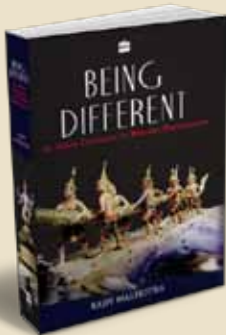


ANNOUNCING A PROVOCATIVE NEW BOOK

# BEING DIFFERENT

AN INDIAN CHALLENGE TO WESTERN UNIVERSALISM



Rajiv Malhotra's *Being Different* is a path breaking book filled with original perspectives on both Indian and Western civilizations. It is not a business book per se. It's concerns are mainly metaphysical, cultural and civilizational. It challenges Western categories of knowledge as well as the Western perspective's de facto status as arbiter of what is considered universally true. To the businessperson

or entrepreneur – both Indian and Western - its value lies in raising cultural awareness and thereby enhancing the intercultural competence needed in today's business world.

"India is its own distinct and unified civilization with a proven ability to manage profound differences, engage creatively with various cultures, religions and philosophies, and peacefully integrate many diverse streams of humanity. These values are based on ideas about divinity, the cosmos and humanity that stand in contrast to the fundamental assumptions of Western civilization. This book explores those ideas and assumptions." - Rajiv Malhotra

*"A fitting and major response to Samuel Huntington's position on 'who are we?' as the West... This deserves to be one of the defining books of the age." – John M. Hobson, Univ. of Sheffield, UK*

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# THE BOOK'S IMPORTANCE TO THE GLOBAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY



## WHY BUSINESS LEADERS SHOULD READ **BEING DIFFERENT**

Indian businesses are poised to advance beyond the successes that have previously been limited to a few narrow specialties and industries. Our leaders partner and compete with business leaders from around the world on an equal footing. American, European, Chinese and Japanese leaders are each well trained in appreciating their own civilizations' distinct qualities and are grounded in the appreciation of their special place in world history. Such collective identity manifests as a nation's soft power and bestows both business and political advantages.

*"It is trendy to say that we now live in "a flat world" where the global business culture renders the differences between civilizations obsolete. Based on his 20 years of research and experience, Rajiv Malhotra, a successful US-based entrepreneur and public intellectual, argues that this notion is idealistic and premature. Rejecting the dilution of distinctiveness as naive and inappropriate, he advocates that Indian cultural and philosophical capital could be harnessed to imbue Indian businesses with competitive advantages. In his book, Being Different, Malhotra unearths these cultural differences and equips us to lead the efforts in addressing global challenges rather than merely following the failed solutions from Western thinkers. It provides intriguing answers to some of the questions that perplex both Indians and other India watchers. How are Indian businesses able to thrive despite our country's weak infrastructure? What accounts for the instinctive environmentalism observed in Indian culture or the prolific and creative outpourings of Bollywood? How have jatis served as a structure of business self-organization and decentralized governance? Are there cultural factors that help our competitiveness in certain industries, such as IT, and that do not apply to other industries? Malhotra provides provocative and original insights This book is incisive, provocative and pithy. It answers the lingering questions pertaining to the India story and provides clues to the required weltanschauung for India experts. I am sure this book will be a tilting point in the India debate and so this book is a must read for both the businessman and the intellectual" . - Dr. R. Vaidyanathan, Professor of Finance, and Chairperson of Centre for Capital Markets and Risk Management, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore.*

Being Different, takes us on a journey of self-discovery, articulates our civilization's distinctiveness, and provides insights into the potential of our tradition as a form of capital. It places us on a solid footing in our coming encounters with the world – not as vendors, back-office workers, techies or cheap labor, but as co-creators of a new global era. It explains that many Indian cultural norms and ideas have enhanced our abilities in science and technology, sometimes unbeknownst to us. This book instills awareness of many unexplored dharmic values that can be utilized as resources to tackle pressing global issues such as sustainability, innovation, diversity management, decentralized workforces and alternative medicine.

While many academics and business people have wondered whether there is a distinct Indian way of doing business, Rajiv's research shows that our cultural norms and values certainly bestow upon us, the sensibilities and worldview that heighten both our competitive advantage and ability to seize global and technological opportunities.

*“BEING DIFFERENT’s new purva paksha tries to deconstruct the metaphysical ruptures in Western epistemology, bringing out the discrepancies among different kinds of universals, grand narratives and logocentric positions. It is well structured, deconstructing the philosophical, cultural and cosmological differences that have not been adequately examined for centuries.” – R.P. Singh, Professor & Chairperson, Centre for Philosophy, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi.*

*“BEING DIFFERENT is a provocative and important book for two distinct reasons. First, the book is one of the few attempts by an Indian intellectual seriously to challenge the assumptions and presuppositions of the field of India and/or South Asian studies tout ensemble, including not only the work of European and American scholarship but as well the neocolonialist, postmodernist and subaltern resentment so typical of contemporary Indian intellectuals. Second, and perhaps of greater significance, is Malhotra’s attempt to analyze the meaning and significance of Indic culture from within the indigenous presuppositions of India’s own intellectual traditions, including the ontological claims of Indic cosmology, the epistemology of yogic experience, the unique Indic appreciation for complexity, and the nuances of Sanskritic expression. The book will be controversial on many different levels and will undoubtedly elicit rigorous critical response.” – GERALD JAMES LARSON*

# EXCERPTS FROM BEING DIFFERENT

What is the philosophical seedbed that shapes India's distinctiveness? What influences shape the Indian worldview, and what business competencies are enhanced as a result? *Being Different* demonstrates that our natural cultural proclivities are fortuitously predisposed toward the complex skills of **creativity, collaboration, innovation and comfort with ambiguity** needed today.

These **excerpts** from the book below offer glimpses into the cultural wealth that may be harnessed for competitive advantage in this knowledge based, networked era. Many Indian processes may serve as the template for today's evolving social media ecology, it's emerging **cooperative structures, decentralized organizations** and the **peer-production of knowledge**.



## CREATIVITY

"Creativity in Indian culture thrives on the dynamic relationship between fixed templates and improvisations. Indians generally find it easier than Westerners to deal with extremes and view the space between the extremes of chaos and order as offering scope for creativity, intuition and insight. There is unity in Indian art, but it is not the unity of repetition of identical forms; it is "unity in diversity." This theme is expressed in architecture, poetry, music, sculpture – indeed in every conceivable dimension of life".

"The immense variety of representations reveals Indians' taste for symbols, for experimentation, for the artistic, and for the adventurous with a corresponding disdain for literalism and colorless depictions. The reverberations of this are felt in the prolific and colorful culture (including pop culture; for example, Bollywood). These representations and enactments are not the result of dissent or revolt, nor do they necessarily supersede previous ones. They are but affirmations that the Supreme has innumerable forms".

"Dharmic worldviews allow for numerous births and a gradual evolution of consciousness, a path which may undergo many turns, detours, setbacks and degrees of change...Even at the end of the universe, there is always the birth of a new one, which is but one in an infinite series of universes with no beginning or end"

# COLLABORATIVE DIVERSITY

“Indian traditions embody the approach of difference-with-mutual-respect based on the radical idea that differences are not a problem to be solved. Differences are merely characteristic of the way things naturally are, and comfort with them is built into dharmic worldviews – views which encompass “chaos”, doubt and numerous other complexities”.

“Every entity in the universe contains within itself the entire universe. The One manifests as many, so even seemingly disparate elements are in fact nothing other than its forms. It is not a matter of separate parts coming together into a synthetic structure. Parts exist only provisionally, temporarily and relatively to the whole, never as discrete existences, though they have distinct roles to play within the unity and add their own light and beauty in the process”.

“This idea – integral unity, with the whole manifesting in the parts and they in turn aspiring to unite with the whole – is reflected in all facets of dharmic systems, including its philosophy, science, religion, ethics, spirituality, art, music, dance, education, literature, oral narratives, politics, marriage, economics and social structures. This core principle is encoded into the symbolism of Indian art, architecture, literature, ritual, mythology, festivals, and customs, all of which are intended to facilitate access to esoteric knowledge”.

“Not only does each discipline presume this unity; so does the relationship among disciplines. All the arts and sciences are interrelated and may be seen as manifold ways in which human nature, itself an emanation of cosmic unity, expresses itself. One discipline contains and reflects the others. Delving deeply into any one of them eventually leads to similar integral principles and structures”.



# COMFORT WITH AMBIGUITY

“The pluralistic ethos of the Mahabharata, for instance, is grounded in a non-exclusivist framework including multiplicity of beliefs, concepts and ideas. This is so deeply ingrained as to make Indians psychologically comfortable with relative truths, uncertainty, ambiguity, disorder and pluralism of all kinds. The Mahabharata records numerous philosophical dialogues wherein protagonists argue across different philosophical systems, and pluralism permeates these debates. The epic includes many philosophical systems, such as Samkhya, Vaishnava and Shaiva theologies, and various non-theistic Shramana ideas. Ethics, politics and sociology are debated in an atmosphere of intellectual freedom”.

# COMFORT WITH AMBIGUITY cont.

"People from dharmic cultures tend to be more accepting of difference, unpredictability and uncertainty than Westerners are. The dharmic view is that so-called "chaos" is natural and normal in nature; it needs, of course, to be balanced by order, but there is no compelling need to control or eliminate it entirely nor to force cohesion from outside. The West, conversely, sees chaos as a profound threat which needs to be eradicated, either by destruction or by complete assimilation".

"Aristotle's theory of categories endowed Western thought with the idea of permanent and ultimate essences (or substances), and used this idea in the Law of the Excluded Middle to introduce metaphysical order and precision. The ensuing traditions of Western philosophy have tended to subscribe to this rigid logic of exclusion; indeed, it has become a key principle of Western thought".

"Dharma traditions, then, do not see uncertainty as "evil" or even inherently negative. Indeed, edifying narratives of Shiva typically have him playing dice with his consort, and both at times cheat playfully. Thus uncertainty is not always represented as a hostile demonic force invading from without but also as that which wells up and erodes order from within. Dice is also used as a metaphor for uncertainty in the Mahabharata".



## COOPERATIVE STRUCTURES

"The Jains, for instance, expound elaborate theories of "non-unique conclusions" (a principle called *aneka-anta-vada*), which underpin their most important and fundamental doctrines. This principle refers to pluralism and multiplicity of viewpoints, the notion that truth and reality are perceived differently from diverse points of view, and that no single point of view is complete. Thus reality possesses infinite characteristics that cannot be perceived or known at once by any ordinary mind. Different people think about different aspects of the same reality and so their partial findings appear to contradict each other. One of the branches of this system is "maybe logic" (*syad-vada*), in which there are outcomes other than true or false. The etymological meaning of *syad* is "perhaps" or "it may be so," but in the context of *syad-vada* it means "in some ways" or "from a perspective." Reality is complex and no single proposition can express the nature of reality fully. Thus the term *syad* should be prefixed before each opinion or philosophical proposition, giving it a conditional point of view and thus removing any dogmatism in the statement. There are no fixed truths or events, as these depend on many contingent factors".

"Context-free thinking lends itself to binary categories and logic, history-centric chronologies, canons, and legal codes of various sorts. This Western tendency is conducive to rule-based, top-down governance and control. It is easier to control things which are certain, stable and concrete, with fixed co-ordinates, than things which are fluid and shifting. The normative logic based on Aristotle's Law of the Excluded Middle leads to thinking in terms of opposites and choices along the lines of "us or them." Such reductionist discourse is useful mainly for the training of "teams," be they armies, sales departments or missionaries. Control is opposed to flexibility and to sensitivity-to-circumstances".

# DECENTRALIZED ORGANIZATIONS

“By their very nature, the dharmic traditions are both introverted and open-minded. The spiritual quest has traditionally been given priority over conquest of the external, material world. Many of the finest dharmic practitioners spent their best years perfecting meditation techniques. This explains why dharmic civilizations often lack well-articulated power structures with centralized authority, why their people handle modern scientific and other intellectual challenges rather well, and why there is a relative lack of political will to control others and propagandize”.

“Another example of Indian self-organization in commerce is Mumbai’s dabbawala distribution service, which delivers hot meals cooked in each client’s own home, using a network with no central node or organizer. It is similar to the decentralized structure of the Internet, with individual entrepreneurs functioning as local nodes dealing with their respective neighboring nodes, without any central command”...

“No authority pronounces someone a Hindu. There is nothing mandatory equivalent to baptism as a point of entry, nothing which is performed by a church-certified priest or minister and which makes one a member of the Christian community. Since Hinduism does not require membership in an organization, club or institution, and since it glorifies sadhus, who pursue their own independent journey, the problem of excessive institutional control has never arisen. No authority has the power to “excommunicate” a person from Hinduism. There are many forms of devotional practice in the dharma traditions – performed individually or as a group, directed to a formless God or a particular deity, performed at home or in a temple. The average dharma practitioner is largely free from institutional authority, or at least there is no theological requirement for the equivalent of a church or umma”



## PEER PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

“The Indian storytelling tradition is truly interactive: the storyteller consults his audience about their preferences not only at the start but throughout the narration. An interlocutor speaking for the audience will specify an event, person or a moral or metaphysical topic around which the next round of stories should be woven. Wonder and wisdom cohabit happily with the past in a playful way. The retelling of what has once been heard many times before is never the same when repeated. The precise story of Rama can never be reproduced, and each attempt involves a combination of reproduction (by supplier), re-narration (often interactive), and re-perception (by audience)”.

“The dharma traditions differ radically from the Judeo-Christian religions in that every human is considered capable, through his or her own spiritual practices, of becoming a living rishi, jina, arahat or bodhisattva. These states are the origin of many sacred texts”.

Spiritual masters can thus discover new insights in ways that are inexhaustible. There will always be innumerable spiritual traditions, histories, paths, rituals, symbols, deities and communities. This explosion of original sources and texts is far greater than what is stored in the Jewish and Christian canons, commandments and prophecies. Huge libraries of scriptures document the direct empirical experiences of people from various lineages plus centuries of peer debates. Spiritual “know-how” is thus cumulative as opposed to substitutive, though some traditions may fade away naturally over time. There have been no incidents of institutionalized and systematic burning of books within the dharma traditions. It is an open body of knowledge without any end or finality, so there is always room for new ideas and experience”



**BEING DIFFERENT** is the result of 40 years of practice under several Indian spiritual masters, combined with a serious study of Indian and Western philosophical systems and histories. The author, Rajiv Malhotra, is an Indian–American researcher, writer, speaker and public intellectual on current affairs as they relate to civilizations, cross-cultural encounters, religion and science. A scientist by training and now full-time founder-director of the Infinity Foundation in Princeton, NJ, he was previously a senior corporate executive, then a strategic consultant and finally an entrepreneur in information technology and media. He also serves as Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Center for Indic Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, and as advisor to various organizations.

Rajiv has been churning a wide range of issues and ideas related to this book for the past two decades (hence the imagery of the churning of the ocean on the cover). Using the ancient practice of purva paksha, he has benefitted from the advice and criticism of scholars from many Western and Indian traditions during the churning, and he hopes this book will serve to expand these dialogues in the future.

He is the main author of *Breaking India: Western Interventions in Dravidian and Dalit Faultlines*, (Amaryllis, 2011).  
See: [www.BreakingIndia.com](http://www.BreakingIndia.com).

He is also featured as the chief protagonist in the book *Invading the Sacred* (Rupa & Co, 2007).  
See: [www.InvadingTheSacred.com](http://www.InvadingTheSacred.com)

Rajiv is a prominent blogger on many sites, including the following:

Huffington Post: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rajiv-malhotra>

Sulekha: <http://rajivmalhotra.sulekha.com/blog/posts.htm>

Rediff: <http://www.rediff.com/news/malhotra.htm>

Outlook India: <http://www.outlookindia.com/taghome3.aspx?tag=102635&name=Debate%3A+Rajiv+Malhotra+%2F+v%2Fs+Vijay+Prashad+>

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*“BEING DIFFERENT is a memorable book... it asks us to look freshly at India and the West, ... a necessary virtue, essential to understanding our neighbors and even ourselves.” – Francis X. Clooney, Society of Jesus and Parkman Professor of Divinity, Harvard University.*

*“This book, the first of its kind looking at the West from India’s dharmic standpoint, is certain to provoke a major debate in the East and the West for years to come. Rajiv Malhotra’s writings have established him as a “different,” extremely original and robust thinker of our times. In the present volume, he forcefully challenges what he terms the West’s “self-serving universalism” which has been superimposed as a “template” for all nations and peoples.” – D. R. Sardesai, Emeritus Professor of History, UCLA.*