



'Indians world's most undemocratic people'

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New Delhi: Indians are perhaps the worlds most undemocratic people, living in the worlds largest and most plural democracy where a persons self-worth is almost exclusively determined by the rank he occupies, says a new book.

A profoundly hierarchical society, in India the determination of relative rank (Is this person superior or inferior to me?) remains very near the top of subconscious questions evoked in an interpersonal encounter, says the book *The Indians, Portrait of a People* by psychoanalyst and culture commentator Sudhir Kakkar and anthropologist Katherina Kakkar.

The gratification of the 300 million middle-class consumers, the new Brahmins, does not lie in their being consumers in a global marketplace but in being somebody in a profoundly hierarchical society, the authors say. You must be somebody to survive with dignity, since rank is the only substitute for money. Thus retired judges, ex-ambassadors and other sundry officials who are no longer in service are never caught without calling cards prominently displaying who they once were, authors say.

Irrespective of his educational status and more than in any other culture in the world, an Indian is a homo hierarchicus, the book says.

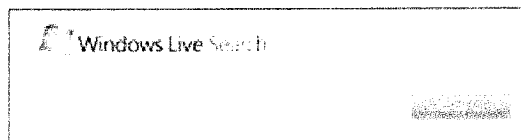
Although at first glance the notion of Indian-ness among the one billion population speaking 14 major languages with pronounced regional differences may seem far-fetched, yet from ancient times European, Chinese and Arab travelers have identified common features among Indias peoples, it says.

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