

# Institution Building in Indian Business: Dynamics and Dilemmas

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## Abstract

This article examines an ‘Institution’ and its distinguishing features from ‘Organisation’. It enquires into the dynamics generated when Western structural assumptions juxtapose with an Indian world view, more particularly in Indian Family Businesses, that seek to transform into institutions. In this transformation into a ‘Modern’ institution, several dilemmas, tensions and paradoxes emerge (often unseen) that have the risk of stalling progress, or in reducing the potential for institutional vibrancy and perpetuity. The integration depends on the wholesome cross-assimilation of these vastly different paradigms. This article delves into these invisible cross-currents and formulates a few hypotheses and recommendations for regeneration and vitality.

## Keywords

Family business, institutions, organisations, Indian businesses, communities

## Family Business in India

In this article, we will explore the context of both emerging Indian businesses and institution building, to understand the inherent dynamics and interplay between these. The Indian business ecosystem is dominated by family businesses which are the oldest and the most prevalent form of business ownership. In India, family businesses contribute around 79 percent of national GDP annually.<sup>1</sup> India has 108 publicly-listed, family-owned businesses, making it the third-highest in the world behind China at 167 and the United States at 121 (as of 2015) (Figure 1).

## Evolution of Family Businesses in India as a Representation of the Evolving Indian Organisational Context

Indian family businesses have represented the socio-economic and cultural underpinnings of India and woven and advocated this ethos in their businesses, even as they ‘modernised’.

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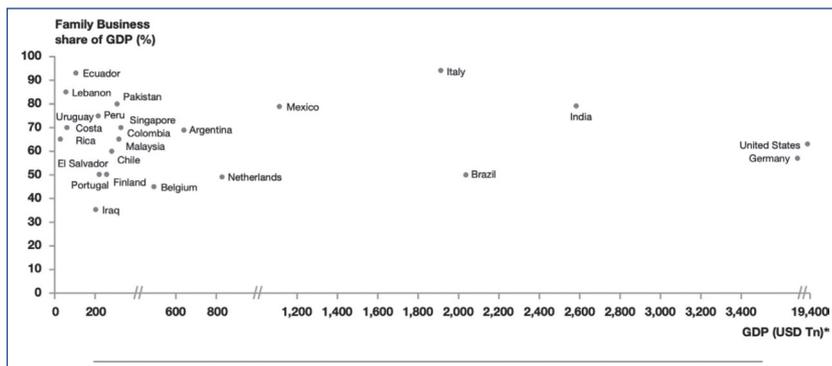
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**Figure 1.** National GDP Share of Family Business.

**Source:** The authors.

Yashodhara Basuthakur and Dr Nupur Pavan Bang from the Thomas Schmidheiny Centre for Family Enterprise at the Indian School of Business explain:

The joint family system was the backbone of these businesses and provided the required resources and capital for the cohesion and growth of the firms. In the early eighteenth century, India was predominantly an agrarian economy, with a deep-rooted caste-based social system that defined the occupational choices of the communities. Agriculture was the primary source of income and livelihood. The manufacturing industries were few and mostly in textiles, handicrafts. But India was lagging in the development of the economic, political, and commercial infrastructure essential for trade pursuits.

The turn of the eighteenth century marked the transition from mercantile capitalism to industrial capitalism. The colonial rule led to the decline of the vibrant Indian merchant community. The Indian businesses faced discrimination in trade, policy and bank loans. During the Industrial Revolution, in 1850, India became the supplier of raw materials and a market for the products of the British factories (cotton, iron and steel, chemicals, etc.). Some of the businessmen who emerged during this time were the Birlas, Kasturbhai Lalbhai, Walchands and the Tatas. They constantly criticised economic racism and created bodies of commerce and trade associations to lobby for the Indian companies. They invested in research and development and introduced new product lines. The Indian-led business enterprises had expanded in scope and scale across the country by the end of the 1940s when India gained Independence.

The Indian family businesses also actively engaged in social causes and philanthropy through generous contributions to charitable trusts and other institutions, driven by the cultural and religious traditions of 'daan' (giving), as a sense of duty to the community. They played a pivotal role in institutional building by partaking in philanthropic activities such as setting up premier educational institutes, research and cultural centres for the progress of the country.

Many established and emerging Indian businesses are in the process of 'modernisation', 'professionalisation' and shaping their continuity, particularly to stave off threats to their longevity. Research indicates that the complexity inherent in family businesses contributes to their premature mortality.

## The Importance of Institution Building in Creating Enduring Organisations

Organisations, when led with statesmanship and wisdom, mature into institutions. The maturation process is an evolutionary and organic one, sustaining its relevance over time. An institution, as is commonly understood, is not only a set of traditions and time-honoured structures and norms but is also a ‘gharana’, a state of mind, a sense of belonging and ownership that is fundamentally ‘alive’ in the minds of people. A collective sense of identity (who we are), values (what is important to us), what we do, processes (how we do what we do) and psychological health (how we feel) form the anchors that bind and hold institutions together. An institution is purpose and value based, socially conscious, stakeholder oriented and long term in its approach.

### *Difference Between the Organisation and the Institution Models*

Understanding this difference will help appreciate the dynamics inherent as organisations evolve into institutions and are often midway in this process. As organisations transform along this path, leaders and members also undergo an ‘inner’ exploration of new meanings, adjustment and alignment with newer ways that beckon their ‘stewardship behaviour’.

What characterises organisational thinking and how does it differ from institutional thinking?

<b>Organisational Mind Maps</b>	<b>Institutional Mind Maps</b>
<p><b>World view and outlook</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defines itself primarily in the language of economics</li> <li>• Primary focus is on results, short-term strategy, structure, process, roles and tasks</li> <li>• Engagement with the environment is expedient, fragile, reactive and suspicious</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defines itself as a living entity—a ‘persona’ and a community of human beings. The collective identity is palpable.</li> <li>• Focus is on long-term mission, philosophy, aims, meaning, values, culture and belonging</li> <li>• Sensitive to their environments, proactive, relevant and respond in a timely fashion to the evolving conditions around them</li> </ul>
<p><b>Leadership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Succession is poor and ad hoc</li> <li>• Problems move upward to the leaders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The process for succession is robust and emphasises a combination of continuity and change</li> <li>• Proposals move upward to the leaders</li> </ul>
<p><b>Roles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role bound, protective and competitive; inter-role spaces have no owners. Many issues fall between two stools, and the ‘boss’ orchestrates these through persuasion and arbitration. Agency is ad hoc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role responsible, mutual, and collaborative; Inter-role spaces are attended to. Members volunteer to do what needs to be done in the inter-role spaces and help each other when tasks and roles are hazy. Agency is strong</li> </ul>

<b>Organisational Mind Maps</b>	<b>Institutional Mind Maps</b>
<b>Membership</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members operate largely from an 'economic' and /or a 'professional' contract</li> <li>• Members take a rigid view of unexpected developments</li> <li>• Members are concerned with individual and sectoral well-being. Their ambitions are self-oriented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members operate predominantly from a 'psychological' contract. Their contributions are mostly voluntary and unilateral in nature</li> <li>• Members are willing to be contextual in their view. They are tolerant of unexpected and idiosyncratic developments</li> <li>• Members are sensitive to the common good. Their ambitions are directed towards the well-being and success of all stakeholders</li> </ul>
<b>Hierarchy</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hierarchy reflects position, expert and resource power. Designations and titles reflect seniority</li> <li>• Merit and performance based, and people are resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hierarchy is a quality of membership and a 'state of mind'—everyone has some form of belonging</li> <li>• Merit plus active institutional commitment and ability to influence non-role-bound actions and multidimensional potential</li> </ul>
<b>Autonomy</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socialisation—do's and don'ts—is a predominant way of induction for new entrants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acculturation—'our way of life'—anecdotes, stories, rituals, myths, anxieties, and the enthusiasm that surrounds the community are shared while inducting new entrants</li> </ul>
<b>Vibrancy</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vibrancy arises from action, success and victory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vibrancy arises from meaning, purpose and learnings.</li> </ul>

These differences are on a continuum, and no one characteristic taken singly by itself can define the stage of maturity. The interplay of most of these characteristics will determine the transition from organisations to institutions.

## **Institutions as Communities**

### *All Organisations and Institutions are Social Endeavours*

One of the best writers on organisations has been Richard Scott. He defines organisations this way: 'Organisations are conceived as social structures created by individuals to support the collaborative pursuit of specified goals' (Scott, 2003, p. 11).

To harness and mobilise human energy in organisations, as they progress towards institution building, it is useful to see organisations as 'communities'.

The popular and current view, ingrained in many of us, looks at organisations as 'rational engines/machines of economic performance'. This engineering metaphor is not conducive to institution building initiatives.

An alternate ‘social view’, where seeing organisations as ‘communities’, is necessary for institution building. The moment an organisation is born, the birth of the community also takes place simultaneously.

## What is a Community?

A collective of individuals with a common purpose and identity is a community. In addition, communities share a mutual concern for each other’s well-being. At the core of community are four values—sense of belonging, trust, voluntary action, and accountability.

All communities grapple with some existential questions either explicitly or implicitly. These are as follows:

- Identity: Who are we? What do we stand for?
- Mission: What is our purpose? What do we do? What more can we do? What else can we do?
- Culture and process: How do we do, whatever we do? What are our principles?
- Associational life or sentient health: How do we feel in this community? How deeply connected are we?

These questions are also the prime movers in the institutional framework.

## *Sentient Processes that Make Communities and Institutions Psychologically Healthier*

The psychological health of communities and institutions depends on the existence and opportunity for the practice of six processes. It is through the practice of these processes that a context of dialogue is created. The identity, mission, culture, and health of the community are directly related to the quality of the dialogue that the community engages in. The six processes are as follows:

1. **Catharsis**—when human beings interface with and experience the living process—rules, norms, and systems—feelings, sensitivities and toxicity develop such as helplessness, pain, anger, guilt, shame, confusion, doubts, etc.  
Communities that provide safe and sustained opportunities for individuals and groups to voice their pathos and detoxify themselves of these feelings are psychologically healthier.
2. The sharing of these feelings and experiences, in small or large groups, provides scope for the development of new meanings and perspectives in the community, leading to renewal of community norms and vitality.
3. **Togetherness**—the more opportunities that exist in communities to relate, link, communicate and engage with each other, the healthier the community cohesiveness is.
4. **Equalisation**—all communities have an explicit or implicit hierarchy and power distance—some lower or higher—arising from caste, creed, race, colour, education, intelligence, wealth, status, etc. Communities that have ways of reducing these distances and encouraging individuals or groups to connect and communicate at a very basic human level, in a non-hierarchical manner, tend to be healthier.
5. **Rejoicing and grieving**—psychologically healthy communities have found ways to rejoice and grieve together as life unfolds around them.

6. **Absolving blame and shame**—healthy communities understand that vulnerabilities, errors of commission and omission, and human failings are to be expected in the living process and have ways of healing the anguish of these feelings of guilt, blame and shame. Penance for shame is often adequate.
7. **Humour**—communities that can laugh at their own idiosyncrasies and foibles, without self-deprecation, are psychologically healthier.

## Socio-psychological Maps and Their Role in the Transition

Socio-psychological maps inform the dilemmas and dynamics that organisations, their leaders and members experience and cope with, as the transformation gets underway.

### *What are Socio-psychological Maps?*

Gareth Morgan in his book, *Images of Organization*,<sup>2</sup> uses metaphors to see and understand organisations. His premise is that a way of thinking and a way of seeing are how we understand our world, and this applies to organisations as well. The metaphors range from organisations as machines, organisms, brains, cultures, political systems, psychic prisons, instruments of domination, etc.

We all carry socio-psychological maps unconsciously in our minds—the emotional and psychological ‘software’ that gets coded in our minds during our growing and formative years. Bruce Lipton et al. point out that from the trimester of the foetus to the seventh year of a child, this ‘software’ is being written on what started as a blank slate of the infant—culture, behaviour, verbal and non-verbal messages, meanings assimilated from the environment as we grow up.<sup>3</sup> These are the socio-psychological maps that we operate from in our adult life.

Bruce Lipton et al. further go on to assert that almost 95% of our daily adult behaviour is triggered by this unconscious ‘auto-mode’ default software of the mind and continues unabated till we rewrite the software using our conscious creative mind to reframe new meanings and responses.

In the Yoga Shastras and in Ayurveda, a very similar idea is explicated through the notion of the ‘samskAra’—the acculturing processes. The evolution of a person can be understood as the unfolding of the person’s potentials in their life context. Three factors influence this process namely, the physical readiness of the person, their psychological readiness, and the ability of the socio-cultural context to nurture the emergence of a new persona. For example, when a child is around 5 years of age, they begin to associate their name to a sense of identity. This is the point of time the ‘software’ of the person, that is, the meaning-making process has started to crystallise. The acculturation of the context through processes of teaching and socialisation have taken root. This creates the ground on which the person will construct their sense of self, their identity. The ground and the identity also predispose the person to various diseases of the psyche and the soma. The more congealed the ground and the identity become, the more rigid the person becomes in their response to their environment, the more the likelihood of chronic illness. The more permeable they are, the greater the ability of the person to evolve, experience flow and flourish.

This notion of how a person evolves is the basis of how acculturation rituals are designed—starting from the conception of the child and punctuating at each stage of growth. The mother is taught what to eat, what to expose herself to, etc., at each trimester through the process. From the time of the conception of the child to the age of seven about ten such thresholds have been identified and sanctified. Unfortunately,

with the advent of modernity, these institutions and the teaching embedded in them have got ossified, and the deeper significance in enabling the most congenial context for the unfolding of the person to their fullest potential, has been lost. In the contemporary business context this principle can be restated as the threshold of growth where the individuals, skills and competencies (physical readiness) the individuals self-construct (psychological readiness) and the organization culture that supports the new behaviours. It will be of immense value to us if we can redesign the institutional processes that punctuate critical transitions of a person in a way that is contextual and takes in the latest scientific advances, which have reaffirmed their significance. Devdutt Pattanaik has taken the principles behind the design of these threshold rituals and redesigned it for organisational transitions with great success for the Big Bazaar<sup>4</sup>.

## Intended and Unintended Consequences and Their Function in the Transition

Every intended consequence generates a simultaneous unintended consequence. This phenomenon influences adjustment and alignments in any change process.

The universe of ‘intended consequence’ is led by rational and logical thought and provides the rationale for any change, decision, behaviour or action.

‘Unintended consequences’ are triggered simultaneously, and these are anchored in the emotional and psychological responses, arising from the socio- psychological and cultural dimensions, rooted in the primary and secondary systems of an individual’s formative years.

For example, as organisations modernise, they often induct young talented leaders with the intention of bringing in contemporary ways of management and a new work culture. The unintended consequence of this move is a conflict between the tenured senior managers and their new younger ‘bosses’. Leadership roles in the traditional and hierarchical Indian social system go to senior, tenured and older individuals. Here, there is an inversion of this tradition, creating several unintended consequences that make the intended changes more difficult. The elders might see the new inductees as not respectful enough of the traditions and existing culture, while the younger managers see the existing traditions and the uncooperative attitudes of elders as constraints.

The Indian *family system* continues to emphasise age and seniority as the basis for leadership and moral authority. The intended consequence of this is to ensure that values are internalised and to an extent are protected. The new managers see the lack of congruence between the explicitly stated values and the practice. They then ‘throw the baby out with the bath water’ rather than join in the process of identifying the gaps and attempting to bring in convergence between the espoused and the practiced.

When sentient processes of honest dialogue and recalibration are instituted, there is greater congruence, and the unintended consequences are marginalised. On the other hand, when these are absent, the *Organisation system* and *family system* are incongruent, leading to consequences such as disharmony, non-cooperation, politics, mistrust, etc.

When an individual, or a group of individuals, encounter a system/structure or norm (ethos<sup>5</sup>) any misalignment or dissonance in the encounter creates stress, confusion, hurt, anguish, and disorientation (pathos<sup>6</sup>).

The individual or group of individuals must find new ways and meanings (mythos<sup>7</sup>) to re-establish their equanimity, harmony, and action potential (eros<sup>8</sup>).

To illustrate, when one thinks of a start-up, one conjures up the romanticism of adventure (eros). It is expected that the place will be buzzing with excitement for the new and everyone will be behaving like

peers: there will be robust discussion and debate (ethos). Stories of others who succeeded and heroic figures who are venerated by the group will be shared often (mythos). However, the fear of uncertainty and failure, the prospects of one's dreams being shattered will often be kept hidden from others (pathos).

The organisation, the organisation defines accountabilities and, in its effort to be precise, over defines it, leading to a context that is experienced as constricting (ethos). The individual who comes from a very regulated and role-bound context would constrict themselves and suppress their creativity, often imitating the behaviour of a respected elder (mythos). However, a person whose background is from a very open family and educational context would feel rebellious and react to the context (mythos frustrated). How does this inner experience impact the person's evocation to belong and excel (eros)? How does the experience of the members of the system cause dissatisfaction and disaffection (pathos)?

This is where dialogues in an institutional space become essential for the evolution of the institution. Old mythos can be discarded and recalibrated. New ideas of heroism need to be redefined. The factors that cause pathos can be honestly shared, and the energy that is wasted can be channelised by removing the depressing factors and redesigning systems and processes so that they become welcoming and evocative. All this will inform the policies, values and practices that rejuvenate the organisation, to co-create, a new ethos.

The intended consequence of building modern industrial organisations is to create value for all the stakeholders, but the management practices and policies often end up creating tensions, and the gap between the explicitly stated values and the actual practice, stays unaddressed. Some of the common tensions are around integrity and the pervasive corruption in the environment. Some of the other common tensions one sees are around the push for profitability and the space needed for experimentation and innovation: the processes of performance appraisal that often emphasise numbers and hierarchy versus the need for robust questioning and dialogue that require equalisation. This is where the institutional processes play a vital role in creating a space where these tensions can be articulated and resolved. They evoke and sustain a commitment to the growth and well-being of the institution.

Studying the impact of these intended and unintended consequences during this journey of institutionalisation is of central interest in this article. If we go back and look at the characteristics of an 'institution' and 'organisation', in the beginning of the article, it will be clear that institutions are created and held, not so much in their structures but more in their psycho-social identity and in the 'minds' and 'psyche' of its stakeholders invoking their socio-psychological maps.

## Creating Institutional Vibrancy

It is important to re-emphasise that all institutions are communities. They are work communities where affiliation also happens or affiliative communities where work also happens. The vibrancy of the institution is, therefore, built on the psychological commitment that its members bring in: the heart. The abilities of the head, that is, strategising and the capabilities of the hand, that is, the technology deployed by the organisation are powered by the conviction that lies in the heart of the members. Second, some key aspects that distinguish a community and, in turn, an institution from a random aggregation of individuals or groups are as follows:

- a shared and common purpose.
- contribution to society.
- shared values, traditions and norms.

- long lived; and
- rules of entry, membership, and exit.

Embedded in all communities is a sense of vitality that is indicative of the health of the institution. In times of good health, there is a strong connection among members and overwhelming synergy in all that they do. In times of ill health, there is apathy among members, and vibrancy is at a low ebb.

To intervene and build institutions, leaders and members need to be in touch with the pulse of the community.

## Membership and Structure of Belonging: Institutions

There are fundamentally three kinds of membership contracts:

1. The economic contract: The focus, here, is on money and lifestyle. What will I get paid if I deliver on expectations? What more will I get paid for exceeding expectations? How much money will I lose if I fail to deliver? Monetary life goals inform this contract.
2. The professional contract: The primary concern, here, is about the nature of work. What will my role be? How will this role enhance my résumé? What more will I learn in this role? What could I expect to be doing in the future? What skills will be needed? Is the role challenging? Will it provide visibility? Centrality? In building competent and professional institutions, an active professional contract is crucial and fundamental.
3. The psychological contract: The emphasis, here, is on the implicit psychological expectations of being treated with respect, of being heard and valued, of fairness and transparency and of trust. The sense of belonging is rooted in this contract.

Every citizen of a community and a member of an institution will act from all three contracts to a lesser or higher degree.

Most leaders and senior citizens of work communities and institutions do explicitly address the economic and professional contracts, but they do very little to make the psychological contract explicit and engaging. Institutional processes are essential to evoke and sustain this very important source of energy and vibrancy. The readiness of the members to display heroism in their role-taking, depends on the depth of the psychological contract. The type of membership an individual will be willing to assume in the institution is also contingent upon the psychological contract.

## Types of Membership

We are likely to see five different strains of belonging, engagement, and commitment, reflected in five membership stances, based on the predominant, operative contract with each individual:

1. Founder members: their psychological contract is fused with the institution.
2. Co-founders: the psychological contract is unilateral and plenipotentiary.
3. Institutional members: the psychological contract is strong and exemplary, and they are the 'value anchors'.
4. Professional members: their professional contract is strong and conditional and their potential for institutional membership is uncertain.
5. Associate members: the professional membership is in the process of formation.

The major opportunity and challenge in institution building is to progress the maturity of individuals from associate members to institutional members and beyond, in a seamless and accelerated manner.

## Anchors That Influence Institutional Vitality

There are four anchors that influence vibrancy and institutional health (Figure 1).

These are:

ANCHOR I	ANCHOR II
<p>1. <b>THE CULTURE-IDENTITY ANCHOR - WHO ARE WE?</b> - This anchor is concerned with the question “who are we?” It embodies the aims, mission, philosophy, values, and culture. It is seeded by the founders and the history that the institution has lived through. It provides the identity and the persona of the institution. The DNA or genetic code is alive here.</p>	<p>2. <b>THE STRUCTURAL ANCHOR - WHAT WE DO?</b> - This anchor deals with the theme of “what we do”. Positioned here are issues of vision, business / work strategy, organization structure, roles, goals, results, rewards/punishments.</p>
ANCHOR III	ANCHOR IV
<p>3. <b>THE PROCESS ANCHOR - HOW WE DO, WHAT WE DO?</b> - This anchor addresses the question “how we do, whatever we do” – the major focus here is on sustainability, predictability and stability — processes, quality, ethics, norms and systems. Ways of doing things are constantly improved and delivery is made consistent over time - ‘quality is character and character is quality’.</p>	<p>4. <b>THE SENTIENT ANCHOR - HOW WE FEEL?</b> - The focus here is on feelings - community feelings... and the concern is with “how we feel”. When members of a community work together, they encounter the vicissitudes of community life and sensitivity and feelings are generated. The psychological health of the community will depend on the way it responds to these feelings. The opportunity to express and share sadness, joy, grief, shame, togetherness, anger, anxiety, helplessness and irreverence is crucial for institutional health and longevity.</p>

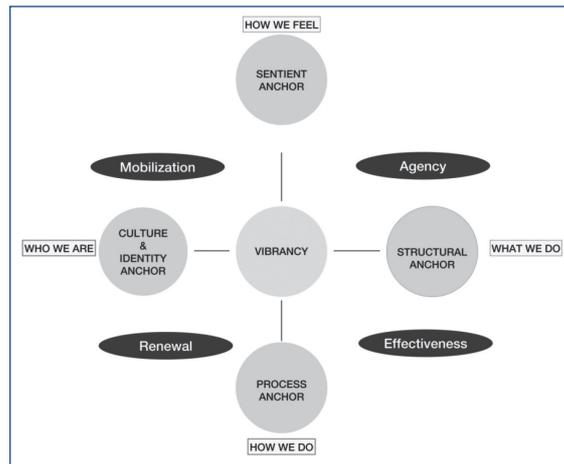
## Coherent Attention to All Anchors

All four anchors exist at the birth and through the life of an institution. Unfortunately, leaders and members of many business organisations take a myopic view of their communities and over-engage with the structural and process anchors only. They provide scant regard and attention to the culture–identity and sentient anchors, attending to them when the work community is already too deep in trouble.

The vibrancy and the sustainability of the institution is dependent on how healthy each of these anchors are. Senior citizens and leaders can build their communities and transform them into institutions by focusing their attention on managing and developing all these anchors coherently.

The interplay of these anchors with each other provides a model for regenerating vibrancy and transforming communities into institutions.

When the four anchors represented in the four quadrants are invested in, the organisation becomes vibrant, balanced and centred.



**Figure 2.** The Institution Building Anchors.

**Source:** Adapted and refined by Prasad Kumar (author) from the original ideas of Prof. Pulin Garg.

Enabling a dialogue that explores the intended and unintended consequences in which each of these quadrants are implemented, is the key to the emergence of the institution. It is not always easy to understand and articulate the underlying complex processes. It is, therefore, important to design the forums for sustained, experiential dialogue.

## A Traditional Organisation Meets Modernity

One of the traditional organisations that has survived into contemporary times with its core processes intact is the *Vishwakarma* community of temple builders. In modern parlance, they are a guild with clear policies and principles. One of the authors has had the opportunity to watch the process of building of a few temples. The process took many years and therefore allowed for a deep understanding of the way the community conducted its business. The whole operation is complex and is comparable to a large building project. It will be illuminating to look at the traditional ways in which organisational and institutional processes were created and how they have been deployed in today's context.

Some of the highlights of the process are as follows:

1. The organisation is very diverse. A temple needs the collaboration of the *Stapati* (chief designer), teams that work with bricks, stone and wood, stone sculptors, metal sculptors and blacksmiths.
2. A separate team that manages the money.
3. Before the temple is designed, the *Stapati* invites the *Vishwakarma* scholars for a discussion to ensure that the design follows the principles laid down in the texts. This process starts with a dedication to their key deities. While the discussions are robust, they are concluded with a mutual appreciation of the points made.

4. Once the design is completed, it is sealed with auspicious marks, offered to the deity symbolically.
5. The *Stapati* then invites teams of specialists for a meeting. Here, the teams are put together after the competence of the worker is vouched for by the head of the subgroup that specialises in particular aspects of sculpting/building.
6. Once the team is put together, the *Stapati* holds an open meeting—called the *Koodam*. Here, all differences are set aside, and the group engages in processes that enable them to bond together.
7. Once the bonding process is complete, the temple design is shared. Discussion is encouraged, where many technical details are shared, and individual abilities are openly discussed.
8. Individual responsibilities and accountabilities are then assigned. This is both a process of the teams suggesting their lead and the *Stapati* applying his discretion.
9. The core team lives in the premises where the temple is being built.
10. Every morning starts with a collective prayer, followed by a discussion of an appreciation of individual work done. The progress of apprentices is discussed. Learning on the job is given great importance.
11. The celebrations of Hindu festivals have three components:
  - The traditional expression of gratitude and veneration.
  - A review of the processes based on the nature of the deity being venerated. For example, on the day of Saraswathi Puja, each person is asked to review their learning and come with a plan for their learning goal for the next year. This is then stated as a covenant to the Goddess.
  - A joyous togetherness.
12. The process of review is fascinating. On the night of Shivarathri and on the day before Pongal (called *Bhogi*), people are encouraged to articulate grievances, resolve them, and clean the slate! Setting aside the past and creating space for the new is treated as a sacred offering. On Makar Sankranti/Pongal, ancestors are remembered, and the stories of people who had made significant contributions to the community are remembered. The new techniques and designs introduced are discussed. This includes the ways in which modern tools are introduced, and the teacher who mastered it is remembered in one of discussions that the authors witnessed. On other days, family issues are aired to the *Stapati* or their respective community leaders. The acharyas of their community are invited on specific days when private consultation to discuss one's personal sorrow is encouraged.
13. Once a year, a collective bargaining process is enacted. The leaders of the community listen to the grievances of the team members and recalibrate the relationship. Where interventions are required, the elders step in. After this Darbar, the elders confer, and the head of the community speaks to the entire community that is gathered setting out the 'new agreements' in a manner of speaking. The *Stapati* and his wife then serve food to all the people assembled!
14. Occasionally traditional *Mahabharata* plays are organised, and discussions and debates on important texts are conducted, where the whole group is present. These debates could get heated as the various points of view are put across, often with examples from one's own life or with reference to important texts. At the end of these events, the relationship between the stories from the itihasa and purana and the specific elements of temple design/sculptures are discussed with an elder. Often, the *Mahabharata* plays are used as devices to comment about social, cultural, or political issues.
15. Since the core team lives together till the end of the project, there are many opportunities for informal learning, relating family and clan histories, sharing of idiosyncrasies of each other, gossip and, on occasion, deep philosophy is discussed in a very casual manner.

16. The caring the group members show for each other is touching. The way the group rallies together when one of them is in need or has lost a member of their families is very heart warming. The group comes together to contribute financially, they share stories of their own loss and direct the grieving member to an elder.
17. Whenever a member wishes to take up an issue (say, draught conditions prevailing in one of the villages) a process called *mahimai* is started. The one taking the initiative writes down the issue in a notebook, puts some money into the kitty and passes the notebook across. Each one contributes as they wish to without compulsion and the initiator then takes charge, performs the service that was set out and reports back to the group.

The lessons for us to take forward are:

1. Creating and sustaining forums and dialogue opportunities for members to experience the sentient processes of community (described earlier, viz. catharsis, togetherness, equalisation, rejoicing/grieving, absolving shame/blame and humour) form the key to creating a self-reinforcing, virtuous cycle of positive vitality, belonging and membership.
2. When these sentient processes are not available, membership suffers. Psychological contracts gradually wither and belonging wilts. Loyalty to the institution, which itself is rooted in emotion, becomes indifferent, and apathy sets in. Leaders are no longer given the benefit of doubt. Change initiatives suffer. Mobilising minds becomes an uphill task.
3. Institution builders and trained facilitators who anchor and sustain these sentient processes in perpetuity are absolute necessities for this to succeed.

## The Dynamics of the Interplay Between Modern Industrial Organisations and Indian Sociocultural Dimensions

When dealing with the structural anchors of an institution (what we do), western and colonial paradigms, juxtapose with the Indian sociocultural aspects embedded in the cultural identity anchors of the institution (who we are) and conscious and unconscious dilemmas are triggered.

To highlight this, let us look at a small anecdote. One of the authors of this article was conducting an organisation development (OD) exercise in a multinational pharma company. After the initial interviews and assessments, the author requested for a dialogue among the senior management team, comprising 22 people. He suggested they come up with a shared understanding of the organisational processes and decide on a way forward. The setting was informal—small groups were formed for specific topics, followed by intense discussions in a round table format and equal voice to all modality. At lunch, the chief finance officer (CFO) took the author aside and asked with a lot of concern—‘Are you doing the right thing? What you are doing looks more like the panchayat I run in my village and the family Koodam (a family gathering where consensus building takes place). This is a formal organization!’

The CFO’s model of organisations reflect a stark separation between the ‘Indian mind’ and the ‘professional mind’ of the CFO. While this separation is a little extreme, it illustrates a common reality of Indian managers. Their ways of bringing their emotional/psycho-social being into a group setting is shaped in the ‘family’ that is anchored in the long tradition of Indian culture. This shapes deep ‘meaning-making’ and ‘role-taking’ behaviour, which the person is often not conscious of. However, their graduate study happens in a fairly confused setting, neither Westernised nor honouring the Indic modes of learning. Then, they go into modern organisations governed through Western paradigms. The modern organisations created in India just before Independence, and immediately after

Independence can be categorised in three ways: first, organisations like Forbes, Forbes and Campbell or East India Distilleries—Parry, which were started by British expats almost 200+ years ago. Second, are public sector undertakings, many of which were started with technical and managerial collaboration with foreign countries/organisations. The collaborators brought with them their own specific ways of emotional engagement, meaning-making and role shaping. Third, Indian business families that were into banking and moneylending either bought the foreign companies or sought foreign collaboration to set up modern organisations. It is only in the past couple of decades that we have seen the growth of Indian entrepreneurs starting organisations, though the tradition of small and medium family businesses has existed for millennia.

What emerges therefore is a socialising of the individual's identity in the 'primary system' (a traditional Indian home) and the deployment of this self in a 'secondary system' (the organisation). This is problematic at many levels, and when it remains unresolved, it leads to the kind of split that our CFO demonstrated. He held a lot of wisdom in building trust among very diverse people and forging consensus in difficult contexts that directly impinged on the livelihoods people. This is invaluable learning for creating and nurturing teams, but he was keeping this wisdom aside to act in ways that he thought were 'professional and modern'! This tentativeness and uncertainty on how to bring oneself in is often dealt with through various degrees of imitating the ways of senior-role holders in the secondary system and compartmentalising the primary identity. This causes many internal tensions and a consequent loss of autonomy, authenticity, and power. This loss of an inner compass shows up in the key dimensions, which matter in an organisation: sense of ownership, membership, relationship with authority, teamwork, decision-making in an uncertain context, taking long-term risks on behalf of the organisation, and assertive challenge and proactive agency. This internal unsureness of how to bring oneself in is coped with by becoming adjusting, accommodating, becoming role and rule bound and conformist. (These issues have been discussed at length by Ashok Malhotra in his book *Indian Managers and Organizations; Boons and Burdens*, as well as by Raghu Ananthanarayanan in his paper *Pedagogical Contextualisation and Integration Challenges for Organisation Development in India: Cultural Wisdom and Rational Modernity in Organisations*).

## Family Members and issues of Role Taking

Family members entering the family business have a different set of issues to contend with. The space of their psycho-socialisation includes both the familial and the business dynamics without much of a distinction between them. This makes for a lack of psychological distance between one's identity and one's work. Professor Pulin Garg has enumerated some of the key issues that characterise Indianness:

1. Work is part of the person's identity.
2. Task and sentient systems are not separated but form an interdependent system.
3. Differentiation among family members is not made based on professional capabilities, but basis on familial norms of age and rights. It is assumed that following the deeply ingrained practices that have been part of the familial learning will ensure success.
4. The shame of straying from one's dharma is the institutional process of ensuring coherence in a group. But there are no processes of punishment or punitive action for a misdemeanour, other than estrangement from the family and its resources and goodwill. Instead, there were institutions for absolving shame and re-establishing the person in the group.

5. The Karta system, where elders oversaw the process of institution building, upholding of values and re-anchoring the family on new ways of doing business, ensured the flourishing of the family across generations.
6. The design of social structures followed the understanding of the inner psycho-social and psychic structures of man. Thus, the inner and the outer were seen as interlinked.
7. The meaning of work was often linked to the spiritual and religious dimensions of the family

It is important to note that several prominent business families can trace their lineage across hundreds of years. To illustrate, one of the authors has had many dialogues with Mr M.V. Subbiah of the Murugappa family. His narration of the way he was inducted into the family business and his subsequent mentoring by the Karta of the Murugappa family at that time, reflect many of the principles enunciated by late Professor Garg. Dialogues with (late) Shri Ganapathy Stapati, a world-renowned temple architect, and elder of the Vishwakarma community who comes from the direct lineage of the builders of the Brihadeeswara Temple in Tanjore, also affirms these principles.

The upshot of this is that members of families that have kept alive their traditions receive a mixed blessing. On the one hand, they imbibe a deep and proud tradition, but, on the other hand, they are often tied down by their tradition. Their autonomy and creativity can be expressed only within the boundaries drawn by the family. When confronted with modernity, the family members have to contend with many powerful forces: first, the new technologies that impact the business ecology; second, the ways of doing business that are part of cultural and social tradition of the country are challenged by Western business structures, advanced management systems, laws and regulations that follow the ways of the colonisers, and, later, by advancing Western thought; third, the idea of what it is to be resourceful as a human, what it means to be successful and how one communes and belongs with one's world are challenged by modernity.

Most families have managed the challenge of adapting to new technologies very well. Many business families like the Birla's and Tatas that saw business activity as an act of patriotism and building indigenous institutions of learning as an important nation-building activity, have succeeded in making the transition from their earlier modes of doing business (which was often Indian forms of banking) to building large organisations. The formal structures and statutes of a joint stock company have their origins in the royal charters that legitimised commercial operations in Britain. These have been adopted in India, when it was still under the colonial form of governance. Many of these laws have, at best, been modified from time to time after India gained independence. Thus, the traditional banking families had to adopt a strange hybrid form, where the traditional ways were force-fitted into the new forms of legitimacy that was imposed upon them. The tension between the two modes of understanding wealth, governance and management has not been fully resolved.

The challenge of doing business in ways that conform to Western business structures and the laws of the country has not always been easy. The modes of shared ownership of wealth and processes of governance have been vitiated. This has often led to a mismatch between the explicit, business, and legal structures and the implicitly held familial norms. Many families handled this tension well in the first post-independence generations by clearly separating the statutory compliance from the process of governance. Later, as these families also modernised, this tension between the explicit and the implicit has come under strain and, sometimes, it has snapped in the succeeding generations, largely due to Western educational values and pedagogy. Paradoxically, the ability of the family members to master modernity through their education and learning becomes a two-edged sword, where the family member has learnt to develop a coherence between the knowledge of the tradition and the new learning; the

family has acquired renewed energy and vitality. Where the coherence has not been developed, irreconcilable tensions have grown. The modern ways have been used to trump the tradition.

The third challenge is the most difficult to navigate. Often, family members are educated in schools like Lawrence, Doon School and Sanawar, which model themselves on the ways of the colonial masters and are anchored in Western pedagogy and values. This was essential to develop influence in the corridors of power as well as creating networks in the new emerging business ecology in the era just prior to the Indian Independence, and this trend continued for many years. However, traditional Indian values get questioned overtly and covertly both by the teachers and by fellow students in these institutions that were set up to Westernise the Indian elite and wean them away from their roots. The pressure to become 'modern' implies an imitation of the West and a disrespect of the indigenous. The authors have encountered the deep inner conflict that this causes in the leaders of family businesses in several of the leadership initiatives that they have facilitated. The injury to the sense of self and the confusion in the philosophical anchors of life, leave deep conflicts that disempower the person.

There is a very interesting phenomenon that has emerged post-independence. Families rooted in the agrarian ethos or in the trading community have become entrepreneurs and broken into the world of big business. Notable business houses are GMR, GVK, Annapurna and Saravana. These families have been led into the business space by charismatic individuals who have led the change in the fortunes of the family.

The issues of managing the two paradigms and the resultant ways of governing of business organisations impact members of a business family as much as they do the professional manager. However, in most families, there are institutional processes that enable a dialogue between the holders of the respective paradigms in a meaningful and respectful way. This is often absent in the organisational contexts, where institutional processes are not nurtured. However, in families where these institutional processes are not renewed and redesigned, they exist in form but devoid of spirit. They hold the family together in an uneasy compromise that sometimes become dysfunctional.

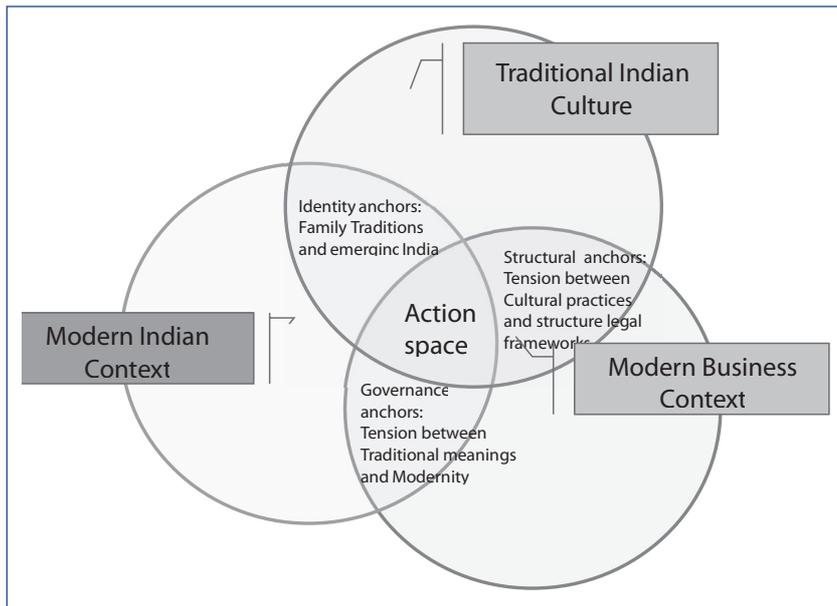
An emerging development in family business management is the advent of the process of developing a family constitution. The writing down of the constitution involves a multi-generational and participative process of articulating the implicitly held assumptions and engaging in a process of dialogue centred around governance and values. This dialogue is an institution-building process since it articulates the basis on which the perpetuity and sustainability of the family business is premised.

## **A Visual Summary of the Process**

Figure 3 illustrates the three distinct pulls that are acting on the psyche of the leader from the family business. He is expected to be a role model in traditional terms, and this means upholding expectations that the society and community have for the family. Often, many of these families hold important positions in the local temple governance, schools or even the community panchayats. This context is in flux.

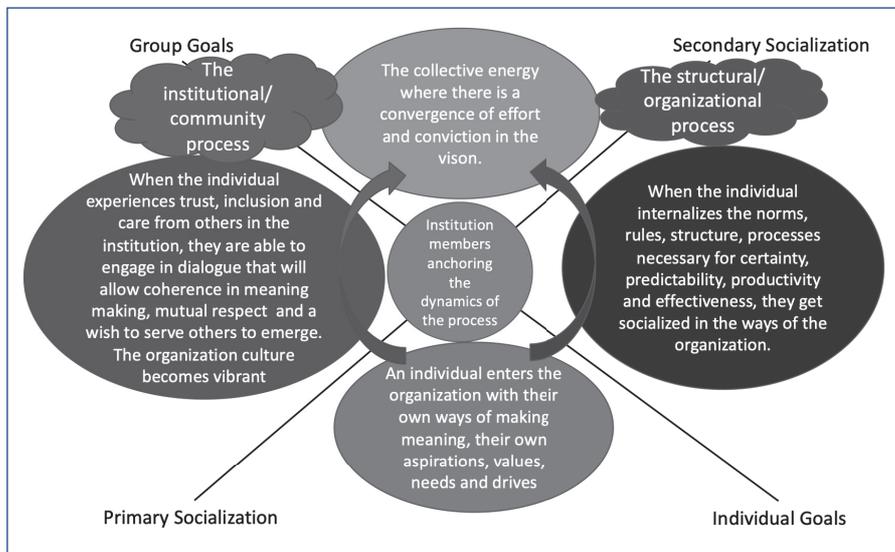
Figure 3b traces the path of a person that one must traverse to become a valued institutional member of the organisation. This holds both for the professional who has internalised modern meanings of personhood and groups, as well as family members who are attempting to modernise the business.

To understand Figure 4, let us conduct a thought experiment: you the reader and us the authors are about to enter an organisation. We come from different backgrounds and with different capabilities; consequently, our dreams and aspirations are different. Our ways of understanding authority, power, peer-hood, etc., are also shaped by our prior experiences and our particular primary socialisation. For us



**Figure 3.** Becoming a Valued Member of the Institution.

Source: Conceptualised by Raghu Ananthanarayanan (The author).



**Figure 4.** The Dynamics of Institution Building.

Source: Conceptualised by Raghu Ananthanarayanan (The author).

to be members of a powerful organisation, we must collaborate. This means understand each other as persons and complement and supplement each other. We must understand each other and have a coherent set of interpretation of events and their significance. This is the implicit context and the intangible culture of the organisation. The process of building this coherence lies in the left-hand path, the institution-building process, where we develop trust in each other and learn how to dialogue with each other. In the traditional context, family members who are the primary shareholders of the organisation and the promoters do not need to go through this among themselves. This is because the coherence in meaning-making is achieved through the fact that the family, being a joint family, follows cultural processes specific to the family. The power and importance of this process often gets taken for granted, and when the traditional families confront modernity and a nuclear family ethos, they neglect the institution-building processes. Differences in interpretation of purpose, money and people do not get addressed at the deeper level and come through as divergences in leadership. They lead to conflict that cannot be resolved at the superficial level. Modernisation involves the induction of professionals into leadership positions. Therefore, if the family leaders do not engage in the process of forging a shared language, trust, and inclusiveness with professionals, a subtle but deep cleavage gets created in the psycho-social ground of the organisation.

We also must take the path to the right where we encounter the explicit policies, rules, structures, systems, and processes of the organisation. The process of absorbing these and moulding behaviour is comparatively easy. The processes of negotiating expectations, understanding the rewards that can accrue are more explicit. Goal setting and other processes by which the common purpose is generated are also part of this path. While professionals 'expect' these negotiations and have been exposed to it, it is likely that the family members who govern the organisation do not. Often, it is taken for granted that the implicit ways in which wealth has been shared will be continued. Performance appraisal is neither easy to do in a family business setting nor is there a precedent for it. Family owners and members who modernise their organisations have, therefore, two tasks in front of them: First, to understand the modern terms under which organisations are governed and, second, to establish equity and balance with the professionals.

## Conclusion

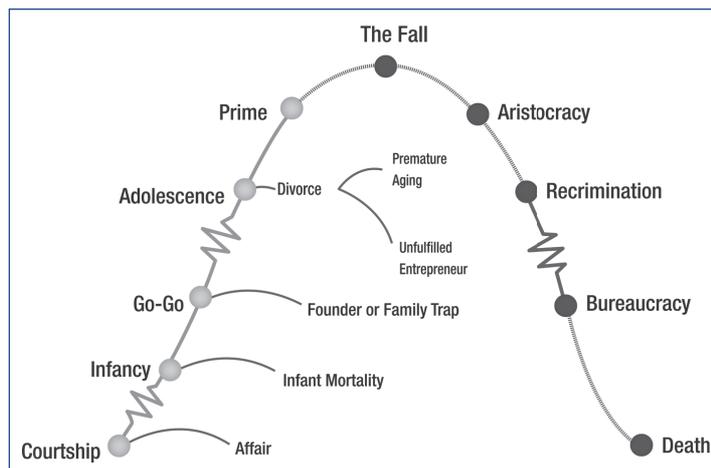
To flourish over the long term, organisational leaders have to understand the potential and power of institution building.

All the four anchors of an institution arise simultaneous with the creation of an organisation. Concurrent with the infancy of an organisation, the four anchors of 'Who we are', 'what we do', 'how we do what we do' and 'how we feel' also come into existence.

Ichak Adizes in his insightful book *Managing Corporate Lifecycles* explores the various life stages of an organisation—from infancy to prime and decline.

The four anchors will either remain passive or become active, depending on the attention given to it by the family business promoters and leaders.

From infancy to the adolescence stage, most promoters focus on 'who we are' and 'what we do', giving scant attention to 'how we do what we do' and 'how we feel'. Institution members are enlisted at this stage.



**Figure 5.** Organisation Life Cycle.

**Source:** Managing Corporate Life Cycles ... How Organisations Grow, Age and Die by IchakKaldersonAdizes.

For the organisation to reach prime, from the adolescence stage, ‘how we do what we do’ (processes and systems) must take priority focus. When this happens, the first shoots of institution building begin to show. Institution members are fostered at this stage.

The central concern of long-lived organisations is to remain at the prime stage for as long as possible and to renew themselves constantly, to ensure that they do not hit the precipice of ‘The Fall’.

Keeping ‘The Fall’ at bay is possible when promoters and leaders activate ‘how we feel’ alongside the other three anchors. When they do so, entrepreneurial agency, renewal, mobilisation, institutional membership and belonging come to the fore and the aging process stalls. Institution members mature and anchor the community at this stage.

Unfortunately, the socio-psychological maps and the ‘machine’ metaphor of organisations persist in the minds of most promoters and leaders, and they do not bring alive the sentient processes of ‘how we feel’ and sustain institutional dialogue, when it is needed the most. Consequently, they reach ‘The Fall’ and decline begins.

When ‘The Fall’ begins, the sense of belonging among the members recedes, proactivity of enterprising membership regresses into pseudo-obedience, and morale is at its nadir.

This article points out that modernising and Westernising Indian organisations come at a price: the socio-psychological price of stress and tensions between the ‘familial and affiliative primary systems’ of growing up years and ‘secondary task systems’ that we inherit, in Western-oriented organisations and occupations.

The central theme of this article is that activation of the six sentient processes of dialogue and regeneration, in tandem with the other three anchors, holds the key to new meanings. Meanings that are co-created with the membership, devoid of the psycho-social stress of Western modernity. Meanings that enable role making, governance and generativity in the journey for longevity and institution building. This needs to be the focus of a leader who also wants to be an institution builder.

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## Notes

1. Business of daughters: more women handling reins of family businesses now.
2. Images of organisation 1st Edition, Kindle Edition by Gareth Morgan, SAGE Publication
3. Bruce Lipton provide reference book title, page number.
4. Business Sutra—A very Indian Approach to Management, Devdutt Patnaik
5. The characteristic spirit of a culture, era or community as manifested in its attitudes and aspirations. *Synonyms*: spirit, atmosphere, climate, essence, animating principle, dominating characteristic, rationale, code, morality, moral code, attitudes, beliefs, principles, standards, ethics.
6. A quality that evokes pity or sadness. *Synonyms*: poignancy, tragedy, sadness, piteousness, plaintiveness, sorrowfulness.
7. Implicitly held stories and ideas concerning what constitutes honour and heroism. *Synonyms*: folk tale, story, legend, saga, allegory, parable, tradition, lore, folklore.
8. Implicitly held attraction and desire to belong, contribute and excel in the context. *Synonyms*: love, aspiration, attraction, drive, motivation.

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### Bio-sketch

**Prasad Kumar** (PM) is the Founder of Human Endeavour Associates, a niche consultancy firm specialising in strategic advisory for owner-led companies and family businesses. PM has worked in senior executive roles in corporate companies, with many leading companies such as Madura Coats, CMC Limited, Wipro, Thermax and GMR Group, partnering in their growth and transformation. Most of his engagements have been long-term partnerships, and as a versatile practitioner, he integrates the cultural and structural dimensions for growth, governance and institution building. His key focus is on institution building and perpetuity in family businesses.

His previous positions were Business Chairman and member of the GMR Group Holding Board, Chairman of RAXA (Homeland Security) and Vice Chairman and Managing Director of Parampara Family Business Institute, and he is currently on their Academic Council.

He is member of the following:

- *The Economic Times* Advisory Panel on Family Business;
- *The Economic Times* Advisory Panel on Corporate Board Governance;
- Governing Council of Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology;
- Advisory Board Member of Sieflex Robot i-City Project; and
- Advisory Board Amicorp Trustees (India) Private Limited.

He was the Guest Editor for the special issue of the NHRD Network Journal on 'HR issues in Family-Managed Organisations in India: Current Reality and Future Perspectives' and authored several articles on various contemporary issues in family business.

A postgraduate in Management and accredited in Applied Behavioral Sciences and Human Process facilitation, PM has worked as a Certified Professional of the International Association of Facilitators and is a Life Member of the Association.

PM teaches specialised modules on family business, institutional strategy, leadership and succession at IIM Bangalore, Indian School of Business (ISB) and other leading business schools.

He served as Executive-in-Residence at the Kellogg School of Management, NW University, Chicago, USA, and worked closely with Ram Charan and John Ward, both global experts in management and family business.

**Raghu Ananthanarayanan** (raghu.tao@email.com) is the co-founder of Sumedhas Academy for Human Context, FLAME TAO Knoware (Pvt. Ltd.) & Ritambhara Ashram. He focuses on bringing insights from the Yoga Darshanas to address contemporary issues in human behaviour and organization design. Three extraordinary teachers mentored

Raghu Ananthanarayanan when in very difficult phases of his life, namely J. Krishnamurti, Yogacharya Krishnamacharya and Pulin K Garg. He was intimately involved with them for more than a decade from his late 20s. This engagement not only transformed him, it evoked from him his service orientation and *sadhana*. His work revolves around helping individuals, groups and organisations discover their *dharma* and become the best they can be. This, he believes, aligns with his own personal *sadhana*. By working with a variety of groups across the spectrum: Dalit groups and developmental processes for the downtrodden, craft groups, traditional communities, groups focusing on the arts as well as with business organisations, he has developed an insight into human processes that cut across superficial categorisations.

Formally trained as an engineer with an MS in Bio-Medical Engineering from IIT, Madras, he has been deeply involved in questions of human life. In academic areas, he has been Cofounder of the Sumedhas Academy of Human Context since 1995 and of the Barefoot Academy of Governance with TISS since 2012. He is one of the Directors of the Centre for Consciousness and Inner Transformation, an initiative of Indic Academy. As Director of Flame Tao Knoware Pvt Ltd, Raghu spans the commercial world of consulting by helping redesign the client organisations for greater alignment and synergy. Raghu has authored several books: *Learning Through Yoga*, *The Totally Aligned Organization*, *Leadership Dharma*, *Arjuna the Timeless Metaphor*, *Organizational Development and Alignment: The Tensegrity Mandala* (as co-author with Gagandeep Singh). Raghu is engaged in designing an advanced coach development intensive based on Indic Wisdom as Director Coaching for Inner Transformation. Currently, his wife Sashi and he, donning their role as chief mentors, are working on nurturing people on a sacred quest at Ritambhara Ashram, situated in the beautiful Nilgiris.