



## **EXPLORING FINLAND - INSIGHTS INTO CULTURE, ETIQUETTE, WORK PRACTICES, AND NORMS.**

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# Profile : Narashima Boopathi Sivasubramanian (BOO)



- **Qualification**
  - Doctor of Science in Economics and Business Administration
  - M.Com., M.Sc., PGDHRM
  - Certified Cultural Intelligence Quotient (CQ) facilitator
  - Pedagogical qualification
- **Experience**
  - International Business Development
  - HR consulting
  - IB consulting (Indian business operations)
  - Entrepreneurship in consulting
  - Trained and coached expats and business leaders in Finland
  - Worked on several Finland and India projects
  - Research on India vs Finland on business, leadership and culture
- **At present...**
  - Vice president –International business development at Finpeda Oy
  - Entrepreneur – Training & Consulting (Cultural Analysis International)

# LITTLE FINNISH THINGS

BY MARKO RAASSINA



SAUNA



ICE HOCKEY



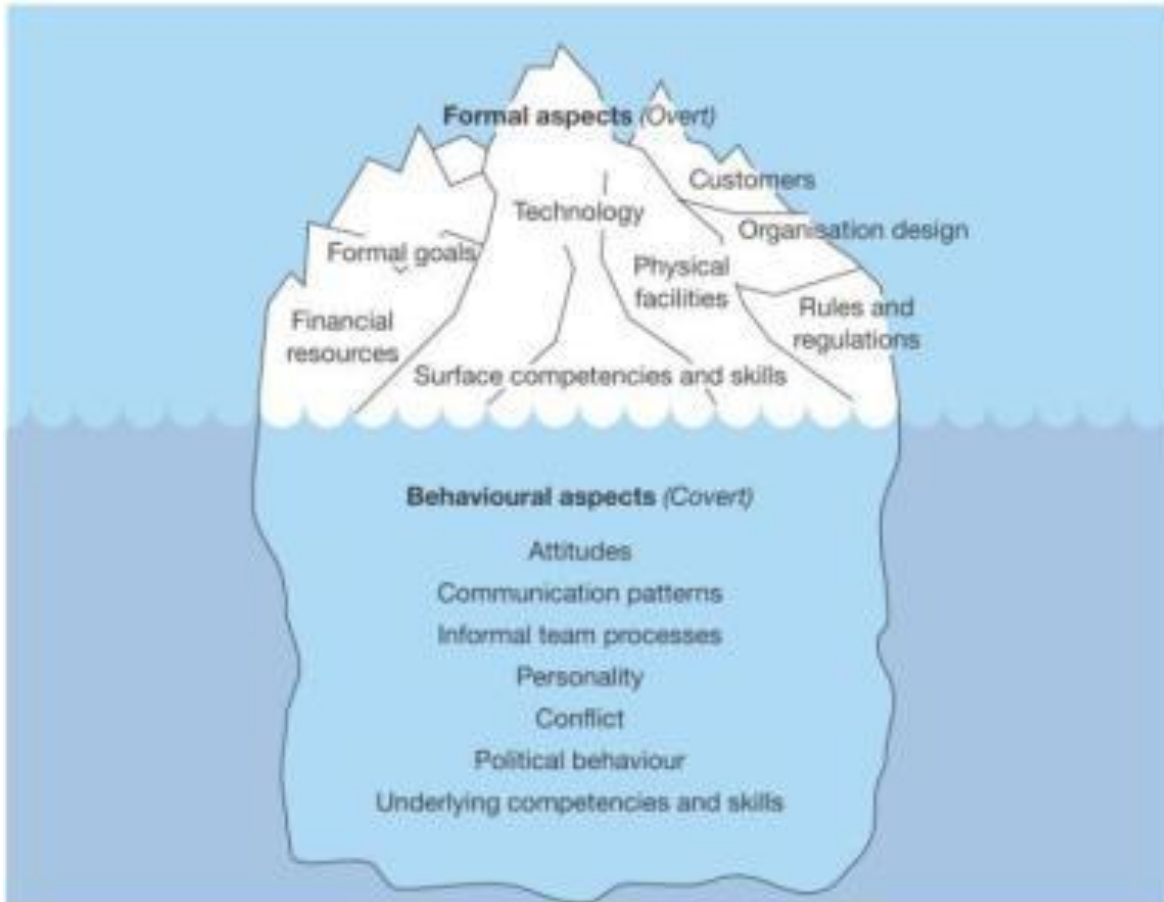
WOOL SOCKS



NORTHERN LIGHTS

## HOW TO MAKE SENSE OF FINLAND?

# CULTURAL ICEBERG MODEL



- **Visible Culture** (Above the Waterline)- only small portion is visible above the surface. **Invisible Culture** (Below the Waterline) – Majority lies beneath
- The idea behind the Cultural Iceberg Model is that while **surface-level elements are visible** and easily observed, the deeper, **underlying aspects of culture are often hidden** and more challenging to discern.
- Understanding and appreciating these hidden aspects is crucial for effective intercultural communication and interaction.
- This model serves as a reminder that there is much more to culture than meets the eye, and a **deeper understanding is necessary** for meaningful cross-cultural interactions.

# FINNISH CULTURAL ETIQUETTES AND SOCIAL NORMS



Finns often value **personal space and privacy**. Be respectful of these boundaries while still being friendly and approachable.

**Silence** is not awkward in Finnish conversations. Finns are comfortable with pauses, and there's no pressure to fill every moment with conversation.

Finns have a **strong connection to nature**. Activities such as hiking, camping, and enjoying the outdoors are integral to the culture.

Sauna holds a special place in Finnish culture. Understanding sauna etiquette, including nudity norms and proper behaviour, is essential for social integration.

Being on time is highly valued in Finnish culture. Whether it's a social gathering or a business meeting, **punctuality is a sign of respect** for others' time.

# FINNS DO NOT VIEW WORK & LIFE SAME AS THE INDIANS



# CULTURAL DISTANCE INDIA VS FINLAND

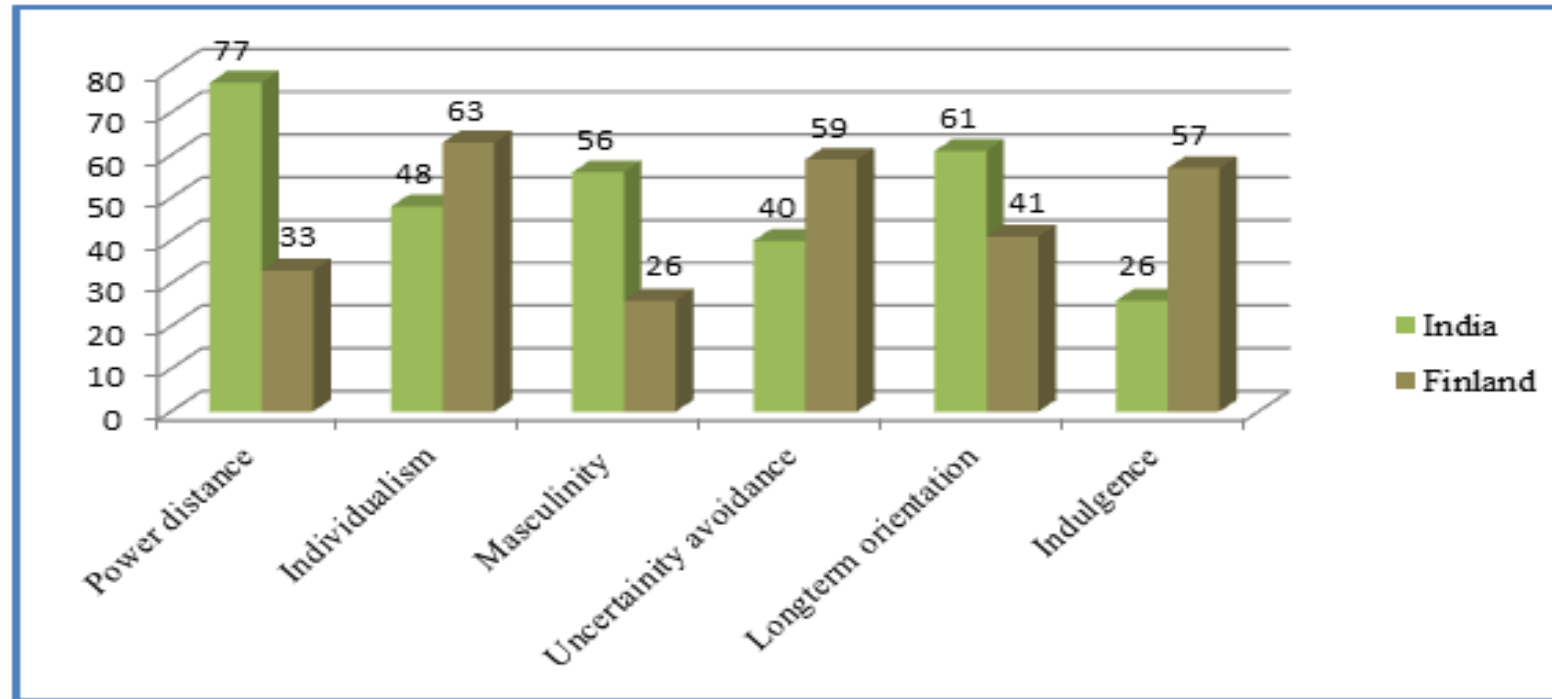


Figure.1. Comparison of cultural dimension scores on India and Finland (Source: Hofstede, 2010)

# COMPARISON OF PREFERRED LEADERSHIP STYLES IN INDIA AND FINLAND

LEADERSHIP STYLES	FINLAND	INDIA
Charismatic / value based	5.94	5.85
Team oriented style	5.85	5.72
Participative style	5.91	4.99
Humane oriented style	4.30	5.26
Autonomous style	4.08	3.85
Self-protective style	2.55	3.77

# FACTORS INFLUENCING INDIAN CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Family	Education	History	Modern	Other
Joint family, Nuclear family Relatives, peers friends,	National, State and other educational systems. Literatures and epics	Ancient history Mughal and British rule, Regional history, Post-colonial reforms	Western cultural influence, media, social media Technology and IT	Movies, Sports Occupation, food Celebrities, politics, leaders, bureaucracy legal system
Geography	Religion	People	Languages	Traditions
29 states and 7 union territories North, South , West, East Climate	Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism Jainism and other religions	Caste systems Ethnic groups Non-resident Indians (NRI) Gender role	More than 300 languages 22 recognized languages Influence of English	Ancient Vedas, customs, belief, rituals, music, dance, hospitality, festivals, Regional, local and national. Traditions

# COMMUNICATION IS THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE



Finns are not known for extensive small talk, and building connections through casual conversation may be different from social norms in other cultures.

**Communication is direct and straightforward**, devoid of hidden agendas. Only essential and factual information is conveyed within a structured and formal communication pattern. **Declining or saying no is acceptable and not perceived as impolite or rude.** **Silence holds profound significance** in Finnish culture.

Finland **-low-context communication** is explicit, with a focus on the message itself, and less reliance on shared context or non-verbal cues. It tends to be more straightforward and relies on clear, unambiguous language.

# FINNISH WORK CULTURE



- Finnish work culture tends to be flat, with an emphasis on open communication and equality. Hierarchy is often minimized, and there is a collaborative approach to decision-making.
- Work-life balance is highly valued, and Finns typically prioritize family and personal time. Flexible work arrangements are common, and there is a strong emphasis on employee well-being.
- Punctuality is highly valued, and meetings often start and end on time. Finnish professionals appreciate efficiency and **respect for others' time**.
- Intervening excessively is viewed as **micromanagement**, whereas subordinates anticipate **autonomy** without the need for frequent instructions. Individuals should be granted the **freedom** to accomplish tasks on their own.

# MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP STYLE



- Finland embraces a **participative and egalitarian leadership style**. Leaders emphasize collaboration, open communication, and inclusivity.
- Teamwork is highly valued, and there is a **collaborative approach** to problem-solving. Team members are encouraged to contribute ideas and opinions.
- **Decision-making** is often **decentralized**, allowing for input from various team members.
- The Finnish leadership approach values trust, transparency, and a supportive work environment.

# GENDER EGALITARIANISM AND EQUALITY



Finland is known for its commitment to **gender equality** and ranks high in global gender equality indices, reflecting its ongoing efforts to create a balanced and inclusive society.

There is no delineation of roles based on gender, and societal influence minimally dictates the behavior of both men and women. In this society, **both genders hold equal power and significance.**

Diversity and inclusion are important values. Treating everyone with **equal respect**, regardless of gender or sexual orientation and other backgrounds is a fundamental cultural value.

# CHALLENGES IN FINLAND



- **Finnish** is known for its **complexity**, and mastering the language can be challenging for newcomers.
- Finns are often perceived as reserved or introverted, and **building social connections** may take time. **Breaking the ice** and initiating social interactions can be a challenge.
- Finns are not known for extensive small talk, and building connections through casual conversation may be different from social norms in other cultures.
- Finns appreciate **individualism and independence**. For newcomers from more collective cultures, adjusting to a society that values **personal space and self-reliance** may pose a challenge.
- For newcomers accustomed to different work norms, adjusting to shorter work hours and a **focus on efficiency** may be a change.



# SUGGESTIONS, PRACTICAL ISSUES AND Q&A

# Thank you!



**It is not the strongest species  
that survive, nor the most  
intelligent, but the ones most  
responsive to change  
- Charles Darwin**