Indian Economic Sectors and New Working Class: a Socio-Cultural Review

Jijo James Indiparambil
Ph.D. Researcher
KU Leuven, Belgium

Abstract: - India being the largest democratic country in the world having a workforce close to half a billion people second only to China and three times the size of the United State, emerges today as a major global power. Though India is predominantly a rural, agro-based country with about two thirds of its population based in villages, we witness a rural transformation led by the green revolution of the late sixties and the white revolution of late seventies. The third phase of rural transformation is brought about by a 'knowledge revolution' facilitated by Information and Communication Technology. This shift produced commendable revolution in India and reduced intermediation in business and society, provided solution across sectors and is increasingly becoming an important tool for nation development. This article attempts to provide a nuanced contemporary picture of Indian economic sectors and labour systems signifying some features of work sectors, employment practices, labour market functions and emergence of new working class in India.

Keywords:- economic sectors, working class, labour force, work culture, workforce, IT industry.

I. INTRODUCTION

The current make-up of organizational workplace in India, as it globally experienced, is characterized by the implementation of a wide array of modern working practices interpolating extensive technological assistance, which has duly provoked, to a large extent, debates on their nature, effects and future. India, being the largest democratic country in the world and second to China in terms of population with 1.1 billion citizens, emerges today as a major global power. For, having a workforce close to half a billion people and witnessing and experiencing a radical transformation from predominantly rural agricultural-based country to urban industrialized and to the current metropolitan Information and Communication Technology (ICT) based knowledge-service country, India emerges today as truly a major global power. Besides, being an important venue for emerging service sectors including financial accounting, call centres, and business process outsourcing, India has become a leading centre for offshore outsourcing. At this juncture, Indian traditional and present organizational work culture and the specific growth of economic sectors and the consequent emergence of a new working class along with its individual and social impacts in both ways – good or bad and must be critically explored. Therefore, it is both appropriate and essential to investigate on Indian economic sectors with its emerging working class (labour force) and how this new work culture addresses the needs of its workers and what are the challenges that it brings forward.

I. THE ORGANIZATIONAL AND BUSINESS WORK CULTURE IN INDIA

The traditional business work culture in India depends to a large extent on its cultural yardsticks (ethnic heritage), the people (civilization), the land (geographical features and settlements), the progressing business environments (traditional trade practices and present foreign investments) and the craving for the adaptation of changing science and technology in the work scenarios. In other words, regional variations with different geographical scales and cultural complexities along with the diversity in language, customs and festivals, and tolerance and acceptance of emerging trends mark the specifics of Indian work culture [1]. It is said to be the reflection of various norms and standards of its people and is more hierarchical in leadership structure, more hardworking in customary nature, more of task based than clock based in working hours and is more resistive in implementing changes in the work patterns. In the same way the cultural stereotypes as such can be more favourable to the specific business work culture that tries to improve the productivity and expand the services globally, by determining the definite and explicit individual performance and proceeds in a given situation [2]. That shows, India, besides holding the inner longing for the new adaptation, as a country steeped in and very sharp in following traditional and conventional values and beliefs that are not easily swayed or converted to something different, accordingly, stifles its workforce culture as well.

Since the ancient times India has been well known as an exporter in industrial business. The erection of commercial cities like Harappa and Mohenjedaro in the fourth and third millennium BCE proves the same. Even though India was an industrial country thousands of years ago there was an interruption, as Sumit Kumar Majumdar opines, and only in the last 150 years India resumed her glory of being in the path of industrialization [3]. Indian economy at the time of independence drastically drained, and as Uma Kapila describes "Indian economy was overwhelmingly rural and agricultural in character with nearly 85 per cent of population living in villages and deriving their livelihood from agricultural and related pursuits using traditional, low productivity techniques" [4]. Besides, the industrial sector was underdeveloped due to the exploiting and destroying policy of the British Raj, weak infrastructure, etc. Majumdar points out again in this line that "[t]he Indian entrepreneurs often emerged as a comprador commercial class [and] Indian capital and expertise were drawn into a partnership with alien invaders, and Indian commercial groups became uneasy or may be even willing collaborators in creating colonial India" [3]. However, India, even at the time of the English East India Company, played a leading role in trade exporting spices and other luxury items from India to Europe.

It is also interesting to observe that in the 1920s, after the First World War, still a time represented the colonial business sectors in India, an extensive as well as considerably substantial and affirming incursion of Indian entrepreneurship started in eastern India and the consequent effective competition by these Indian enterprises invariably challenged, weakened (in 1930s) and eventually destroyed (in 1945) the British hold on Industry in India. It also raised the awareness and importance of the Swadeshi (native) economic ideology after which Indian industries and business interests were growing steadily. This Indian industrial sector, after independence, divided into public sector and private sector and registered a substantial expansion in both sectors. Nevertheless, industrial policy in post-independent India from 1947 to 1991 and the political economy of industrial development were challenging. For at this time, certain industries like ordnance, public utilities, and railways are nationalized and some others established as state owned, and still further looked for private investment sectors. In this regard, the Industrial Development and Regulation (IDR) Act of 1951 formulated a licensing framework and "controlled entry, expansion of capacity, technology, output mix, capacity, location, and import control" [3]. However, as a critical sector of the economy with low flourishing local industries and businesses, Indian economy started growing after independence when the government stepped up investments with its own policy making.

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed subtle change ranging from socio-cultural upgrading, political integrations, and economic growth in India. Majumdar rightly observes and illustrates that "the changes in the outlook of the governments since the mid-1980s, and the liberalization process initiated since the beginning of the 1990s, heralded new developments in the industrial and business scenario of the country. [...] Business was becoming global and many business centres were gaining attention at the international level. [...] The new era witnessed the entry of an increasing number of foreign business interests in different sectors" [3]. Contemporary Indian Industrial and business development shows that India has moved from being an agricultural country to a service producing country.

Hence, Indian work culture seems dualistic, where a large traditional economy, i.e., agriculture, coexists with the economy of industry and services that produces high level of growth and productivity. As a result, there is in India, the advancement and growth of Multinational Companies (MNCs), Information Technology (IT) & Information Technology Enabled Service (ITES) sectors, Business Processing Outsourcing (BPO) & Knowledge Processing Outsourcing (KPO) and other globalized tendencies of business and work practices. A substantial amount of attention is given in today's service sector in India through the performance of IT and the related software, outsourcing, and back office services. This new experience of a radical change in the structure, policies and work pattern in India caused also a paradigm shift in her above said work culture, which is the expression of the various norms and standards of her people. For, the work culture today differs depending on whether an employee is admitted to a large international or a local company as more of a Westerns-style business culture and

climate is followed in the international companies [5]. Thus, in the contemporary India we witness a new organizational work culture.

II. INDIAN ECONOMIC SECTORS AND EMERGENCE OF NEW WORKING CLASS

We present in this section the Indian work culture and economic activities, which are broadly categorized into primary sector, secondary sector, and tertiary sector. This division is based on the nature of the activities performed. At the same time, based on ownership it is divided into private sector and public sector and on the basis of the condition of workers, organized and unorganized sectors. The economic activities of the primary sector, also called 'agricultural sector,' formulate the direct use of natural resources and comprises agriculture, forestry, fishing, fuels, metals, minerals, etc. The secondary sector also called the manufacturing sector or 'industrial sector' (automobiles, textiles) uses the produce of primary sector as raw materials and engage in further invention, fabrication, and creation. The tertiary sector is known as service sector and produces or generates different services such as education, banking, insurance, etc. and subsequently contributes to the development of the primary and secondary sectors [6]. Indian economy, which has been primarily an agrarian economy until independence with its more domestic orientation, is now revolving around industrial and service economies [6,7,8].

The exhibit-1 shows the economic growth from early 1980s. When the primary sector possesses the share of 50 per cent or more in the total output (the GDP) of the economy of the country, then it is an agrarian economy and the same principle is applicable to the secondary sector (industrial economy) and the tertiary sector (service economy) as well. Almost 60 per cent of the Indian population at the time of independence was depending on the primary sector for its livelihood, which gradually and consistently decreased with increased industrialization and the present emphasis on post-industrial societies or the services societies [6].
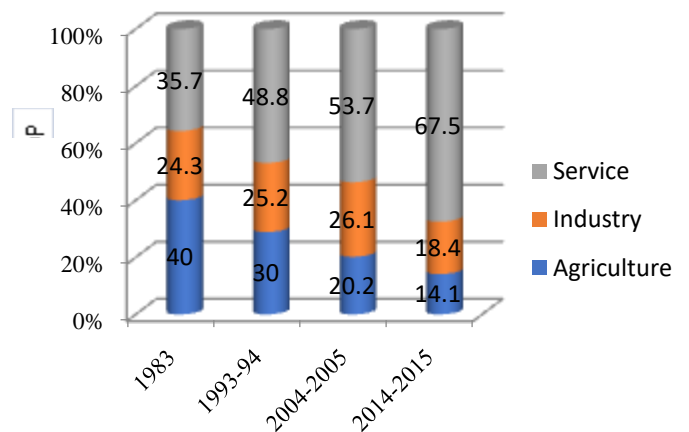

Exhibit 1:- Economic Growth

The share of the service industry in GDP grows gradually and steadily during these decades and contributes in the process of India developing into a service economy [9].

The contributors of Indian service (tertiary) sector are: trade, transport (rail and other means), communication, banking & insurance, hotels & restaurant, public administration & defense, legal services, real estate, personal services and storage. Though Indian economy experienced a structural change in production shifting its face from agriculture towards industry and service sector, the diversification of GDP mostly occurred with the shift not from agriculture to industrial sector but from agriculture to services [8]. For instance, the share of agriculture or primary sector in real GDP declined from 40 per cent in 1983 to 20.2 per cent in 2005 whereas the share of industry and services increased from 24.3 percent to 26.1 per cent and 35.7 per cent to 53.7 per cent respectively during the same period. The margin of industrial growth is very minimal comparing that of the service sector. Moreover, agriculture sector drastically declined during the period 2005-2015 from 20.2 per cent in 2005 to 14.1 per cent in 2015 along with the gradual decline of industrial sector from 26.1 per cent in 2005 to 18.4 per cent in 2015. However, the service sector output increased by 13.8 per cent during these periods from 53.7 per cent in 2005 to 67.5 per cent in 2015. This shows in India the service sector has emerged as the major sector of the economy in terms of both growth rates and share in GDP.

Besides the agriculture and manufacturing sectors, India largely invests today in trade, education, entrepreneurship, technology, modern means of communication and transportation, and social development. The considerable increment in foreign investment and the succeeding incredible growth of the Indian IT services makes the service sector the largest contributor to the GDP of globalized India [10]. Likewise, with its positive investment climate India has become the world's most attractive IT market hub with excellence in digital skills and business delivery. It mainly "comprises of instance System Integration, Software experiments, Custom Application Development and Maintenance (CADM), network services and IT Solutions" [11]. An extensive leapfrogging is experienced in this regard that allows India and any developing countries to bypass the various stages and generations of technological growth and situate them directly in a service-dominated economy [12]. In this respect, in India, information technology services and information technology enabled services have become high productivity services and makes a different workplace system and work culture. These salient factors we examine in the following segment.

III. INDIAN IT INDUSTRY AND SERVICES

After IT industry and Information Technology Enables Services (ITES) sprouted, routed and slowly grew up in India with foreign investments from IBM and ICL and prospered tremendously after the successful issuance and reception of the liberalization policies in the 1990s and the many more investments thereafter [13]. IT sector generally refers to the digital processing, storage and communication of information of all kinds. As part of an inclusive and large-scale transformation belonging to global services of the 21st century, IT boom hits the shores of India with tags such as "Served from India" and "Destination India" with a new and broad-ranging appeal to its business and work culture [10].

Additionally, a new recognition is given to India acknowledging and appreciating her destiny as "IT Superpower" or a "knowledge-based society" by the outsiders and investors and IT industry thus functions as a vehicle of the new and rapid socio-economic transformation. Increased initiatives such as permitting 100 per cent foreign investments, creating Export Processing Zones (EPZs) with tax incentives and duty-free exports and imports, etc. formed the general causative factors for India's IT boom. The supporting components for this development include: Indian professional and technical education emphasis and the generation of a highly educated workforce in contrast to the global shortage of IT talent, seemingly startling lower wages (a fourth of the US wages) and comparatively low telecommunication costs, and factors like time difference, institutional changes and quality reputation [13]. Indian work culture and customs drastically changed due to the adoption and adaptation of the ICT driven globalized work practices and must be understood, therefore, within the larger political and economic context.

Indian IT industry serves as a fertile ground for the growth of a new socio-economic and cultural structure employing and encouraging innovative corporate practices and is instrumental and influential "in reversing the brain drain, raising India's brand equity and attracting foreign direct investment (FDI)" [10]. Referring to the notable features of Indian IT industry S. Annapoorna and Siddappa T. Bagalkoti observe the domination of software, BPO and recent KPO operations in Indian IT industry and its upward movement in the value chain offering system interaction package implementation and IT sourcing and consultancy [12]. It is also mainly said to be export driven with its excess export orientation and increased quality of products and services. Another salient feature of this industry is its growing interests in visualizing an increased scope for the enlargement of the domestic market through SOHO (small offices and home offices) and E-governance initiatives. Thus, IT services lead to economic and social transformation altering and upgrading Indian position in global economy.

Various IT services from India generally comprise the 'high end' computer science research and the 'low end' data entry or back office process services and function in different segments such as IT services (IT & ITES), business process management (BPM [includes BPO & KPO]), software products and engineering services, and hardware manufacturing, processing and services [14]. These services largely invest in innovation, automation, and *Internet of Things* (IoT) [15] and adapt themselves to a changing marketplace of this era. Depending on the type, size and ownership, IT firms in India are categorised into small/medium enterprises (SMEs), major Indian companies (MICs), and multinational or firms with foreign equity participation (MNCs/Fes) [14]. They are mostly engaged in hardware and software productions (development, maintenance, coding and testing), solutions and outsourcing services. In addition, it is now generally observed that "having proven its capabilities in delivering both on-shore and off-shore services to global clients, emerging technologies now offer an entire new gamut of opportunities for top IT firms in India" [16] and leads to a structural change in her organizational workplace practices.

Nevertheless, as it is in the case of any structural change and development, acknowledging and appreciating various progressive and constructive trends, researchers criticise and raise some of the inherent challenges that question the very growth and sustainability of Indian IT industry. These are arguments directed from different arenas of IT works and services. According to Annapoorna and Bagalkoti [12], the first concern is about the extensive export orientation, which becomes highly volatile with varying international pressures. The excess dependence on Government concessions and different advantages of the liberalizing policies of the state forms the second concern as it always presupposes a time when these benefits cease to exist by the withdrawal or the change of policies with a feasible cause. Third concern consists of the possibility of declining technical efficiency, lower or inadequate attention paying to the domestic market, and the emerging serious competitors around the globe. Finally, there are few who raise the problem of attrition and scarcity of specialized and technical workforce as well as the issue of employment security as "[t]here is no longer a guarantee of lifetime employment but lifetime employability is assured through continuous upgradation" [12].

However, it is important to mention that of late the service sector and its IT industry in particular, have become a significant contributor of employment generation and the remover of the regional disparities with regard to work culture and practices, and thus becoming the largest provider of young Indian workforce with long-term careers and work plans [10]. The initial fear of large amount of possible worker redundancy and increased unemployment with the advancement of technology, computerization and IT revolution in the work arenas is outweighed and surpassed as these revolutionary processes conversely become the great employer of new technocratic era [12]. For instance, Indian IT industry becomes largely aspiring for young generation of both highly skilled (employed in hardware and software sectors), and relatively less technically trained or even differently graduated (admitted and occupied in ITES, BPO, and KPO industry). Seema Joshi writes in this regard that, "with a phenomenal increase of employment in IT, BPO, etc. [...] it can be hoped that this primary employment generation will also have a trickle-down effect in that the newly employed skilled worker will create lots of secondary employment for semi-skilled and unskilled workers" [10]. Acknowledging these new brackets of employment generation, we analyse in the following the nature, structure and practices of current Indian labour force.

IV. INDIAN LABOUR FORCE AT A GLANCE

The Indian labour force consisted 430 million workers in 2004-2005, growing 2% annually in the above discussed three sectors, such as: (1) the rural (agricultural and allied sectors) workers (60%); (2) urban organized (industrial) sector (8%); and (3) urban informal (service) sector (32%) [17]. However, there was an incredible growth in labour force later with the exacerbated increase within the current IT enabled services in India. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation of Government of India analyzing its National Sample Survey results illustrates that in India, labour force (employed & unemployed), which was about

468.8 million (rural male: 235.7, rural female: 106.5, urban male: 102.7 and urban female: 24.2) in 2010 increased to 483.7 million (rural male: 238.8, rural female: 103.6, urban male: 112.5 and urban female: 28.8) in 2012 [18]. As per the 2011-2012 survey of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) the total workforce is estimated at 47.41 crore (470 million; rural: 33.69 crore; urban: 13.72 crore) among which 23.18 crore (230 million) persons were employed in agriculture and allied sectors, 11.50 crore (110 million) in industries sector and 12.73 (120 million) in the service sector. Similarly, according to the report of the World Factbook, in India, the labour force by occupation is 49% in agriculture, 20% in industry, and 31% in services in 2012 [19].

Survey results of World Development Indicators by World Bank, as shown in exhibit-2 [20], and of National Sample Survey Office of Government of India, as in exhibit-3 [21], reveal that there is a rapid increase in the industrial and service sectors workforce during these years of technological advancement and we experience a subsequent progression in IT enabled services along with it.
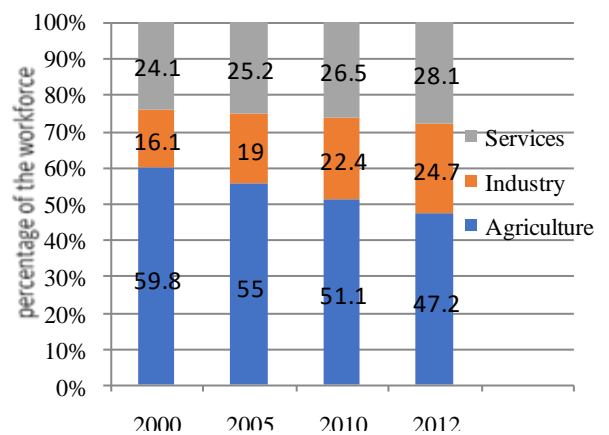

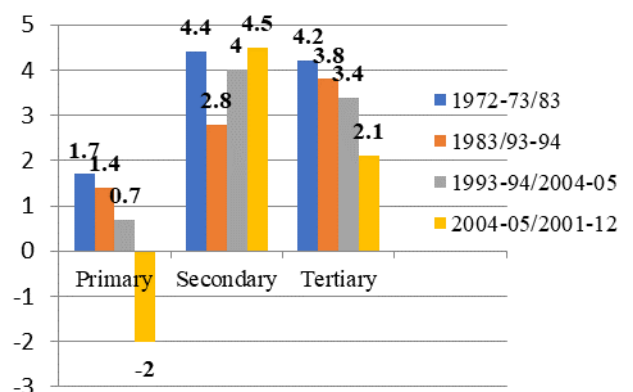Exhibit 2:- Workforce percentage 2000-12

Exhibit 3:- Sector-wise employment growth 1972-73/1983 to 2004-2005/2011-12

Analysing these studies, a structural transformation is found in the labour force shifting or declining agricultural labour share from 59.8% in 2000 to 47.2% in 2012. An increased movement of workforce from industry to services also could be traced here. However, since, India is still projected as an agrarian economy and society in terms of workforce with a strong domestic orientation and point of reference, we shall now analyse in detail India's labour force

in a tripartite system of agricultural-rural, industrial-urban and service/knowledge-metropolitan workforce.

Agriculture in India, depending less on machines, is labour intensive and experienced a significant breakthrough during Green Revolution which started in 1966 and the subsequent increase in production of food grains and commercial crops. The agriculture sector spread over the entire rural region of India provided employment (direct or indirect) to 53% of population in 2012-12 against 72% of 1947 [22]. In 2011-12, in rural India, almost 59 percent male workers and 75 per cent female workers were engaged in the agriculture sector. Present-day studies observe that there is a gradual decline in the rural India agriculture workforce from 81% rural male in 1977-78 (67% in 2004-05) to 59% in 2011-12 and from 88 % rural female in 1977-78 (83% in 2004-05) to 75% in 2011-12 [23]. This turning down is due to the disinterest of agricultural labours caused by sizeable amount of problems crop up such as slow and uneven growth, slow modernization of agriculture, defective land reforms and even problem related to agricultural credit, marketing and warehousing. Further in this line, the modern machinery utilization in the agricultural fields reduced also the need of manual workforce.

At the same time, industrialization, largely happening in urban areas, absorbs people in large scale and provides productive employment to them. Almost 21.5% of the Indian labour force (31% of workers by the medium and small industries and 43% by large industries) is employed in the industrial sector in 2009-10 [22]. Among the urban India male workers 26% are engaged in trade, hotel & restaurant, 22% in manufacturing, 21% in other service sectors such as construction (11%), transportation (12%) and agriculture (6%), whereas urban female workers are engaged mostly in 'other service' sectors (40%), manufacturing (29%), trade and restaurant (13%) and agriculture (11%) [23]. P.V. Raghavan and others recognize some of the problems of industrial development in India such as short falls in industrial targets, underutilization of capacity, inadequate infrastructure, high costs, sectoral and regional imbalances, and industrial sickness [22]. There is, thus, a conspicuous decrease of workers in agriculture sectors or rural regions and increase in industrial manufacturing and other services based in urban area.

However, just as in all the developing countries, today service sector grows faster than in any of the other commodity producing sectors in India as well. Being a prime destination for 'hi-tech' and information technology enabled services, India has transformed her local labour markets into a new 'knowledge' workforce ushering in an entirely new epoch in her work-history [24]. The hi-tech work stands for computer programming and software developing, whereas ITES looks for BPOs and call centres. India's tertiary educational institutions and professional and technical colleges produce a large number of young workers who are talented and skilled and trained in software services and ITES/BPO and thus it has a pool of graduates who are equipped to meet the demands of the IT industry [25]. IT professionals and related service workers are concentrated, as per the NSS 61st (2004-05) [NSS 61st (2004-05) means the National Sample Survey 2004-2005 (61st round) on Employment and Unemployment by National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) – Government of India],

in the urban areas (93.2%) allocating themselves into various selected categories such as software consultancy and supply (49%), computer related activities (15%), database activities (11.7%), and manufacture, repair and maintenance of computers (22.3%) [26]. Today most of the outsourcing services and off-shoring firms and organizations function in India basing themselves in a choice of metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Calcutta, etc. and create a Service/knowledge-metropolitan workforce. Thus, a new transformation is observed and experienced of urban workers to a metropolitan knowledge/service workforce that creates a new Indian working class.

V.   IT WORKFORCE AS VANGUARD OF NEW INDIAN WORKING CLASS

In traditional and conventional practices of India, as explained in the first section, the "class formation is substantively shaped by the reworking of inequalities of caste, language, religion and gender [and] class as a category is constituted by these structures" [27]. However, in close conjunction with transnationalized class identification of globalized and liberalized economic development, the mounting IT workforce creates a new social structure forming and experiencing the emergence of a new working class in India. It happens in consistence with India's adherence to and engagement with the global economy through her openness and participation in the global IT trends. In any society, class determination largely depends upon the socio-cultural and economic interplay along with its tendency to adopt and adapt the changing scientific and technocratic development and trends [28]. Hence, workers employed in IT industry (or industries in the process of automated or computer based and non-computer-based service sectors) have been called the 'new working class' and this Indian IT & ITES workforce is portrayed as 'proletarians within global business process' and is termed as white collar working class [28]. This new working-class functions as agents of globalized nation associating labourers with high-tech, managerial efficiency and global economic competitiveness.

This emerging workforce can also be categorized generally as 'service-contract' employees and 'labour contract' employees depending on their diverse characteristics such as duration (long-term or short-term), authority, expertise (with or without qualifying degree), and employment security [29]. These two types of labourers, however, are identified, by themselves and by others, as the 'creamy layers' as their status is asserted with western oriented lifestyles and professional identification with a global industry and thus gradually "tended to portray themselves as cosmopolitan, trendy, liberated and global in outlook" [28]. To identify some of the differentiation of this new working class, Maureen O'Dougherty writes that they try to present and prove status outwardly by both symbolic and material actions of global consumption practices and to secure a modern life at home and in the society [30]. She tries to explain the form of new middle class by linking the consumer culture and social status. In the same way, since, English language facility and fluency are prerequisites for all transnational outsourcing positions the upbringing of this workforce with language proficiency is a

must and thus a new-fangled feature that demonstrate the convolution of old and new class structure [28].

Although the service sector provides greater employment opportunities with wide-ranging high growth of GDP, there has been consistent and multiple employment convolutions and labour setbacks with this tertiary sector services and in IT related workplaces in particular. It is largely observed that the industry, for instance, with its functional and behavioural patterns creates "an increasingly sharp and visible social and economic divide between those who work in the IT industry and those who do not" [25], reflecting an enclave type characteristic. Though IT industry epitomizes the so called 'middle class' and provides for an upward mobility, a social disparity tends to arise as new IT workforce emerges only from the "relatively affluent, forward caste, urban-dwelling, highly educated and English-speaking background" and subsequent negligence and inattention of those who cannot afford to participate in this movement [25,28]. Various studies also suggest that employees "face acute problems of excessive working hours, management pressure and the lack of opportunities for career progression" [25]. Although there has been studies conducted about the emergence, growth and structure of India's IT industry, the significance of ethical and sociological implications of these changes for its workforce, its most crucial resource, are not sufficiently critically analyzed.

VI. CONCLUSION

The sum of India's traditional and current business and work culture is the sum of various socio-cultural and economic norms and standards followed by its people. Religion in India, going beyond the matter of mere belief involves institutionalized patterns of behaviour as rituals, art, and other ceremonies, plays a crucial role in the formation of Indian work culture and needs further exploration. The foregoing overview of the Indian workplace culture consisting the analysis of a shift from agricultural predominance to the present knowledge-based service sectors precisely illustrates that the work organizations (national, transnational, multinational, or international) in India are open to socio-cultural, political and economic (inherent and adapted) forces and trends. This new experience of radical change in the structure, policies, and work pattern in India causes also a paradigm shift in her work culture adjoining to that of a globalizing world and to the subsequent global work scenarios. This article tried to provide a nuanced contemporary picture of Indian economic sectors and labour systems signifying some features of work sectors, employment practices, labour market functions and emergence of new working class.

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