeople, the administrative inconvenience of substituting for the returnees, and the disruption in people's lives are very high.[8]' His recent survey shows that ten to forty percent of the personnel from different companies in the United States which was assigned overseas had to be recalled or dismissed

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[4]P. Brown *the mismanagement of talent.* (Oxford 2004). The Oxford University press, *12*
[5] T. Friedman, *The World is flat*. (New York 2004) Farrar *6*
[6] T. Friedman,*10*
[7] D. Bhawuk *Intercultural sensitivity,* the journal of intercultural relations (New York 1996) *3*
[8] D. Bhawuk *7*

because of poor performance. The high failure rate implies that selecting people on the basis of technical expertise alone is not an economically rational decision and that cross-cultural adaptability is an important criterion. Second, sojourners have often complained about working at a reduced level of efficiency and effectiveness while living in another country because of cross-cultural differences. Third, because of the rapid growth of international business, no country can survive without participation in world trade.'[9] Thus, intercultural sensitivity is necessary when you work with different cultural backgrounds together.

1.4 The fundament of culture

Why is it difficult to work with another culture or view different than yours? Our cultures define our fundamental beliefs about how the world works and form ways in which we interact and communicate with others and develop and maintain relationships. The research of The American P. Stephenson *Cultural acquisition of a specific learned response among rhesus monkeys*[10] shows how fundamental culture is. 'In his experiment, five monkeys were put into a large cage. There was a stool in the middle of the cage and a banana was hung from the ceiling above the stool. Outside the cage, an observer had a hose filled with ice water. Within a few minutes, the most daring of the monkeys climbs on the stool to get the banana. This effort immediately engenders an ice cold shower for all of the monkeys. Several minutes later, another monkey tries, with the same result. The monkeys quickly learned the relationship between "get on the stool" and "an ice cold shower" and choose a way to protect themselves. As soon as one monkey even tries to go near the stool, the other four jump on him, screaming and gesticulating, to stop him before the observer got the "signal" to spray them all with ice water. Some time and several fights later, all the monkeys have learned the rule, and become quickly indifferent to the stool, as if it weren't even there. The defensive tactic they had imagined becomes superfluous. At this point in the experiment, the observer takes out one of the monkeys and replaces him with a new monkey (one that doesn't know anything about the cold shower). The new monkey immediately climbs on the stool to get the banana, and after a moment's hesitation, the four others jump on him.

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[9] D. Bhawuk, *8-13*

[10] G. Stephenson, *Cultural acquisition of a specific learned response among rhesus monkeys,*(Wisconsin 1966) Sussex publishers *2-6*

The new monkey learned a quick lesson, without any action on the part of observer. The ice cold shower was no longer necessary, and the banana rots nicely hung on the ceiling.'

This shows that the environment prevents the new monkey for experience the consequence of what happens when he climbs up the stool. In this way he knows that it is not good what he did, but he doesn't understand the reason behind it. The same behaviour is visible by people. You can compare it when you want to open a door but someone is stopping you before you opened it and pulls you back. You know that it is not good to open that door but you don't understand why it is a bad thing to open the door. The experiment continues and all the other five monkeys were replaced with a new monkey. Each time, the scene repeats itself: 'The new monkey tries to climb on the stool, is jumped on by the four others, until they are sure he has learned his lesson. The rule "No one should climb on the stool" is a lesson that new monkeys learn in this group. This lesson is specific to this group and to no other.

In the end, none of the five monkeys knows why they should not get on the stool, yet they defend the law with more vehemence than the original five. No one knows that, in fact, it was a quite effective way to avoid getting an ice cold shower. None of the new monkeys ever got the ice cold shower. They were stopped before the shower came. Even though the original reason has disappeared, the rule has become a norm for this group. A self-perpetuating norm, kept in place by interactions, and never questioned.'[11]
The research shows that with the passage of time, the same practice or habit is being followed by most people. They might never ask why something must be or is done in a specific way, whether there are viable options, and why those are not tried. Thus, a person practicing a particular culture would no longer be conscious of the underlying values or assumptions and the powerful way in which those values and assumptions affect the patterns of behaviour. Again there is the same behaviour visible with humans. When I was in January in Bangalore it was a festival day, in order to celebrate the new season. To check my assumptions I asked ten people what the reason was of celebrating this festival. Eight of them didn't know the reason and answered my question with; 'I only know that we eat a lot of sweets. 'This shows how powerful and fundamental culture is. This culture is founded in the beliefs that someone has about a situation.

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[11] G. Stephenson*2-6*

Instead of changing beliefs, it is more effective to understand beliefs and try to connect with them.[12]

1.5 Understanding culture

What helps in this process is to understand someone's beliefs. The Dutch social scientist Martijn Frijters shows in his book: *The Power of Thoughts*, how understanding someone's beliefs or understanding your own beliefs can help to develop different perspectives on situations which helps in finding a suitable solutions.[13] In his work he applies the RET theory of Albert Ellis. Ellis' theory helps us looking differently to situations. He shows that the actions in certain situations do not define our feelings or emotions. It are our thoughts about the situation which causes our emotions. We can change those thoughts about a situation by understanding the belief behind the action in the situation.[14] This analyse will use this approach to put the situations in broader perspective.

In this thesis Kessels & Smit will function as a case study. This research will explores how Kessels & Smit can work more productive in a different culture (India) by understanding the context and norms and values of the country wherein they work.

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[12] M. Frijters, *De kracht van gedachten* (Culemborg 2011)van Duuren management *3*
[13] M. Frijters, *3-8*
[14] M. Frijters,*3-8*

2. Kessels & Smit in India

India is booming and the place to invest in for companies today.[15] Kessels & Smit also fell for the multiple opportunities which India offers. Currently employees are travelling continuously to and trough India, to search for opportunities to found an entity of their company there; K&S India.

2.1 The development of India

India is viewed as a key (regional) power with one of the world's fastest growing economies. In a time of global economic crisis, India is one of the few countries which still managed to have economical growth as table 1 shows. Many companies are settling in India and want to tap into this booming market.

Table 1: India GDP Growth Rate 1 [16]

India is fast emerging as a modern economic and military superpower and its popular culture, represented prominently by the colourful creations of Bollywood, is attracting more and more fans across the globe. Interest in its rich traditional culture, its philosophy, and spirituality is growing worldwide too.[17] India is the only major modern country that, within in its contemporary culture, has preserved a substantial part of its ancient cultural traditions.[18] However, these achievements have been shared only by a

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[15] P. French, *India* (Amsterdam 2011) Allen Lane *6*
[16] www.tradingeconomics.com wanneer geraadpleegd?
[17] K. Kloistermaier, *A survey of Hinduism,* (New York 2007) Suny *XIII*
[18] S. Tharoor, *The elephant, cell phone and the tiger.* (New York 2004) Arcade Publishers *19*

section of Indians. In his book[19]; *a better India, A better world*, the founder of IT Company Infosys Narayana Murthy shows that more than 300 million Indians still do not have freedom from hunger, illiteracy and disease. The enigma of India is that the progress in higher education and in science and technology has not been sufficient to take 350 million Indians out of illiteracy. 318 million people in the country do not have access to safe drinking water and 250 million people do not have access to basic medical care.[20]

India is very divers and has different faces. Both Bollywood as the poverty are a part of India. That's why it is often named a unity in diversity. According to Shashi Tharoor, member of the Indian parliament, India is a country that manages to live in several centuries at the same time. "*It has the mindset of the 19th century, instruments of the 20 century and the needs of a 21 century*, p. 241"[21]

Both the differences in background and the different needs that Indians have make it difficult for companies to settle in India. Thereby comes that there is a fundamental difference between the culture in India and the Netherlands. In 'being cultures', like India, people often behave in ways considered suitable to their social roles. This is often a problem for Westerners who are doing-oriented. Business man B. Peterson, gives in his book *Cultural intelligence: a guide to working with people from other culture* an example of this. 'Westerners sometimes experience the talk and behaviour of Indian people as performance, as dramatization of the self and as not very relevant to what is important, which in the Westerners' minds is to get something done.'[22] These few differences in thinking show that norms, values and processes which are applied in the West (and more specifically the Netherlands) don't need to work in India.

How can you discover and understand these Indian beliefs, styles and practices? Hinduism is prevalent in India and has much influence on daily life of Indians. Understanding Hinduism can give a broader perspective to understand India and Indians. 'Hinduism is not only a religion; It's a way of life.'[23] Understanding the traditional norms and values of Hinduism, which are inherited in the Indian mindset, can

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[19] N. Murthy, *A better India, a better* world (London 2007) Penguin Global
[20] N. Murthy, *43*
[21] S. Tharoor, *241*
[22] B. Peterson, *Cultural intelligence: a guide to working with people from other culture*(Yarmouth 2004) Nicholas Brealey Publishing *14*
[23] S. Tharoor *23*

help Kessels & Smit to work more productive in India. To do this, this thesis firstly explores the way Kessels & Smit has been working during their time in India and outlined patterns in the challenges they dealt with. After this, the situations and the beliefs Kessels & Smit had about the situation where this was connected this to the Hindu norms and values which are, in this thesis, interpreted as the beliefs of Indians of the situation. Knowing the Indian view on a situation, the Kessels & Smit India team can change their beliefs about the situations which has effect on the emotions or feeling they first had. On every situation I applied Ellis' RET model.

2.2. The objectives of Kessels & Smit

Kessels & Smit, *The Learning Company*, founded in The Netherlands in 1976 by Prf. Dr. Joseph Kessels and Cora Smit (Msc), is a group of fifty professionals with a passion for learning and development. From their bases in The Netherlands, Belgium, the United Kingdom, South Africa and Germany they support individuals, organisations and communities around the world in learning & development issues. The purpose and idea behind the company was to create a laboratory in which to develop practices, concepts and approaches for new ways of learning and organising, which helps individuals, groups and organisations to become the best they can be. Their work areas are: learning and development in organizations, organizational excellence, management development, competency-based learning and assessment, coaching for personal and professional growth, learning networks, strategic change as a learning process.[24] The professionals Paul Buhrs, Pepijn Pillen, Shridhar Bharatan, Robert van Noort and Paul Keursten are stakeholders of Kessels & Smit India and are the Kessels & Smit India team. This team also works in South Africa and the Netherlands (where they are based). Setting up in India is a professional and cultural exchange for them. They aim to tap into the upcoming market of the Human Resource Development area India in, deliver service in the need for education and development, expanding their community and create assignments internationally and to create a self regulated company based on local entrepreneurship.

2.3 The challenge for K&S

The professionals of Kessels &Smit are specialists in the area of learning and development but not in the area of Indian culture and the customs of Indians. They

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[24] J. Kessels, *5*

encounter lot of challenges in interaction with the Indians and Indians are confusing for them. The K&S India team is not aware of the Indian context neither did they try to understand the situations the way Indians do. Their perspective on situations was only based on their western framework.

Kessels &Smit asked me to guide them in this process. The courses of Language and Culture studies taught how to find solutions in taking an interdisciplinary approach. The gained knowledge about India is obtained of the other bachelor, Art and Languages of India and Tibet and the course 'Hinduism and Buddhism.' For nine months, from September 2011 till May 2012, I observed the Kessels & Smit India team during their visits in India and also tried to establish their entity in India myself. The visits to clients, maintaining contact with them, the inspiring conversations with people about India and business life in India, organising and attending events and to reflect with the K&S India team on this helped to discover the patterns which are crucial and challenging for them in enterprising in India. For Kessels & Smit there are five specific areas in which they encountered challenges during working in India. Some personal experiences will illustrate the challenges they face (d).

2.3.1 Networking

Case

Paul Mathew is an Indian consultant in organisational development and CEO of the company 'Corporate Theatre'. He uses theatre as the medium of learning as well as the platform for delivery. In our e-mail conversations and phone calls there was a good connection between our personalities. This could be the start of a good partnership. There was not only alignment in our approach in work but also alignment in our thinking about other aspects of life. When my colleague Pepijn Pillen came to India we visited Paul Matthew. This visit was a confirmation of what I already felt. There was mutual connection. As a follow up on this meeting I joined one of his workshops to understand his way of working and we spend some time together. Our relation became more meaningful and there was a good basis to work with in the future. Next day I met him and his colleagues again and we had a good conversation about how to implement our ideas and really start working together. I started talking about how we already could do some pilots or workshops together because I saw the picture in my mind about how we could make a new program based on his and our tools. This picture was focused on

the outcome. When I asked in a later phase why we still haven't done a session together, he gave me feedback on this:

 "If this fits in well with your plans and priorities, let us keep it open ended. If you would like to move it faster please go ahead with your plans. I do not want to slow down your pace in any way. As with all that we have done so far, we want this to happen 'organically' without forcing it. It will pay off in the end".[25]

Also during other meetings there was the pattern that the K&S India team was often already ahead of things and was working towards the result, while the Indians weren't focused on the results at all. They forced me to be more 'shanti shanti.' As long as the steps that we took, or work that we did, were with good intentions, good results were the outcome.

Pattern underlying the case

Indians seem very open for new contacts and are curious to learn more about you. In conversations Indians can ask an intimate or personal question which makes it immediately a different kind of conversation than just chitchat. 'Just' a connection or conversation turns into a meaningful conversation. This process seems to go faster than in the Netherlands. Conversations in the Netherlands tend to stay on a superficial level in the beginning. However, the final step, when you start working with or expect something from Indians, takes more time than in India then it takes in the Netherlands. The Kessels & Smit India team sees this pattern not only with business deals, but also with corporations or on personal level.

2.5.2 Challenges on the Indian work floor

Case

Taronish is the executive of human resources of the company OMCI (Orinoco Marine Consultancy India Pvt. Ltd).

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[25]P. Mathew, email *on 23 January 2012*

We had several conversations about the challenges which he has while working in the company. He especially had a challenge with motivating people. This was one of his messages:

"Several gaps exist in our operations and it seems as I am still getting very few pushes from any of you, rather there is a lazy expectation that I (or the ships) will pull when something is needed, and you can then jump into action. What is most unacceptable is the need to remind some of you on multiple occasions for project feedback, leave aside deliverables. I have requested some of you several times on issues that need attention, and provided ample time for these very basic queries to get answered. Yet I am still waiting. Please make double sure that it is captured in a list, and that I never have to ask you twice. "[26]

He agreed with my opinion that this might not be the way to motivate his people. When I told him about our (Western, Dutch) methods and how research shows you can also motivate people in different ways he was very eager to learn more about this and to apply it in his company. However, when he understood that we use an appreciative approach to motivate people he started to laugh: "Does K&S also have other approaches than that soft and cuddle approach? It might work in the Netherlands, but here it doesn't."[27]

Pattern underlying the case

Although people face the same problems in organizations, what is believed to be an appropriate solution to those problems is different in every part of the world. The challenges which Indian companies have are the same as companies in other parts of the world deal with. However, the solution or approach is different. You can make or break a deal by using the right approach that serves their (Indian) needs in the best way.

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[26] T. Kahjotia, *email on 13 September 2012*
[27] T. Khajotia, *conversation on 23 September 2011 in OMCI office*

2.5.3. Culture

Case

Sangeeta is an Indian consultant who was interested to work with Kessels & Smit. I met her once, before I went to India. When I was in India, she invited me to stay with her in her house in Delhi. Inviting someone to your house, even if you don't know that person is something I don't encounter many times in the Netherlands. Sangeeta doing that illustrated the hospitality of Indians to me. It was a nice gesture but I didn't feel at ease in her house at all. It was difficult to explain the feeling because she was nice to me and didn't say mean things to me but there was a hostility, which I didn't like. Later it became clear that she didn't have clarity about my position and that I was competition for her. In very subtle ways she showed this hostility to me. It was very difficult for me to address the issue. We both found a way to deal with it. However, the tension grew and I encountered much struggling with this because it made me unsecure and powerless. We currently have a fine relationship and we can be in the same room but sometimes I'm still wondering what it is I did wrong. In other, similar situations with Indians where I felt that I was not aligned with a person I choose to address the issue which gave me clarity about the beliefs of that person but also damaged the relationship which was in origin very good.

The pattern underlying the case

In the Western perspective people tempt to get clarity and understand why something happened for that reason or why someone reacted in that way. It's our way to understand situations and move forward. However, the experience is that this approach doesn't always works in India. It can even be harmful. It's a difficult situation to be in; not talking about certain situations and find solutions to a problem, but feeling uncomfortable or bringing certain subjects on the table but taking the risk that the relationship will be damaged.

2.5.4. Community versus the Individual

Case
A company asked me to do a session with their operational level about personal leadership. The company wanted these people to be more motivated and more connected with the company. At the start, I asked everyone to name their favourite hero and shared with them that Whoopi Goldberg is mine. From the fifteen people, two of them said Bruce Lee and Gandhi ji, but the others named their father or mother as their hero. Their voice and the expression on their face changed when they started talking about their parents. There were different things they shared about their parents, but their stories all had one thing in common: their heroes faced many difficulties in life, struggled, but overcame them. When I later had a conversation about the session with the manager, she explained to me:

"In India the parents are more heroic than any other person. You see them every day and they do a lot of sacrificing for you. They do everything to give their children a better future than they had. My dad never studied, but he always stimulated me and my three sisters to learn as much as possible."[28]

Pattern underlying the case
Indians find social security in their community. According to the model of The Dutch social scientist G. Hofstede India is a more 'collective' country than the Netherlands. Collectivism recognizes the group, and not the individual, as the basic unit of survival. Collectivist societies provide lifetime protection to the individual trough the in-groups, in return for an unquestioning loyalty. Group recourses are shared. The opposite is in an individualist society, which consists of a majority of two-parent or single- parent families, where an individual sees himself as a distinct I, who is surrounded by others not because they belong to this group, but because of their individual preferences.[29] In many situations the Kessels & Smit India team appeals on the personal interest or motivation while the Indian finds the community interest more important at that moment.

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[28] K. Chandra, conversation on OMCI office on 17 February 2012
[29] T.Hofstede, "*Cultures and organizations: software of the mind*", (Londen 2005) McGraw-Hill *53*

2.5.5 Entrepreneurship

Case

Paul arrived in India for work visits wherein he meets new clients and support our Indian colleagues. This was after discussing with Marc, if he needed his support in India. It was on his own expense and difficult to plan because he also had other obligations. When we met around noon Marc was totally relaxed and was chitchatting. This was not why Paul flew from the Netherlands to India. I saw Paul's irritation grow during the day. Marc clearly didn't prepare or arrange anything while Paul especially came to India to support him.

The pattern underlying the case

The model that K&S uses is based on local entrepreneurship and self leadership. At that moment Paul realized that this model might not work in India. Entrepreneurship and self regulation was perhaps something he couldn't ask from the Indian professionals. In India there are a lot of factors of influence that causes, in western view, a lack of self regulation.

In this chapter the different patterns are outlined. The framework about Hinduism in next chapter will help systemize the most important norms and values in Hinduism which are an explanation for the patterns outlined in chapter two.

3. Hinduism

3.1 The difficulty of defining Hinduism

Scholars generally who refer to 'Hinduism' have agreed that this religion is notoriously difficult to define. 'Traditional Hinduism' by definition, these scholars claim, cannot be defined. It is too fluid, too all-encompassing, and most of all too 'tolerant' to be subjected to a concept. According to some, in fact, 'Hinduism' probably does not exist at all. Robert Frykenberg argues in a recent article that: "There has never been any such a thing as a single 'Hinduism' or any single 'Community' for all of India. Furthermore, there has never been any one religion— or even one system of religions—to which the term 'Hindu' can accurately be applied. No one so-called religion, moreover, can lay exclusive claim to be defined by the term 'Hinduism.''[30] Hinduism is often explained by metaphors in trying to define this religion. Hinduism, according to the English professor. Monier-Williams), is like an Indian banyan tree whose 'single stem sends out numerous branches destined to send roots to the ground and become trees themselves, until the parent stock is lost in a dense forest of its own offshoots'.[31]

At all times the flexibilities of Hinduism are also showed in the very obvious difference between theory and practice. Trying to understand Hinduism by merely paying attention to its verbalized theory without having observed its living practice, makes it more unlikely to understand it. Hinduism is not a 'case' to be scientifically studied and to be reduced to preset categories taken from Western culture but it is an expression of human nature and culture to be accepted on its own terms.[32]

3.2 The foundation of Hinduism

3.2.1 The origin of Hinduism

The Muslims, who began invading India from the eight century onward, used the term Hindu as a generic designation for non Muslim Indians, identical with 'idol worshippers.' Thus, the name Hindu was given by outsiders. The Vedas, the oldest literary monument

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[30]R. Frykenberg, *Land control and Social Structure in Indian History* (Madison, 1969) University of Wisconsin Press *15*

[31] B. Smit, *re-envisioning Hinduism and Evaluating the Hinduvta Movement* (Religion, , 1996) Academic Press limited

[32] B. Smit, *123*

of the Indian people, are universally considered the foundational scriptures of Hinduism. When the Aryans, the authors of these hymns, moved 2000 BCE into northwest India, they imposed a caste system to organize the new society created by their arrival. They initially put together a hierarchy of four varnas. 'A term to use an ancient textual four-class division of human beings into: *Brahmans* (priests and scholars), *Ksatriyas* (warriors and kings), *Vaisyas* (commoners), and *Sudras* (servants of the others).' [33]

It's the question whether the *Vedas* are brought in by the Aryans. The theory of an Indian indigenous origin of the Veda contradicts this. 'Indian scholars pointed out all along that there was no reference in the Veda to a migration of the Aryans from outside India, but that all the geographical features mentioned in the Rig-Veda were those of north-western India and that there was no archaeological evidence whatsoever for the Aryan invasion theory.' Instead of speaking of an Indus Valley civilization, the term *Sarasvati-Sindu* civilization has been introduced, to designate the far larger extent of that ancient culture.[34]

3.2.2 The scriptures

'Let the scriptures be your standard for what should be done and what should be not done. Knowing the regulations of the scriptures you should do your work here.' - Bhagavad-Gita XVI, 24[35]

The Hindu way of life is principally originated on the teachings in the *Vedas* – Sanskrit religious scriptures. Insight in the scriptures will help clarify the norms and values of the Hindu. 'The *Rig-Vedas*, which was recorded in a form of Sanskrit over 3000 years ago, is the oldest of the four *Vedas*. It has 1,208 hymns to a pantheon of gods. Over the years the teachings have passed on from one generation to another trough memorisation and word of mouth. Two other *Vedas*, the *Yajur Veda* and the *Sama-Veda*, are later supplemented than the *Rig- Veda*. The fourth *Veda, the Atharva-Veda,* was added perhaps a hundred years later.'[36]

Many Hindus nowadays have an insufficient understanding of the religious scriptures. Some very educated Hindus cannot even recollect with accuracy the names of the four *Vedas*. The common man believes in the theory of *KKarma* and has learnt the Hindi way of living trough rituals, customs and beliefs passed on by word of mouth from one

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[33] Herman Kulke, '*A history of India'*, (, Australia, 1987) Croon Helm *31-42*
[34] K. Kloistermaier, *XIII*
[35] P. Bhalla,*15*
[36] H. Rodriques, *Introducing Hinduism* (New York, 2006) Routledge *24*

generation to another.[37] The Hindu way of life has also been profoundly influenced by the *Upanishads* – Sanskrit religious scriptures. They came as the final portion of a Veda, and are also termed as *Vedanta*. While acceptance of the Veda as revealed is certainly the most basic criterion for declaring oneself a Hindu, there is another genre of literature that has shaped the minds and hearts of present-days Hindus much more profoundly; the two great epics, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* and the puranas, the true bibles of the Hinduism. '*Ithihasa* is the collective term for the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. '*Itihasa- Purana* is often called collectively the fifth *Veda*, the Holy book of the mass of people who were not entitled to study the four *Vedas*. The epics date back to over 2,000 years.'[38]

'Along with the *Puranas*, the *Dharmashastras* and *Dharmasutras* provide many guidelines on life and living. Of these, *Manusmriti* is perhaps the most important.[39]' What is significant is that the study of these is restricted to a learned few.

The triad of instruments for the attainment of religious knowledge consists of *Sruti, Smriti* and *Nyaya. 'Sruti* literally means 'that which has been perceived through hearing. As a technical term it comprises the scriptures with the highest theological value, containing supreme and unquestionable authority. *Smrti*, literally "that which has been remembered', tradition, constitutes the second highest religious authority. This term is used in either a narrower sense, comprising, only the *Dharmasastras*, or in a wider sense, including *Itihasa and Purana*. For daily live *Smriti* is often of greater importance than *Sruti*; it affects the life of every Hindu in many details. *Nyaya,* the logical argument or rational proof – is the third avenue of religious knowledge in Hinduism. *Nyaya* too is used in a general sense of logical proof and as the specific name of a school of thought, which specialized in logic and epistemology.'[40]

3.2.3 The Bhagavad-Gita
'I consider myself worshipped trough the sacrifice of knowledge by the one who reads this our sacred conversation. And a person who listens to it with faith and without

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[37] P. Bhalla,*11*
[38] K. Kloistermaier,*30-40*
[39] K. Kloistermaier,*45-50*
[40] K. Kloistermaier,*46-52*

scoffing shall be liberated and attain to be happy realm of the righteous.' - Bhagavad-Gita XVIII, 70ff. [41]

Many are convinced that the *Bhagavad-Gita* is the key book for the re-spiritualization of humankind in our age. The *Bhagavad-Gita* in its present form constitutes chapters 23 to 40 in *the Bhismaparavan* of the *Mahabharata*. The *Bhagavad-Gita* is inserted just before the outbreak of the actual battle between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. 'Arjuna is one of the five Pandava brothers who see themselves as the rightful claimants of the kingdom and is seen as the hero of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. With him is Krishna as his charioteer, a befriended king of Dcaraka, whose divine character is to become manifest only during the narration of the *Gita* itself.[42] The *Gita* is a dialogue between God in the appearance of Krishna and Arjuna. In this part of the book he stands opposite of his friends and family and refuses to fight. Krishna however knows to convince Arjuna to follow his duty as warrior. His message is brief; you have to fight Arjuna! Krishna persuades Arjuna with arguments taken from the various established viewpoints, appearing in the process not only as the charioteer of Arjuna but as the great teacher of wisdom.[43]' In this moment Krishna also gives his teachings to Arjuna. How someone has to become free from the illusion that this world is, and experiencing our true blissful, eternal nature. Anyone can do it. Krishna explains in Bhagavad-Gita all the essential spiritual truths: the difference between the soul and the body, the difference between the soul and the Supreme Soul (God), the science of reincarnation, the nature of time, the ultimate goal of yoga, why different kinds of religion appeal to different kinds of people, and the ultimate purpose of human life. Wherein your soul can't die, but lives further.[44] When this doesn't have effect, he shows his true divine appearance and the story ends with a renewed injunction of Krishna for Arjuna to fight, promising him final liberation.[45] Mahatma Gandhi sees in the *Bhagavad-Gita* an allegory of human life that has to fight out the dilemma between divinely ordained duty and personal preference.[46]Many Hindus have considered the *Gita, Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* not only a book to be read and studied, but they take it as a guide in their lives. Since ancient times a teacher has been accepted as the guru- a mentor, preceptor and spiritual guide. In the epic *Mahabharata* there are several stories

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[41] P. Bhalla,*35*
[42] K. Kloistermaier,*75*
[43] K. Kloistermaier,*75*
[44] K. Kloistermaier,*77*
[45] K. Kloistermaier,*77*
[46] K. Kloistermaier,*74*

show the position of teacher and pupil is within Indians and can help understand how deep this it inherited is in the Indian minds:

"Once a Young Bhil lad Eklavya went to Guru Dronacharya to learn the art of archery. However, Guru Dronacharya refused. Not discouraged by the refusal Eklavya made a statue of the Guru, Eklavya practices regularly and became an expert archer.
One day when Guru Dronacharya went to the forest along with the Pandavas, a dog accompanied them. In excitement, the dog ran ahead. When he saw Eklavya, he began barking. It was time for the evening prayer, and not to be disturbed by the barking of the dog. Eklavya shot arrows in such a manner that the dog was not hurt but he could not bark with a closed mouth. Frightened, the dog rushed back to guru Dronacharya and the Pandavas. Surprised at what they saw, they rushed to meet Eklavya. 'Son,' Dronacharya inquired, 'where did you learn such archery?" 'I have learn it trough your favours, Gurudev," Eklavya responded. Guru Dronacharya was shocked to hear how Eklavya had become an expert. He had already committed to Arjuna that he would be the finest archer of all time. This lad was already ahead of him. Guru Dronacharya was lost in thought. What should he do? Then he had an idea. Eklavya had said that he had learnt it trough his favour. If so, then Eklavya owed him <u>guru dakshina</u>, the honarium.
When Guru Dronacharya asked him for the honorarium, Eklavya asked him what he desired. Remembering his promise to Arjuna, he asked him for the thumb of his right hand. Without a thought, Eklavya cut the right thumb of his hand and place this near the feet of the guru. Guru Dronacharya was more than pleased. He could now keep his promise to Arjuna. He blessed Eklavya and said, 'Son! As I promised, Arjuna may become the greatest archer ever, but as long as there is the sun, the moon and the stars, you shall forever be remembered for your Faith in the guru. You shall forever be remembered for your devotion to the guru and be honoured for it." [47]

3.3 Social framework of Hindus
No other religion has a many gods and goddesses as Hinduism. 'However, all those gods are a manifestation of just one god, known by many names and is manifested in three forms, in the triad Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.' In that way Hinduism is a monotheistic

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[47] P. Bhalla, *Hindu rites, rituals, customs and traditions,* (, Delhi, 2009) Hindology books 43

religion. The three together are responsible for creating the universe, preserving it and destroying it to repeat the circle once again.[48]

Brahma is the first member of the Hindu triad. He created the universe and all things in it. Vishnu is the second god of the Hindu triad and is the preserver. He has several incarnations, but there are ten that hold special significance. Shiva is the third god of the Hindu triad, the destroyer. He represents both death that destroys, and reproduction that follows destruction.

'As the teachings of Krishna to Arjuna showed, Hindus believe that men are divine in nature. The basic purpose of a human being is to realize this divine nature within him. 'Hinduism firmly declares that the ego is the root cause of all suffering. If an individual has to escape from suffering he has to cease to be his egoistic self and identify himself with his limitless inner self. Hindus believes unquestionably that the world is an illusion or *Maya*. When a person overcomes this illusion trough detachment and withdrawal of senses he will become qualified for self-realization.' These activities, which produce good or bad deeds, are led by desire. Thus, the human has to suppress his own essential self that is led by accumulated activities and makes new ways of desires.[49]

An individual must learn to see the omnipresence of God in everything and everywhere. 'He who sees Him in all and all in Him would lead a deeply religious and spiritual life, because having realized the presence of God in all; he develops compassion and right attitude towards the whole creation of God. He will gain this by living in strict accordance with the laws laid down in the scriptures. By performing daily rituals, various *samskaras* and live the four *ashramas* or stages of his life in accordance with the rules prescribed in the scriptures. The rituals are meant to inculcate feelings of reverence and devotion to God or Gods.' The whole process of living is a great ritual in which the individual offers within him and reaches the highest state of realization.[50] Furthermore the Hindus believe in reincarnation. 'You come to earth with your *Karma* of your past life, do good deeds in your life and with that you pass a good *Karma* trough your reincarnation in your next life. '[51]Hindus believe that you eventually, after multiple reincarnations, attain the position of a Brahmin man. In this position you are able to realize yourself and to obtain final freedom by following the path of meditation and

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[48] P. Bhalla,*24*
[49] J. Yajaram,*45*
[50] J. Yajaram,*51*
[51] P. Bhalla, *93*

becoming one with the Absolute God. Man is only one stage in this evolution of life and in the soul's upward journey towards such liberation.

3.3.1. Dharma

Dharma presupposes a social order in which all functions and duties are assigned to separate classes whose smooth interaction guarantees the wellbeing of society as a whole, and beyond this maintains the harmony of the whole universe. 'The aim of *Dharma* is freedom from conflict. Hindus believe that when your desires are in opposition to the universal law, there is a conflict. Unless you are completely insensitive, you will be torn between the two.' [52] Following *Dharma* means doing what is right consciously, even when things go against your likes and dislikes. After a while right action becomes spontaneous. *Dharma* means fulfilling one's duty in one's station in life, which is determined by birth not merit.

 Dharma, etymologically from the root dhr-, 'to sustain' or 'to uphold,' has been given diverse meanings in various Indian schools of thought. At one end of the spectrum there is the grammatical or logical use of the term Dharma as merely an element of a word or of a sentence.[53] At the other end is the onto cosmological interpretation of Dharma as that 'which gives sustenance to the universe or the universal principle of all things.'[54] Generally, it is used with reference to 'religion' in the specific sense of socio-ethical laws and obligations. *Manusmrti*, the Laws of Manu, the most important authority on the subject, identifies the sources of *Dharma* as 'the *Veda* in its entirety, the traditions (*smrtis*) fixed by men conversant with the *Vedas*, the customs of righteous people and one's own conscience. The promise is held out to the man who follows all the rules laid down in Manu's law that 'he will obtain fame here on earth and supreme bliss beyond.'[55]

 As J.D.M. Derret points out*, Dharma* is not the result of theoretical or logical conceptualization but of experience lived trough by several generations and interpreted in the spirit of these experiences.[56] It is based on notions of authority, of duty, of consensus. It is in many ways the very opposite of 'law' as understood in the modern West, with its emphasis on equality, rights and majority votes.[57]

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[52] G. Das, *The difficulty of being good.* (Delhi, 2003) Penguin global *345*
[53] K. Kloistermaier, *31*
[54] K. Kloistermaier, 3*1*
[55] K. Kloistermaier, *32*
[56] K. Kloistermaier,*34*
[57]K. Kloistermaier,*34*

It is a general Indian view that all the crafts are part of the pattern of life, just as religious rites and the functions of ruler ship are the traditional Hindu view of class and caste. Each caste has its own function and should keep to it. In this way the cosmos operates most smoothly. 'The warriors' duty is to protect, the priests' to advice, the commons' to pay the bill. Nothing known to man or practiced by him exists, in the Hindu view, without necessity. Even the thief operates under divine sanction and the prostitute too has a duty to perform, to make a complete world, though there is also a need for police and judges to keep the thief and the prostitute with bounds.'[58]All the many groups of society are viewed as parts of a vast and complicated machine in which all parts are interdependent and must mesh for perfect operation. Each person is born into a distinct caste, depending on the *Karma* from the past lives. There is no crossing over or intermingling from one caste to another, as this would disrupt the social order.' 'However, there is an unresolved conflict in Hinduism between universal *Dharma* and the *Svadharma,* your individual duty according to caste and station in life. A warrior must kill to fulfil his duty, whereas a Brahmin must avoid harming any living creature. Even demons have their own castes and *Svadharma*, which may run counter to human morality. One person's *Dharma* may be another's sin.[59] Dharma coincides with the Hinduism. That did not prevent certain developments from taking place within what was considered as 'law' in Indian history, nor did it exclude the treatment of many moral questions on a rational and a universal basis. Following Dharma means doing what is right consciously, even when it goes against your likes and dislikes. In an interview our stakeholder Shridhar described Dharma as twofold: 'On the one hand it is the sense of duty, but at the other hand it's the nature of the beast. Dharma is according him a synonym for DNA. It's how you live your life and the real essence of your personality will come to the surface in your Dharma'.[60] *Dharma* is connected with time, place and context. In different situations you can have different *Dharmas*. Also within the person you have different *Dharma's*. A person can have a Dharma for his work but has to follow a different *Dharma* at home. Sometimes it feels that they are several persons in the same person and they have to wear a mask in different situations. Just like Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-Gita* in the climax of the battle. Just when both armies are fully arrayed against each other, Arjuna realizes what he is going to do: he is about to fight and kill his relations, teachers and friends. Realizing that, he is ready to give up the war altogether, telling Krishna; "I would not kill these, though killed myself, not for the three worlds – how much less for the sake of this earthly kingdom? What pleasure should we have after having slain the sons

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[58] N. Brown, *Class and cultural traditions in India,* (New York, 1958) American Folklore Society *241-242*
[59] N. Brown,*245*
[60] Bharatan, S., interview by Kathalijn vergeer. *Interview about working in India* (Octobre 28, 2011).

of Drtarastra, our brothers? Only sin will we reap if we kill them!'[61] Herein, Arjuna has an interpersonal conflict. His Dharma as a Kshatriya, and claimant of Pandava, tells him to fight in order to maintain the kingdom. However, his personal Dharma tells him not to kill his relations. Mahatma Gandhi sees in the *Bhagavad-Gita* an allegory of human life that has to fight out the dilemma between divinely ordained duty and personal preference.[62]The Dharma principle causes a lot of interpersonal conflicts for a person.

3.3.2. The four roads in Hinduism

In the view of Hindus we are all on our way to somewhere and have not yet arrived. In India the social attitude that there are different ways of life and different virtues for people at various stages of life is widely accepted. 'A student should possess certain virtues. Later when someone goes to work, gets married and raises a family, new attitudes, ways of behaving, and new virtues are expected. At this stage a person usually seeks worldly success, takes on worldly obligations, and pursues worldly pleasures. After fulfilling the family obligations of middle life, a person may become detached from worldly life and become more spiritual. Some may even leave their families and give up the material things they worked hard for in order to live a religious life.'[63] This form of activity emphasizes change, the idea that no one will be the same tomorrow as he is today.

One of the oldest, most popular, and most important ways of viewing Hindu religiosity is the distinction of three 'paths':

- *Jñana Marga*
- *Karma Marga*
- *Bhakti Marga*
- *(Yoga Marga of Raja Marga)*

The spiritual leader Vivekananda once said: 'to fly a bird needs the left wing of the *Jñana* marga, the right wing of the *Bhakti* marga, the tale of the *Raja* marga to go in the right direction and the capacity of marga.'[64]

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[61] K. Kloistermaier,*77*
[62] K. Kloistermaier*,74*
[63]N. Brown,*248*
[64] S. Vivekananda, *Karma yoga and Bhakti yoga* (New York, 1982) Ramakrishna Vivekananda Center, *117*

'The road of the *JnanaMarga* is also called the path of knowledge. It's often the path of the guru where they study the Holy Scriptures and philosophical literature. They participate in debates and teach others about the Holy Scriptures.' [65] *Jnanamarga* comes in various shapes, but the need to have a teacher and the requirement of absolute loyalty toward the guru restrict individual choices once the guru has been selected.

The *Karmamarga* is the path of the ritual actions. *Karma* is about acceptance, gracious acceptance, of every turn of event as Prasad from God. 'Every action has a reaction and over the course of a lifetime, if one is accordance with the divine, he will gradually works off his or her Karma. If he is acting selfishly and for ego, then he will accumulate more *Karma* to work off. Reborn, each person finds their *Dharma* or duty in order to work off this *Karma*.' [66] Good acts produce good Karma, and these acts eventually change the balance of Dharma in the universe. If people don't keep their commitments, the social order and the rule of law would collapse. The word *Karma* is derived from a root that means 'to act' and emphasizes the link between an action and its result. Our past *Karma* determines our present station in life, for which a particular *Dharma* or moral lifestyle is deemed appropriate. Sacrifice trough surrendering to God is therefore the basis of salvation. Hinduism offers the best way to live a life devoid of anxieties and worries. It says, "Live your life normal, offering all your actions and possessions mentally to God in the spirit of sacrifice without bothering about the results of your actions." Actions done as an offering to God do not affect them.[67]

In the *Bhakti*, the path of devotion, it's about your own divine personal preference and to whom you devote your whole life. The majority of Hindus are followers of the *Bhakti.* It's difficult to translate this word into English but the majority of scholars derive *Bhakti* from the root bhaj- to worship, to be devoted to. *Bhakti* religion consists of acts of worship and loving devotion towards Gods. It means the action of service. The most popular class of literature in India, the *Mahabharata, the Ramayana*, and the *Puranas* are the sources from which *Bhakti* religions have drawn their inspiration for centuries. *Bhakti* had a wide appeal from the very beginning, not only because it recognized the emotional approach to God as fully valid, but also because it broke down all the barriers of privilege that had kept out large groups of the population from *Karmamarga* and *Jnanamarga*. *Bhakti* became the way of salvation for everyone. The promise of salvation

[65] K. Kloistermaier,*119-121*

[66] W.Doninger, *The laws of Manu* (, London, 1991) Penguin Books *34*

[67]A. Sharma, *Karma and Dharma; New links in an old chain* (, Berkley 2008) Tikkun *13*

for all resulted in a tendency to simplify the requirements for it, so that all might be able to fulfil the essence of righteousness, however poor and unlearned they might be. *Bhakti* means not only love for God, but also enmity toward those who do not love him in the same way.[68] According to the Indian sage Narada, *Bhakti* is about 'those who have attained love of God have no more desire for anything else; they are free from grief and hatred'.[69] It is especially the *Bhaktimarga* that constantly brings forth new developments and movements. While the *Karmamarga* presuppose high caste standing and the *Jnanamarga* is largely for intellectual elite, the *Bhaktimarga* has Universal appeal.

The last path is the *YogaMarga*. This is the path of the ascetics, which is the last part of the journey and prepares the Hindu to his next life.[70]

3.4. Some observations about Hinduism

Hinduism doesn't give a coherent worldview or a corporative-shared belief system as used in the western concept of religion. To understand Hinduism, people have to put their own traditional convictions aside and realize that Hinduism is more about what people do than what they think. "Each individual follows a way of life that provides some meaning to it."[71] Hindu religion has a metaphysical core, and it provides a spiritual interpretation to live in its entirety. Hinduism is a synthesis of a variety of religious experiences and offers a complete view of life. It is not rigid in thought and is tolerant of how individuals interpret in their own life.

Hinduism, while certainly circumscribing Indian religiosity, has many other specific historic- cultural and socio political dimensions. It always has to see in combination with these and can't explain the behaviour of Indians on itself.

Most aspects in Hinduism in practice are not based on scriptures but look inherited in the Indian nature, like the *Dharma* principle. Hinduism always emphasizes on the need to protect ones *Dharma* and follow ones natural *Dharma*. Your *Dharma* is not something that is imposed upon you. It is something that you are born with. The texts are very clear in this regard. Life is a battlefield in which there is a fierce battle and competition between the good and bad forces. The same battle goes on in ones physical body and

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[68] K. Kloistermaier,*181*
[69] K. Kloistermaier,*182*
[70] B. Smit, *126*
[71] B. Smit, *126*

mind. *Karma* and *Dharma* are interwoven with each other. *Dharma* is your purpose and *Karma* is the approach towards this goal. It's expressing the idea that how they live today influences how they will be in the future, even in future lives.

      Karma is a complicated concept. 'One reaps as one sows' or 'what goes around comes around' may help highlight the concepts underlying *Karma*. Hindus are more focused on where they are and how they got there, than on where they can go from where they are now. The secret is detachment: do your duty without concern for the personal consequences. Hindus must always do what is right without desiring success or fearing defeat. 'Work without desire for the results, and thus without entangling yourself in karmic reactions.'[72]

      For me Hinduism is the framework of how Hindus live their life. It's an organic way of life wherein the approach is evolving according the developments in the world and is based on the needs of Hindus.

The way Hinduism is shaped, the many influences and high level of tolerance to new approaches show how flexible Hinduism is. Besides that Hinduism is not the only religion in India, there are also within Hinduism multiple paths to follow. Something you see back in daily life of Indians. The scriptures and then especially, the epics are the source of the principles they apply in life. The principles in the Hinduism, as the Karma and Dharma will help understanding the Indian mentality and how Hindus see the world.

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[72] K. Kloistermaier, *173*

4. Connecting perspectives -
Hindu norms and values and K&S India

4.1 Interpretations of the findings

The situations I encountered myself during this research were similar with the cases in the topics I outlined in chapter two. By comparing these situations, a pattern emerged in the questions that were underlying those situations. In this fourth chapter the patterns will be connected to the norms and values of the Hinduism.

In every topic there were multiple Hindu norms and values of influence on the situation. In my analysis I focus on just one norm or value that was of influence on the patterns in each situation. This will give a deeper understanding of how the norms and values can be an explanation for behaviour in the Indian corporate world.

4.2 Network

The Indian interpretation of being connected is different from how the Kessels & Smit India team interprets contact. The pattern which the K&S India team encounters is that Indians seem to be very curious to other persons' life, but they won't open up easily about their own life or views. Not when it is something personal for them or has to do with them. The effect of this is that it is often difficult for the K&S India team to see what they exactly think or want from them. In the Western world, you get more clarity about the purpose of a conversation while being in contact with a partner. More conversations will lead to a clearer purpose. A relationship can lead to a good friendship, a love relationship or productive corporation. However, in India it seems that there isn't a good alignment about the interest and transparency on this. It's difficult for the K&S India team to interpret the contact and connection they have with Indians. In the situation with Paul Mathew the K&S India team thought that there was alignment about what they wanted to achieve together but they were confused when Paul gave them the feeling that he wanted something different than them. However, he did have the same objectives as the K&S India team, but he had a different interpretation how to achieve this result. The *Karma* principle can help to give an explanation for the behaviour of Paul Mathew. Hindus are more focused on where they are. They have a being- culture. They are not so much interested in where they can go to but they are focused on where they are now. In their perception you don't need to have clarity on the objectives in the relationship, you just need to focus on good interactions and then the results of the relationship or contact

will be fruitful anyhow. As chapter three shows, the secret is detachment: do your duty without concern for the personal consequences. So when Indians are in a meeting, they won't automatically be focused on the next meeting. They are one with the moment. For the K&S India team this looks as if Indians are unaffected or not being target minded. However, the Indians do have a vision of where the connection is going or what they want to achieve. They only have a different interpretation how to achieve this. They do good deeds, which produces good *Karma*. That is what is in their hands; the rest and the results are in the hands of God. When you do good deeds and do everything what's in your reach to make it happen, God will take care of the rest. This is *Karma* in theory. However, the many practices and observations show that in practice it's often used for one's own benefit or is misinterpreted. Most Indians interpret it as: do just something good and God will make it happen. 'It like bribing the Gods,' said Sriniwas, spiritual coach, to me in a conversation.[73] 'You go to the temple often, pray to Ganesha, the God of luck and removing obstacles and everything will be alright.'[74]

What can help here is to acknowledge their culture but also stick to your own objectives. The key is to cut your goal into smaller objectives. Like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe once said: "It is not enough to take steps which may someday lead to a goal; each step must be itself a goal and a step likewise."[75]

4.2 Today's challenges

Although people face the same problems in organizations, what is believed to be an appropriate solution to those problems is different in different parts of the world. What is striking in India that companies in India mostly see practical- and skill training as a solution to solve the problems in their company. However, in the methods Kessels & Smit uses, only obtaining practical skills won't be implemented by the participants if you're not focusing on what is the thought or purpose behind these trainings as well. In a conversation with education expert Indira Parikh, she explains that there is almost a therapeutic approach needed to change this pattern but that Indians are not used to look for resources other than their (close) family when it comes to challenging someone's

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[73] Sriniwas, S., interview by Kathalijn vergeer. *Interview about practice and theory of Hinduism* (November 23 , 2011).

[74] Sriniwas, S., interview by Kathalijn vergeer. *Interview about practice and theory of Hinduism* (November 23 , 2011).

[75] Goethe, J.W. "goals and goal setting quotes." *inspirational quotes.* 2002. http://www.inspirational-quotes.info/goals1.html (accessed march 24 march, 2012). P. *3*

mindset.[76] Taronish' reaction illustrated this when saying: 'Do you also have something different than that hugging way of working?', when he heard about the approach which was focussed on changing the mindset of his colleagues.[77]

The K&S India team sees a pattern in how Indians are educated, namely in a one way direction and based on hierarchical positions. However, today's corporate world needs people to be flexible. As Friedman pointed out, there's a shift in paradigm happening, which requires companies to work in a different way.[78] The approach that Indian companies take is not meeting today's needs and still has a very hierarchal way of working. This hierarchy can be found in many ways in India. It can be converted to the principle of Dharma, the caste system or the influence of the British colonization and other foreign rulers. The concept of hierarchal positioning goes long back in time in India. 'Amongst traditional Hindus the teacher has always been accorded an important position. Since ancient times a teacher has been accepted as the guru - a mentor, preceptor and spiritual guide.[79]' The story of Eklavya in chapter three is a good example of this.[80]

Having faith and devotion are very important in the Indian culture. You see the faith Eklavya has in the expertise of his guru and he gives his Guru complete trust or confidence in order to learn archery. With his devotion Eklavya shows his love and loyalty to his guru because again he trusts in his guru and knows that being loyal to his guru will help him to grow and master competences he wants to learn. The interpretation, which the K&S India team has of this positioning is obedience of the pupil. This pattern is not only grounded in how information is transferred but you can also find this in the *Bhakti*, the path of devotion. 'The majority of Hindus are followers of the *Bhakti* and in this path your own divine personal preference is important.'[81] To that person you devote your whole life. Looking to this hierarchical positioning from an Indian perspective, you see that Indians interpret it as loyalty and that this is their way to grow and learn. Eklavya was loyal to his Guru and in this loyalty and devotion he found the strength and discipline to teach himself the art of archery and guide himself.

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[76] I. Parikh, Flame institute 27 February 2012.
[77] T. Khajotia, *conversation on 23 September 2011 in OMCI office*
[78] T. Friedman,*12*
[79] P. Bhalla,*70*
[80] P. Bhalla,*43*
[81] K. Kloistermaier,*181*

The example of the story in the *Mahabharata* illustrated how Eklavya gave everything to his Guru in order to learn from him and master his craft. However, the story also showed how Eklavya learned his archery. He was loyal to Guru Dronacharya. Eklavya's devotion to him stimulated Eklavya to continue practicing but the actual archery he learned by himself. In a conscious way Indians get educated in a one way direction but in unconscious ways Indians have a very inventive and self regulated way of learning. Because today's world needs and asks for other approaches than which is in line with Hindu norms and values, Indians are forced to be extremely flexible and anticipative. They are entrepreneurs. However, for Kessels & Smit it's a challenge to make this implicit way of learning more explicit. It's a challenge to make it more visible across hierarchical lines within the company, in a society where showing your qualities or expressing your commitment very explicitly instead of loyalty is not common practice.

4.3 Culture

In Western culture there is the tendency to get clarity on situations and wanting to understand why things happen for a certain reason or why someone reacts in a certain way. It's our way to understand situations and move on. In chapter one I already mentioned that Westerners have a doing-culture. The experience is that addressing the issue or trying to get clarity on situations doesn't always works in India and can even do harm for the relationship. On the other hand, not addressing the issue either is beneficial for the relationship because you don't trust the other person anymore and will take distance from that person. Especially in situations where you can feel that something is bothering the other, you will notice that an Indian will never address it, never say no or will find excuses to escape the issue. In the example with Sangeeta she was not comfortable with my position within K&S at all, but she would never address it because it was her duty to accept me. Thus, she showed her discontent in other, subtle ways. As addressed in chapter three: in India, you have to follow your *Dharma*. Following *Dharma* means doing what is right consciously, even, when it goes against your likes and dislikes. Being an Indian Sangeeta had the *Dharma* to show hospitality and that's why she invited me to stay in her house. As a partner of Kessels & Smit she had the follow her *Dharma* and work with me. But her personal *Dharma* didn't want to offer me a place to sleep or work with me at all. When this issue was addressed in conversations, she denied it because according her *Dharma* of being Indian; she did the right thing and took care of me. To which of the *Dharma's* she had to listen in that interpersonal conversation and to

which *Dharma* she should have stayed true? As chapter three shows, when a person has to follow several *Dharmas* this can cause a lot of interpersonal conflicts. *Dharma* presupposes a social order in which all functions and duties are assigned to separate classes whose smooth interaction guarantees the wellbeing of society as a whole, and beyond this maintains the harmony of the whole universe. The aim of *Dharma* is freedom from conflict. However, the opposite happened here and Sangeeta who tried to be true to her *Dharma* only had a lot of conflicts. There are more factors of influence of this, but when you look at it from the perspective of the *Dharma* principle, the reason why it's so difficult to address things and talk about it is because there is a lot of conflict between what an Indian has to do and what he wants to do. At the same time, there was no need for Sangeeta to address the issue because she was doing exactly what she had to do according her *Dharma*.

This also explains why it sometimes feels as if Indians don't take that additional step. They are OK with doing things what they have to do. They don't need to make that change and go beyond what they have to do. It is very difficult to go against your *Dharma* in India and being *Adharma*. Making the change in India can sometimes be more harmful than beneficial for you. When you are not following your duty, or what is supposed to be your duty in life, you will have a very hard time in India. Mostly because your environment will judge and outcaste you if you are not acting according to your *Dharma*. You won't get any social support from your surroundings anymore. Being an outcaste is a big challenge in a group-focused society. In a country where the social system is weak and has less social security than in the Netherlands, you are depended on your environment, which expects you to act according your *Dharma*. Some choices Sangeeta, (like getting a divorce) made her an outcaste and this will follow her for the rest of her life. Understanding and knowing someone's different *Dharmas* will give understanding about the choices which that person makes.

4.4 Community

In India there is less social security than in our country. In many situations the Kessels & Smit India team appealed on someone's personal interest while that person found the community interest more important at that moment. The pattern which the Kessels & Smit India team sees here is that most thinking and decision making is based on environment and that Indians find it difficult to make choices by themselves. They feel as if Indians see solutions as a universal truth instead of someone's personal truth. The

Dharma principle and the hierarchy in India also give an explanation for this, but in this analysis I'm focussing on how Hindus view the world and how this affects both the thinking as well as the commitment level of Indians. The interpretation of how they see themselves in line with the world is different than how we see the world. As shown in the learning's from Krishna to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita* someone has to become free from the illusion that this world is, and experiencing our true blissful, eternal nature. Thus, in the Indian view they are one with the world. Again here is the emphasis in the Indian culture to have no desires. Your desires are in service of the other. This transcendental attitude causes, in western view, idealistic thinking and causing passivity in acting on their ideals. This orientation to 'being' rather than 'doing', as illustrated in chapter one, along with high power distance may hamper not only individual decision making but also effective teamwork and acceptance of self-managing teams. The influencing factors on self-regulation of Indians are very high. Important to realize here is that in the Indian worldview there is no such thing as the individual or desire which makes it difficult for them to give answer on questions about what they personally want. Furthermore you have to take into account that for most people in India their life is already planned out. As the four paths of Hinduism show, there are different paths in life to follow and you act in according your phase in life. Man is only one stage in this evolution of life and in the soul's upward journey towards such liberation.

Trying to motivate or to do an appeal on values that you have as an individualist can work in a reversed way here. Important to realize is that in the Indian worldview the individual or desire is not central. Trying to motivate Indians in line with 'the higher goal' or how it will benefit their environment instead of how it will benefit them directly is the best way to go.

4.5 Entrepreneurship

Indians are waiting for someone telling him what to do. Marc was waiting for Paul to be told what exactly was expected from him. The *Dharma* principle could be of influence here. You do what you think is your task to do. However, there are more perspectives which you can take on this subject. Being an entrepreneur can be seen as taking risks and the necessity to strive for profit. A goal-oriented approach is needed here. The *Karma* principle is opposite to this and is focussed on the actions of that moment and not on the results. The chances of succeeding in putting up a Kessels & Smit branch in India

are depending on destiny. You don't have influence on that. The notion of fatalism is very high in India. Just accepting it and let it happen is much easier for you. This fatalism is the way to deal with things. In a conversation on the street a woman told me*: '*I find happiness in surrendering.'[82] There is so much dependency on external factors that it is very difficult to make a long-term plan in India, which is more common in the Netherlands. The K&S India team can appeal on the interest of the Indians and what they think will motivate the Indians, but following the Hindu norms and values Indians will have a different approach towards how they are going to achieve that. As shown, Indians have a different interpretation of time. It's circular and connected with their perception of rebirth. In contrast to the Western view, where time is linear, there is just one life wherein everything happens and is not interdependent with what happens before that life or after that life.

At the same time, Indians are known for their entrepreneurship and there are a lot of success stories where people make something out of nothing. Hinduism knows multiple paths to achieve salvation but this doesn't count when your own community follows a certain path. Hinduism may look fluid and rigid from the outside, but within the religion is very structured. To Indians this means they have to behave in a certain manner. This is often in contrast with expectations from the K&S India team. The self-regulation and the initiatives that the K&S India team expects from Indians are expressed in a more implicit way. Practice shows that Indians are extremely flexible and anticipative. This is not only due to the rituals and norms, which systematize their life, but is also due to the pressure of the economical, social and political system. This quality suits entrepreneurship. The story of Eklavya is an example of this. Indians consciously react in a way that is according the norms and values of Hinduism. However, they unconsciously learn and act in very entrepreneurial and inventive way.

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[82] Kumar. M. interview by Kathalijn Vergeer. *Fatalism in India* (January 23, 2012).

5. Conclusion and discussion

5.1 Contribution and weaknesses of the study

The purpose of this thesis was to explore how understanding of Hindu norms and values can help Kessels & Smit during the set up of their entity in India, overcome their challenges and thereby show the correlation between understanding a culture and corporation. This research addressed a few core principles of the Hinduism, which can help to understand and explain the behaviour of Indians - since Hinduism is, for most Indians, the core outlook on life. Herein this study is limited. The subject requires more research from other perspectives than only the cultural or religious side. As mentioned before, Hinduism per se has many other specific historic, cultural and socio political dimensions. In addition, there are many external factors of influence, which can explain a certain situation.

Before I will go further on this, I firstly would like to emphasize again that India is a unity in diversity. The endless variety in India is striking, often incongruous. India is a country where simultaneously juxtaposition of the ancient and the new, the traditional and the modern, the agrarian and the technological, the rural and the urban and the concepts of East and the West coexist. The living reality of these juxtapositions is experienced in all spheres of life.[83] Therefore it is impossible to make a generalization of my findings. As stated in chapter 3.4 Hinduism is not rigid in thought and is tolerant of how individuals interpret in their own life.[84] To really understand India, you have to be in India.

5.2 Academic contribution

From an academic perspective, this study contributed to the composition of a body of existing theoretical knowledge and connects theory with practice. This theoretical knowledge is focussed on the importance of taking an indigenous perspective and connecting different frameworks in order to expand the scope and to put questions into a broader perspective. Thomas Friedman showed the need for countries being interconnected and how, due to globalization, borders fade away but cultures come up.

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[83] P. French, *India 12*
[84] N. Brown,*245*

The research with the five monkeys showed how deep inherited culture is within someone. Bhawuk showed the importance of intercultural sensitivity with his survey and as Frijters illustrates with his model: instead of changing other's beliefs, it's better to understand their beliefs and try to connect with it. Understanding of someone's beliefs or norms and values helps to understand their perception and worldview and to put situations into a broader perspective.

Hinduism has, to a certain extent, influence on everyday life in general. Just like in other cultures; a person practicing a particular culture is no longer conscious of the underlying values or assumptions and the powerful way in which those values and assumptions affect his behaviour or thoughts. By zooming into Hinduism as a case study wherein practice and theory are linked, this study showed the correlation between understanding a culture and working more productive in a different culture.

5.3 Conclusion and contributions to Kessels & Smit, the learning company

The Hindu norms and values may give insight in the behaviour of Indians and explain in a way the underlying patterns which Kessels & Smit encounters during the set up of their entity in India. Nonetheless, it is important to realize that not only religious or spiritual factors are of influence, but that social, economic and political factors here are also from influence and that all these factors are interdependent. Doing business in a particular nation and culture requires a focus on a multi-dimensional understanding of its culture and business practices. Understanding those differences and adapting to them is the key. This research showed how understanding of the Hindu norms and values help to see a challenging situation from a different perspective and helps in understanding where the behaviour of the Indians comes from. For the K&S India team this clarifies the interpretation Indians have of a situation. When you try to understand a situation, it's good to take a more holistic view. Firstly K&S can interpret the connection better by realizing Indians do have a vision of where the connection is going or what they want to achieve. They only have a different interpretation how to achieve this. Secondly, K&S can see the hierarchal positioning in India from a different perspective and at the same time also see that Indians really are entrepreneurs. However, for Kessels & Smit it's a challenge to make this implicit way of learning more explicit. It's the challenge how to make it more visible across hierarchical lines within the company, in a society where

showing your qualities or expressing your commitment very explicitly instead of loyalty is not common practice. Thirdly, by understanding the *Dharma* principle and taking this into account, they can help with the choices that an Indian has to make. Fourthly, K&S sees the fundamental differences between how they and how Indians see the world and how this impacts the behaviour of Indians. What motivates someone in the Netherlands doesn't have to motivate an Indian. K&S has to find other ways to connect with this. Fifthly is the topic where the norms and values of Hinduism come together and they need to take the knowledge of different norms and values into account when they have expectations from Indians.

Indians know that the only way to understand India is to really experience India. Being in India means also that you see the different layers of the country. This helps to understand India. India has different faces and all the different pictures next to each other will give you a complete understanding of how India works. India has different dimensions and you have to go through them all to understand India. Thus, the outcomes of this thesis can't be applied to every situation. Every situation has to be seen on itself. To work in India you have to be very flexible and anticipative to be able to cope with those challenges.

Your own attitude and approach is very important when you work or interact with a different culture than yours. If you don't feel invited or want to make effort to understand other views than yours, it will be impossible to connect perspectives, which is the aim when you are crossing (cultural) borders.

After being a year in India, I get a feeling of India, but I still don't understand it completely. Maybe I never will. When I finally understood something, I always came to a deeper level, which proved me the opposite of what I first discovered. It is the combination of understanding the culture and then to anticipate on it. What helped me trough this year in understanding India is the advice of a wise woman I met in the first month of my journey: 'Feel your way through India...and then find it.'[85]

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[85]Conversation with anonymous woman, 18 July 2011 Mussouri

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