

Principled Leadership in India: Linking GLOBE Findings with the Research at Simmons College

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In this article, the authors try to examine what kind of leadership fits the Indian organizational context. For this, they consider the findings from project GLOBE and Simmons College. From a study of these two streams of research they present to the readers, the broad implications of “principled leadership”. In this regard, they also posit how it can be applicable to India’s pluralistic societal culture.

Introduction

What type of leadership is most appropriate for the Indian context, as the Indian organizations strive to play a more active role in the global economy?

To answer this question, we look at the findings from two streams of research: GLOBE and School of Management, Simmons College. The GLOBE – Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness – research was conducted

over a ten-year period, encompassing 62 societies.¹ As part of GLOBE research program, middle managers of firms in 62 societies were asked to report cultural practices and values in their organizations. The managers also rated effectiveness of alternative leader behaviors, using which six second-order leadership profiles were developed. The GLOBE program examined and affirmed the thesis that value-based leadership, alternatively referred to as principled leadership, is endorsed universally across world cultures as effective.

The School of Management at Simmons College has been conducting research on gender and diversity in management, leadership, and entrepreneurship positions, for the past 30 years. Through extensive surveys on women's aspirations for leadership and power, it has identified a more inclusive perspective on principled leadership. The majority of women say they aspire to leadership not only to achieve exceptional results, but to make positive changes in their organizations, in their communities, and in society more broadly. These findings are even more striking for the women from under-privileged social groups, for instance, for the African American women compared to the Caucasian women.

Juxtaposing these two streams of research helps us understand what is broadly captured by the term "principled leadership" – i.e., leadership based on core principles, in ways relevant for the pluralistic Indian context, which is characterized by a diversity of cultures and by social groups enjoying a varying range of privileges. (see House *et al*, 2005).

Of course, the next challenge is to identify the good and innovative practices for developing and leading "principled organizations" – i.e., organizations based on core principles. At the 30th anniversary of the Simmons College, many alumnae shared their experiences and perspectives that help us identify several key processes underlying the principled organizations.

On the whole, our model of principled leadership has three components:

- An inclusive component, identified by the Center for Gender in Organizations, Simmons College

- Principled leaders not only ask "Leadership how", but also "Leadership for what?" and "Leadership for whom?"
- A universal component, identified and validated by the GLOBE program
 - Principled leadership is value-based and is motivating and energizing.
- An organizational component
 - Principled leaders are committed to organize their own life and the life of their organizations and their societies in ways that enable and foster principled leadership.

Here, we will first look at the major insights from the research at Simmons College. Then, we look at the GLOBE findings, to identify organizational cultures and alternative models for outstanding leadership in the Southern Asia cluster. Finally, we articulate key processes for implementing a principled-leadership approach.

What is Principled Leadership?: Research at the Simmons College

Principled leadership is usually referred to the use of good character and integrity principles to drive the actions of an organization. The principled organizations, thus, "build those principles into the center of their lives, into the center of their relationships, into the center of their communications and contracts, into their management processes, and into their mission statements." (Covey, 2001).

However, research at Simmons suggests an emerging model of principled leadership viewed in a richer and more compelling way (Merrill-Sands, Kickul, & Ingols, 2005; Fletcher, 2002; Merrill-Sands & Kolb, 2001). Surveys of about 1,000 women executives in the US in 2003 and 2004, conducted jointly by Hewlett Packard and Simmons College, show women are less motivated by traditional models of leadership focusing on rank, position or turf. Only 27% of respondents say it is important to them to be 'in charge of others', and only 47% want power to move up the organizational ladder. On the other hand, more than 70% are motivated by leadership focused on making a difference, helping others, contributing to the community, and making world a better place (Merrill-Sands, Kickul, & Ingols, 2005).

¹ For details on GLOBE and its methodology, see House, R J, Hanges P.J., Javidan, M, Dorfman P, and Gupta V. eds, (2005) *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies*. CA: Sage.

According to Merrill Sands (2005), these women's voices clearly show that principled leaders do everything effective leaders do to mobilize groups to achieve exceptional results and to build strong, inclusive and enduring organizations. But they go a step further and ensure – in every decision they make and action they take – that they and their organizations are contributing in a meaningful way to building a vibrant, prosperous, ethical, caring, and sustainable society.

The principled leaders strive for three types of distinguishing contributions:

- *Value-based work culture:* They foster a work culture where decisions, large and small, are evaluated against a code of ethics and guiding values, and where integrity in decision-making is an explicit measure of success.
- *Fiduciary social responsibility:* They shape and meet shareholder expectations while also holding themselves accountable to a broader set of stakeholders – employees, customers, suppliers, and the communities and societies in which they operate.
- *Sustainable development:* They match their focus on short-term success with rigorous assessments of the long-term impact of their enterprises on the environment and the resources we bestow to future generations.

They do so by working assiduously to dismantle the false dichotomies that limit our imagination and forge a third path – a path that integrates seemingly opposite concepts such as profitability or social responsibility, productivity or work-personal life integration, and ethics or the bottom line, in new and creative ways.

Culture and Leadership in Southern Asia Cluster: The GLOBE Findings

In the GLOBE program, India has been classified into Southern Asia cluster, along with nations that span from the Philippines and Thailand on the east, to Iran in the west, broadly capturing the ancient Sarasvati-Indus region. The program classified other nations into one of the following nine clusters: Confucian Asia, Eastern Europe, Nordic Europe, Germanic Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East, Latin America, Latin Europe, and Anglo. Further, using aggregated data from the middle level manager respondents in respective organizations, culture

has been operationalized in two ways: culture as practices (“As Is” perceptions of culture in an organization), and culture as values (“Should Be” aspirations for culture in an organization).

Organizational Values and Practices in the Southern Asian Cluster

In Southern Asian societies, at least seven managers rated organizational cultures in 46 firms (mean respondents/firm=18.3). Table 1 shows the cluster average of organizational values and practices in this sample of firms. On a scale of 1 to 7, South Asian organizations have an average score of 4 to 5 on seven of the nine dimensions: uncertainty avoidance (4.37), future orientation (4.86), power distance (4.31), institutional collectivism (4.42), humane orientation (4.61), performance orientation (4.25), and group collectivism (4.73). They score low on assertiveness (3.68) and gender egalitarianism (3.09).

The above picture of business practices indicates a strong influence of colonial forces. This influence dates to at least around 1600 AD when England chartered British East India Company to trade with the east. The company adopted Managing Agency system, which relied on expatriates for top management and hired locals for junior clerical positions, and promoted them based on how well they imitated British practices. This “Babu” (lit. clerk) system was widely adopted by the government and public sector enterprises after the nations became independent, and promoted dependence on the bosses selectively hired through elite civil services examinations.

Similar systems prevailed in other, non-British colonies. More than three centuries of Dutch colonial presence (1619-1942) influenced business culture in Indonesia. The Dutch legally restricted the Javanese and other native Indonesians from engaging in business, and hired the local elites into lower-level civil services, while segregating local population by ethnicity (Wiseman, 2000).

In the formal hierarchical firms, women rarely fit in the authoritarian culture and are mostly engaged in less visible supporting roles such as office administration. In 1985, women constituted just 6.6% of manager-administrators in Indonesia, 8.3% in Malaysia, 15.4% in Thailand, and 25.4% in the Philippines. (Women Managers in Southeast Asia, 1990). In the private sector, most women-managers

Table 1: Grand Country Means for GLOBE Organizational Culture Dimensions

	Iran	India	Thailand	Malaysia	Indonesia	Philippines	Cluster	Contrast with other 9 clusters
"As Is"								
Uncertainty avoidance	3.52	4.29	5.05	4.11	4.75	4.50	4.37	.22
Future Orientation	4.34	4.83	5.24	4.59	5.02	5.16	4.86	.26*
Power Distance	4.53	4.17	4.79	4.59	3.76	4.00	4.31	.53**
Institutional Collectivism	4.10	4.18	4.52	4.57	4.86	4.30	4.42	.11
Humane Orientation	4.38	4.30	4.83	4.57	4.67	4.90	4.61	.13
Performance Orientation	3.43	4.39	4.12	3.80	4.72	5.04	4.25	-.37**
Group Collectivism	4.25	4.63	5.13	4.52	4.85	5.02	4.73	.10
Gender Egalitarianism	2.59	2.89	3.08	3.02	3.30	3.68	3.09	.07
Assertiveness	3.85	3.78	3.40	4.18	3.48	3.37	3.68	-.32**
"Should Be"								
Uncertainty Avoidance	3.26	4.45	5.23	5.03	4.61	4.61	4.53	.22*
Future Orientation	5.85	5.87	6.16	5.95	5.70	6.01	5.92	.37**
Power Distance	3.66	3.65	3.85	4.04	3.93	3.77	3.82	.25**
Institutional Collectivism	4.20	5.00	5.55	4.84	5.12	4.79	4.92	.04
Humane Orientation	5.37	5.08	5.00	4.63	4.57	4.93	4.93	-.01
Performance Orientation	4.50	6.16	5.98	5.70	5.66	6.28	5.71	-.27**
Group Collectivism	3.80	5.62	5.24	5.77	5.25	6.04	5.29	-.56**
Gender Egalitarianism	3.92	4.24	4.01	3.72	3.90	4.54	4.06	-.49**
Assertiveness	4.39	3.15	4.61	2.71	3.11	2.78	3.46	-.21

Note: *= $p < 0.05$; **= $p < 0.01$

relied on family connections or long professional experience, while in the public sector they often needed higher educational attainments compared to their male counterparts. (Wright & Tellei, 1993)

However, in small urban-rural enterprises where the direct influence of foreigners was limited, women as traders and artisans often played an important role, since they contributed up to one-half of family income (Kumar, 1980). In many villages and towns, market trading activities were dominated by women. (Dewey, 1962). Price's (1983) study of Javanese textile firms showed in most cases husband-wife teams jointly owned the units, and women as managers generally had a maternal attitude towards employees and considered them of lower status, but part of a family.

In terms of organizational values, the managers desire their organizations to be more future oriented (5.92), more collectivist (4.92), more egalitarian (3.82), more performance-oriented (5.71), and less male-dominated (4.06). Some of these values are visible in the changing position of women, often led by Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). A leading example is the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India, which was founded in 1972 as a trade union of self-employed women. In contrast to the welfare model of development, SEWA's work is grounded in the premise that women, like men, need incomes to support themselves and their families. Therefore, SEWA works with women to improve and increase the returns from their ongoing enterprises through capital, support for organizing cooperatives, marketing assistance, specialized skills training, and policy representation. Of its nearly 250,000 women members, 40% are home-based workers, who have been empowered to seek better wages and working conditions (Mehra, 1997).

On the whole, the modern Southern Asian view of women seems to be one of a person with outside accomplishments but with very strong ties to the family. Woodcroft-Lee (1983) reported that the Islamic magazines in Indonesia portray an ideal woman as a wife and mother who has successfully pursued an academic or professional career after marriage and who has been active in community welfare, religious education or politics, but has also put her children's and husband's needs before her own.

Table 1 also contrasts the organizational cultures of Southern Asian firms with those of other clusters. The contrast is estimated by assigning a weight of 0.99 to the Southern Asian cluster, and -0.11 to each of the other nine clusters in ANOVA analysis. The estimated contrast reflects the extent to which a cluster scores higher on an organizational culture dimension compared to other clusters.

As is evident, Southern Asian firms are contrasted by their more future oriented (0.26), hierarchical (0.53), and less assertive (-0.32) and less performance oriented (-0.37) practices. Further, they have distinctly high aspirations for uncertainty avoidance (0.22), future orientation (0.37) and power distance (0.25), but lower aspirations for performance orientation (-0.27), group collectivism (-0.56), and gender egalitarianism (-0.49).

On the whole, from a global worldview, this implies a patriarchal structure which promotes a stable long-term orientation, lacks achievement orientation, and, moreover, is skeptical of the benefits of group trust and team work and of empowering women.

Outstanding Leadership in the Cluster

The GLOBE program identified six models of leadership based on 23 leadership styles that were deemed effective in one or more cultures of the world. Table 2 shows the grand cluster means of these models of outstanding leadership, using a scale of 1 to 7.

	Iran	India	Thailand	Malaysia	Indonesia	Philippines	Cluster	Contrast
Value-based	5.81	5.85	5.78	5.89	6.15	6.33	5.97	0.19
Team-oriented	5.90	5.72	5.76	5.80	5.92	6.06	5.86	0.15
Self-protective	4.34	3.77	3.91	3.49	4.12	3.31	3.82	0.41*
Participative	4.97	4.99	5.29	5.12	4.60	5.40	5.06	-0.27
Humane	5.75	5.26	5.09	5.24	5.43	5.53	5.38	0.60**
Autonomous	3.85	3.85	4.28	4.03	4.19	3.75	3.99	0.11

Value-based (5.97) and team-oriented (5.86) leadership are the most effective models for outstanding results in Southern Asia. In other words, visionary and inspirational leaders who are decisive and performance oriented, and who have high levels of integrity and are willing to make personal sacrifices, are deemed to be effective. Furthermore, leaders who are team builders, collaborative and diplomatic are also highly valued. These attributes are consistent with the cluster's high power distance and family orientated culture. Leaders are expected to act as patriarchs who help their subordinates aspire towards more ambitious and collective goals. At the same time, they need to make sure their actions and decisions help develop and sustain the team and family orientation in their organizations. They need to be open to negotiations and ideas from many corners and have to be capable diplomats to make sure they do not jeopardize the future of the organization.

Humane (5.38) and participative (5.06) leaders who are modest and caring and delegate responsibility to others are also deemed as effective in this cluster. The emphasis on humane and participative leadership models is consistent with the organizational cultures of humane and group orientation. While they are in strong positions of authority, leaders are expected to be benevolent and paternalistic and to allow for input from others.

Autonomous leadership has an average score in this cluster (3.99). It appears that despite a culture of harmony and group orientation, the managers in this cluster feel that leaders need some modest degree of individualism, independence, and uniqueness. While this may be surprising, it may reflect the need for leaders to be somewhat distinct and different from the others. They have to show characteristics that enable and legitimize their leadership role.

The last leadership dimension is self-protectiveness. It received an average score of 3.82 meaning that to a modest degree, leaders need to be self-centered, status conscious, face-saver, and procedural. They also need to induce a moderate level of conflict within the group. The need to save face and to heed status is understandable given the need for harmony and power in this culture, but the other attributes are somewhat surprising.

Table 2 also shows the contrast of the effectiveness of leadership models in Southern Asia, with that in other nine clusters in GLOBE. In international

comparisons, managers in the Southern Asia cluster find humane leadership (0.60) significantly more facilitative, and self-protective leadership (0.41) less of an impediment. The effectiveness of other leadership attributes is comparable with rest of the world. In group-oriented hierarchical cultures, the leaders often need to protect themselves against breach of norms through involvement of higher-ups and various stakeholders in the decision-making process. Such an approach also makes it imperative to be more responsive to humane considerations.

Implications for Indian Executives

Next, we will examine the implications of our findings for teaching and for training of managers in India. The core proposition that springs out of the above GLOBE findings is that the value-based principled leadership is an effective form of leadership in South Asia.

However, when principled leadership is discussed in terms of enduring and universal global values, variations in individual perspectives are undermined. Integrity or principles are believed to signify standards or norms that are black and white to everybody who embraces principled leadership. In reality, managers and students may choose from many variations of principled leadership. Three broad categories include:

- a) **Leaders as trustees of received organizational culture:** A principled leadership model, where the leaders seek to preserve the traditional cultures of the region's organizations. The leaders may not challenge the group oriented and hierarchical cultures of their organizations, and may develop competencies for being humane and self-protective.
- b) **Leaders as organizational culture actualizers:** A principled leadership model, where the leaders recognize and help actualize to the organizational aspirations for more futuristic, collectivist, egalitarian, and feminine values.
- c) **Leaders as organizational culture change agents:** A principled leadership model, where the leaders strive to align the aspirations of the region's organizations with that of the world. This may entail strengthening the aspirations for gender egalitarianism, performance orientation, and power balance, and also helping the organizations learn not just to live in the future, but also in the present, and reaffirming the positive role of the groups.

Each of the above three categories is anchored in strong principles. The principle of preserving the received organizational cultures is critical not only to ensure authenticity and diversity in the world, but also to allow organizations to use their cultures as a distinctive source of defining, identifying and securing competitive advantage. Similarly, the principle of translating the organizational values into actual practices is essential for the psychological health of the members of the organizations, and for ensuring trust and confidence of various constituencies through a consistency between the words and the deeds of the organization. Finally, the principle of championing change in the organization through globalization of its cultural aspirations is a vital element for survival and growth in the modern world.

The above three principles present differing challenges to the managers, which may be difficult to reconcile. The first and the third principles differ in their emphasis on localization vs. globalization. The second and the third principles differ in their conception of an organization's values as standards for practice, or as targets of interventions based on deviations from global standards. And, the first and the second principles differ in requiring leaders to develop competencies to sustain cultures and member contentment that goes with such sustaining, vs. developing competencies to institutionalize values into practices, and to eliminate the member discontentment from the gaps in such institutionalization.

The more inclusive model of principled leadership – as identified by the Simmons College research – helps us reconcile these. The effective principled leadership operates at much higher level of principles, which include not just value-based work culture, but also fiduciary social responsibility and sustainable development. They embrace localization as well as globalization, supporting the organizational values where appropriate and modifying them where not, and on the whole making a difference in the lives of the members.

How exactly does such an inclusive model of principled leadership work? Below, we present nine processes for building capacity to reconcile contrasting principles and to effectively enact principled leadership. These processes are culled from the experiences and perspectives shared by MBA alumnae of the Simmons College School of Management in October 2005².

² School of Management, Simmons College, Alumnae Reunion Day, October 1, 2005.

1. **“Self-awareness” Process:** The first step towards principled leadership is to become aware of oneself, and to comprehend the diversity and multitude of cultures one is operating in. Only by hearing one’s own voice, and finding ways to voice this voice, the principled leaders learn the skills of diagnosing the environment, analyzing the political context, and then taking actions to manage the manipulating powers. For this, it is important to build institutional and leadership capacity of the members, by training them and immersing them in the art of social negotiation. Those so trained gain confidence to Just Do It.
2. **“Stepping back” Process:** The principled leadership helps the leader and the members emerge out of a dependence on oneself. They learn to trust the people they are working with, and trust the process that provides the checks and balances, and to just relax. They are able to step back and look at the big picture of what is going on as a whole.
3. **“Making an impact” Process:** The principled leadership recognizes that a business does not have value, unless it brings values to the marketplace. It encourages asking what are the values, shaping those values, and bringing them out by making decisions based on those values. The thrust is on discovering unique ways of using one’s position as platform for what one truly and sincerely believes in, and enabling and empowering others to do the same. The principled leadership is conscious of giving back to the community, and taking steps to attract more principled leaders into the workforce. It seeks to have an impact on values that transcends beyond one’s position and one’s organization.
4. **“Bringing passion” Process:** The principled leadership is anchored in passion. When things are dull, burdensome and uninteresting, the leaders and the members start hating their situation and deteriorate physically and psychologically. In these times, principled leadership inspires one to get out and move to a new space, and to embrace one’s niche as unique principled leaders fully. The principled leadership is committed to making enormous contribution to social dialogue and solutions related to major issues and catastrophes, such as terrorism (9/11), child abuse by priests, natural calamities (tsunami and Katrina), and corporate frauds (Enron and

- Worldcom). The principled leaders recognize that the enormity of these problems and threats was known beforehand, but owing to the lack of principled leadership at multiple levels, these issues were not pursued and handled with the passion they should have been.
5. **“Seizing the moment” Process:** The principled leadership goes beyond maintaining relationships just because they serve some benefit. Instead, it teaches one to value enduring relationships, to value time and the present, while keeping one’s eyes up the horizon. The subject of principled leadership does not necessarily comprise of only macro moments. More often, principled leadership is oriented towards seizing each and every micro moment that comes one’s way, to make a difference. The principled leaders talk to others to make sure they understand the significance of principles and of making difference through those principles. Each person has moments and opportunities, which often do not require big time commitments. It cultivates recognition that every one’s life is full with time to use these micro moments to make a difference.
 6. **“Breaking the ceilings” Process:** The principled leadership recognizes that a lot of people, particularly women and other socially less powerful groups, are interested in leadership positions that enable them to make a difference. But still they are not interested in moving to such positions, because of the lack of supportive external environment and indeed hostility of contemporary work environments. They recognize that a positive change can occur by introducing flexibility in the workplace. While women are often criticized for their lack of leadership aspirations, research by the faculty of the Simmons College suggests that men without working spouses are more likely to aspire for leadership positions, than men with working spouses. Further, as a result of the misconceptions, women are often not offered assignments that will give them opportunities for being prepared for the leadership positions.
 7. **“Educational exercise” Process:** The principled leadership recognizes that being a change agent involves having confidence to give forced assignments to the members of less powerful groups, and accommodating the unique styles of the members of these groups. The principled leadership is more than exercising leadership, it is educating oneself as well as others as to

how to be principled leaders. It is about reaching out to those who follow non-traditional track, and embracing them to reinvent and reinvigorate the traditions.

8. **“Continuous reinvention” Process:** The principled leadership allows the leaders as well as the organizations to reinvent themselves at different stages of their lives, to see transition and change as part of life, and to do and celebrate really valuable things that are different. They gain confidence and resilience to always figure out how to get up and start going again.
9. **“Experiential opportunities” Process:** The principled leadership is oriented towards creating opportunities for assignments that give the leader as well as the members an opportunity to move up. These assignments help the members come into the view-screen for being selected for more challenging assignments, and be also prepared to take up those higher challenges.

Put together, we hypothesize that a leadership based on the above nine processes will be more effective and enduring.

Conclusions

To conclude, an effective Indian model of principled leadership would need to accommodate the diversity of nation's cultures and perspectives. It would not be sufficient for an outstanding leader in India to just be a vanguard of the traditional culture, or on the other extreme to simply discard the traditions as old-fashioned. Both the attempts to eulogize the dominant global values as the appropriate standards, as well as the programs that focus just on institutionalizing the organization's own local values, are bound to be challenged in the Indian context. The leaders in India, therefore, need to play a more dynamic role, and develop a more dynamic conception of values and principles to evolve their organizations into vigorous and forceful principled organizations in the 21st century.

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