INTRODUCTION

AND

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
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"Loud Voice" "The Maharashtrian contribution to the area of cultural activities (sanskrtik kshetratil) is unmatched. Lokmany(a) (Tilak) blew up (encouraged) a cultural life through the Ganapati festival (utsav). Now such fervor has spread in each and every lane (gallogalli fujivle ahei).

Heavy voice Why should you be the coordinator (karyavah) every year? Give others a chance as well.

The ‘well-earned-place’ voice We get elected with the support of people from this chawl!

Irritated voice Where are last year’s accounts?

Heavy voice What do you want to do with that?

Annoyed voice From which money did you buy the table fan?

Hollow voice Who are you to tell us all this?

Irritated voice We also pay the membership fees (vargant deto)

Heavy voice Then don’t pay.

Hollow voice We will not allow you to have a single program this year.

Youthful voice Which play (will be performed) this time?

Heavy voice The entertainment committee will decide that you be concerned what we will do.

Loveable voice They allot work only to their own fellows (aplya vashilyatlya)!

A voice from the back Go, see your face in the mirror first

(Loud laughter)

A dilapidated voice What is the need for a Ganapati in a secular state?

Frightened voice Then go to Russia!
Soft voice Who is singing the songs this time?

Harsh voice Why have songs at all? The blaring radio is enough (Radio bomballoy te pure ahe)

Soft voice Of course, the songs are needed (What’s a Ganapati festival) without songs??

Harsh voice Just arrange lectures (vyakhyanna)

Many voices Throw him out!!

The ‘well-earned-place’ voice Let us have a debate on “Maharashtra Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow”

The feminine-male voice Instead have “Marathi Poetry Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow”

The just-crackling (adolescent) voice Instead have “Maharashtrian Youth Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow”

Loveable voice Instead have “Women and the question of unemployment”

Annoyed voice Instead have “Should children be employed?” (chokryonn nokrya karya ka?) Thus is better

(Laughter noises)"

(My Translation of an excerpt from P L Deshpande’s ‘Dhwanya Dhvanva Maharashtra’ in Urala Surala (2000), pp.69 Refer original Marathi version in Appendix A)

Through many Marathi ‘voices’, popular satirist P L Deshpande draws a caricature-like image of Maharashtrian chawl dwellers, engaged in arguments about arranging programs for the annual Ganapati festival. In his personalized ‘tongue-in-cheek’ style, “Pula” (or P L Deshpande) represents an array of typical, identifiable Maharashtrian characteristics through these voices. The voices are opinionated, frank (sometimes to
the extent of being rude'), shrewd, vigilant, critical, humorous and yet simple, submissive. open to change and extremely accommodative. They reflect glimpses of a well developed regional and communal identity, something most Maharashtrians nurture as part of their family and communal life.

Upadhya (2001) clarifies the historically understood concept of community as one which becomes the storehouse of culture, language, human values, meaning and social organization, without which people suffer from alienation and rootlessness. The pride of being a Hindu Maharashtrian, aptly rejuvenated by Lokmanya Tilak, can be witnessed even today in the Maharashtrian community, within and outside Maharashtra. Taking off from the famous Ganesha festival, divinity too has always been an integral and influential part of the Maharashtrian family and community living. Overcoming geographical boundaries, the Maharashtrian community has been extremely successful in elevating its unique religious, social and regional elements to a pan-Indian level, evoking similar nationalist (though essentially Hindu) sentiments.

In the contemporary context, many urban Indian communities walk the tightrope of tradition in a rapidly globalizing socio-cultural context. But the multidimensional Maharashtrian persona demonstrates a remarkably intricate mix of tradition and modernity, some of which this study attempts to unveil. While there is tremendous commitment among members of the community to preserve and revive unique aspects of the Maharashtrian social identity, there is also willingness to accommodate change and successfully overcome challenges posed by a changing social and economic milieu.

The present study explores the Maharashtrian psyche as a case in point to cull out similarities at a cultural level (pan-Indian). With specific focus on social-moral reasoning, the study aims to bring forth some elements of mental life unique to the
Indian cultural context Discussions generated through hypothetical dilemmas about routine practices and everyday life events, were the means to explicate the natural, habitual and ‘behind the scene’ mentalities. Analysis of how respondents resolve these dilemmas bring out indicators of social change and cultural continuity. These are examined within the mentality-practice framework of the cultural psychological perspective. This perspective seems most appropriate to unearth these mentalities through a contextualized understanding of cultural practices.

The Cultural Psychological Perspective

The ‘renewed’ discipline of cultural psychology explains how cultural practices and traditions become a part of the human psyche and result, not in the psychic unity of mankind, but in various cultural divergences and local explanations of basic human development processes (Shweder, 1990). The field of cultural psychology acknowledges the existence of many psychological mentalities, claiming that heterogeneous potentials and inclinations of the human mind are universal, but their form is context specific. It enriches basic psychology by acknowledging the importance of psychological universals and tries to broaden the boundaries of human psychological functioning by integrating work from different culture-specific theoretical perspectives (Miller, 1995). Cultural psychology aims to understand cultural practices and individual/group mentalities, not by separating the individual from the cultural context but by understanding both as interspersed and inseparable wholes. It investigates the psychological foundations of cultural communities and the cultural foundations of the mind (Shweder, Goodnow, Hatano, Levine, Markus & Miller, 1998). Cultural psychology has roots in a variety of research traditions, inclusive of psychological anthropology and many other sub-disciplines within...
The interdisciplinary nature of cultural psychology enables its integration in many disciplines studying human behavior. Studies in human development conducted with a cultural psychological perspective have illuminated the understanding of cultural variations in some basic concepts like the self, morality, emotions, and attachment. These studies indicate an urgent need to move away from the tendency of finding psychological universals and make disciplines like human development culture-inclusive. Such an approach would alter and expand the already existing models of human development to accommodate cultural variations. Miller (2005) aptly remarks that the goal of cultural psychology is to be completely integrated within disciplines rather than remain as a mere perspective. She reiterates that culture, an ever present entity, is one of the fundamental sources patterning human development, and an inadequate acknowledgement of this would create only ethnocentric models of the so-called ‘universals’.

Drawing an understanding of cultural psychology mainly from Shweder et al. (1998), Shweder (1990), Miller (1994) and Miller (1997), the theoretical framework of the study was constructed with specific emphasis on social-moral reasoning. The concept of culture in cultural psychology stems from an in-depth understanding of the local conditions in which the individuals execute their daily life. Culture is understood as an intentional world made up of intentional beings. In order to sustain what they feel is true, beautiful, valuable and worth sustaining in their patterns of living and thinking, individuals/groups transmit both symbolic and behavioral meaning systems over generations. This perspective advocates that behavioral (practices) as well as symbolic aspects (mentalities) of a culture are transmitted...
essentially through tacit socialization by parents and other "culture bearers" (Shweder et al. 1998, pp. 885)

With respect to the individual psyche, all human beings have a mental life based on which they take intentional, willing decisions and represent their beliefs through normative practices and behaviors. It is also important to note that the cultural psychological perspective emphasizes the vital presence of agency and intentionality in individuals and reiterates that culture is not just passive acceptance of norms. The unequal distribution of cultural knowledge does not reduce membership from the common culture, instead varied interpretations and subjective understandings of cultural practices can lead to different mentalities, both within and across-cultural groups.

To explain the inseparable symbolic and behavioral aspects of local, cultural life, an active exploration of the practice-related mental states and mentality-laden practices is required. The understanding of practices and mentalities would enable the construction of a custom complex, the basic unit of analysis in cultural psychology.
As evident in Figure 1, the study seeks to explain some indigenous patterns of social-moral reasoning and describe various processes of tacit socialization. Miller (1997) also emphasizes the influence of indigenous cultural meanings, practices and the socio-political context to find local explanations of particular behaviors. By knowing what comprises the mentality-practice nexus, traditional, indigenous frameworks guiding behaviors and mentalities in a particular cultural context can be
elaborated upon. For example, in the Hindu Indian context, concepts of *karma* and *dharma* seem overarching, especially in relation to social-moral development (Kulkarni & Kapadia, 2006) But indigenous frameworks containing these concepts are transmitted subtly and implicitly through family socialization, making it extremely difficult to explicate such understandings in everyday life situations and even more challenging to capture these complexities in research.

An example of cultural psychological research in the area of social-moral development is work by Shweder, Mahapatra and Miller (1987) wherein they argue that Kohlberg’s conception of morality is limited to the person and the justice paradigm as his work stems from an individualistic, western philosophy. They propose a “social communication” theory asserting the need to view morality from a broader, culture-inclusive lens, so that it accounts for more than one rationally defensible moral code. They highlight that cultures differ in their treatment of conventional obligations, stressing that many cultures do not support the idea that social practices are just conventions formed and propagated by cultural consensus. Many social practices in cultures like India have a strong and overlapping moral basis which is communicated through routine family practices. Culture thus provides a coherent and comprehensive context in which social practices make moral sense and hence, as far as possible, transgressions are avoided.

The cultural psychological perspective also understands developmental processes very differently. Unlike the social constructivist perspective, which views development as a sequential process moving from simple, unconscious behaviors to more complex and conscious ones, the cultural psychological perspective acknowledges the unique ability of the human psyche to transform the conscious and deliberate processes into automatic, habitual and unconscious ones. This inverted model of culturally-mediated
development cannot be fully explained unless the study of people is complimented
with a study of their unconscious mentalities which support particular cultural ways of
life. Cultural psychology provides a multidisciplinary platform to understand various
ways of life', characteristic of different cultural communities. Cultural psychological
studies in the area of social-moral development have been challenged and criticized
by theorists from psychology and allied disciplines.

**Critiques and Challenges to Cultural Psychology with Reference to Social-Moral
Development**

The cognitive-developmental paradigm in mainstream psychology provides stage
theories in different areas of development. With specific reference to social-moral
development, Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development is still considered a
landmark feature, illustrating a child's progress from moral immaturity (lower stages)
to moral maturity (higher stages). Kohlberg was involved in validating his theory
cross-culturally, especially within communities like the Israeli kibbutz (Snarey,
Reimer & Kohlberg, 1985). His studies have had enormous influence on the
disciplines of education and leadership studies. Individual moral judgment levels were
used to determine comprehension of other's moral judgments and preference for
leadership qualities a level or two above one's own (Rest, Turiel & Kohlberg, 1994).
In a 'stock taking' endeavor, Shweder and Haidt (1993) elucidate that Kohlberg's
cognitive contribution to the field of moral psychology is unrivaled as most later
research in the field either used Kohlberg's theory or criticized it. Subsequent
research on the Kohlbergian model was also concerned only with finding the presence
or absence of the six stages across cultures, placing groups at higher or lower levels of
moral functioning (Huebner & Garrod, 1991). A major finding of these researches
was the absence of post conventional morality, especially in non-western populations.
Similarly, Gilligan’s (1982) critique of Kohlberg’s androcentric approach drew attention to a gender based morality of care perspective. Shweder and Haidt (1993) mention Gilligan as a pluralist and Kohlberg’s most cited critic, who introduced the idea that the moral realm can be diverse and consist of more than one ethic. In a cross-cultural overview, Eckensberger and Zimba (1994) discuss the inadequacy of Kohlberg’s approach in the roles attributed to culture and gender. Although research evidence about the use of the justice or care ethic by a particular gender has been largely inconclusive, the interactions between culture and morality, also mediated to some extent by gender, cannot be ignored.

Within the cognitive-developmental domain, Elliot Turiel and his colleagues have furthered Kohlberg’s work by proposing the “social interaction” theory. According to this theory, convention and morality are not sequentially connected in development. Putting forth a distinct domain view of social-moral development, the theory states that the moral realm is distinctly different from the conventional and the personal realms.

Cultural psychologists Shweder, Mahapatra and Miller (1987) researched social-moral development in Orissa, India indicating that Hindu Indians could not clearly distinguish between conventional and moral events due to the influence of their local, cultural worldviews about the person, society and divinity. Turiel, Killen and Helwig (1987) reanalyzed some ‘conventional’ items from Shweder et al.’s (1987) study (e.g., a widow not eating fish, a son eating chicken after the father’s death, a menstruating woman entering the kitchen) and results revealed the presence of purely conventional items among Indians as well. However, this happened when reasoning about after-life or unearthly events and consequences were filtered out and treated as context-
dependent ‘informational assumptions’, because of which not many cross-cultural differences emerged.

In a similar study challenging the social communication theory, Madden (1992) found clear evidence of conventions in an almost similar sample in Bhuvaneshwar, Orissa. Neff (2001) also highlights the use of personal autonomy by Hindu Indians in Mysore and suggests that cross-cultural research endeavors should not obscure the multidimensional nature of social reasoning. Reiterating the constructivist position, she states that it is not uncommon to find individuals transgressing social norms and making way for individual interpretations of cultural knowledge.

Diverging from Kohlberg’s theory in some fundamental ways, domain theorists advocate that morality and convention develop simultaneously as distinct domains and not in a sequential fashion, as proposed by Kohlberg. Research by Tunel and colleagues (Tunel, 1998) with young children suggests that from a very young age, children are able to distinguish between morality, conventions and personal concerns. Varied interactions with the social environment shape individuals’ patterns of social-moral reasoning within these domains. With increasing age, children interpret their worlds by compartmentalizing social events and judgments about them into distinct domains. Studies to know whether children and adolescents distinguish between morality and conventional practices in countries like Nigeria, Korea, Israel and Zambia show that children can make clear distinctions between moral and conventional events, but their justifications were varied and culture-specific (Smetana, 1995).

Noteworthy is the fact that domain theorists have understood culture as a part of the larger context, separate and outside of the individual. Espousing the psychic unity of the human mind and its universal ability to actively interpret events, most research in...
the distinct domain paradigm looks for similarities across-cultural populations. They also disagree to the conceptualization of individualism and collectivism which tends to lump cultures together, ignoring the existence of a multiplicity of selves within and between cultures (Turiel, 2004). This is especially true when powerful males (or other oppressors) display considerable individualism in certain hierarchically structured cultures. When individuals' judgments reflect a coexistence of concepts like interdependence, hierarchy, and emphasis on personal entitlements and justice (Wamryb & Turiel, 1994), it indicates heterogeneity in social-moral reasoning. This questions the proposition that a majority of social judgments emulate from particular cultural orientations, like individualism or collectivism.

Commenting on the renewed wave of cultural psychology and its claims to replace some crucial aspects of basic social science disciplines, Turiel (2004) mentions that the propositions held by both the old (psychology) and the new (cultural psychology) are in opposition. He asserts that in attempts to move toward "positive psychology", many issues of social conflict, injustice, and unfairness are ignored. These are issues that no human community should ever get adjusted to. Drawing from his research about judging social practices, Turiel and his colleagues demonstrate how individuals evaluate, criticize, and disagree with social practices which entail inequalities. A major argument floated by research in this paradigm is that individuals actively construct and interpret their social interactions. They are not passive recipients of cultural knowledge. Many studies in this paradigm are about women or other socially disadvantaged groups, found mostly in hierarchically structured communities. Strains between the conflicting views about social-moral development held by cultural psychologists and domain theorists are quite evident in literature (Turiel, 1998).
The distinct domain perspective offers many opportunities to think about the multidimensional nature of social-moral reasoning, especially concerning issues of gender equity, justice and resolution of social conflicts. It also offers an extremely viable framework to interpret social change for communities in transition, purporting the universal worth of certain basic human rights and opportunities for optimum human development. What hinders the acceptance of this framework is its treatment or understanding of culture as an independent variable and not something which is part of the individual's psyche. In the search for psychic unity, the domain theorists still support an essentially justice-based (yet welfare dependent) understanding of social-moral development. Viewing distinct domain studies from a cultural psychological perspective leaves a lot to be desired, especially concerning explications of the informational assumptions or quite simply, the distinction between culture and context.

Most researches on social-moral development within the cultural psychological and the distinct domain perspectives show results in almost opposite directions. The domain approach narrows the understanding of morality, making it as exclusive as possible for explaining other domains while the cultural psychological approach broadens it so as to include cultural variations. The cognitive-developmental paradigm deemphasizes the role of culture and focuses on individual construction of knowledge, the cultural psychology perspective emphasizes other-dependent construction of socio-cultural knowledge. Given these diametrically opposite theoretical foundations of the two paradigms, it seems both paradigms would remain parallel, water-tight compartments. Future research must bridge this gap and resolve the push and pull between search for psychic unity and a culturally inclusive psychology. Jensen (2005) indicates some hope in this direction and advocates a
cultural-developmental approach to moral psychology. Before resolving these issues, an understanding of cross-cultural variation in social-moral development is necessary.

**Cross-Cultural Researches on Social-Moral Development: An Overview**

An examination of research conducted across cultures helps understand the influence of indigenous concepts and divergent worldviews on the development of morality. Research, especially from non-western cultures, shows how the content of social-moral reasoning differs from the western model and shapes individuals' understanding of morality.

In an attempt to expand Kohlberg's theory to include Chinese perspectives of Confucianism, Taoism and traditional Chinese thought, Ma (1988) highlighted aspects of Chinese thought like a soft approach to conflict resolution and filial piety, which are different from the western ideas of morality. A comparative study of responsibilities and obligations in close relationships between Chinese and Icelandic adolescents by Keller, Edelstein, Schmid, Fang and Fang (1998) also indicated a complex interaction of culture and the development of social-moral reasoning.

Interpersonal concerns were a dominant feature mentioned by Chinese respondents who focused on the moral aspects of a close friendship. This was never mentioned by the Icelandic respondents.

In a study to understand the influence of culture on the development of the care perspective, Shimizu (2001) describes unique concepts like the principles of *omotyari* (empathy) and its expression through *ozendate* (sensitivity to needs in advance) operating as a norm in the Japanese culture, which are not restricted to a specific gender. She also found, unlike Gilligan's claims, that Japanese adolescents regarded caring as a communal response to the cultural values and not something restricted only to individual cognition and feelings.
Research from the cultural psychological and the domain distinct paradigm has not agreed about the role of morality and convention in social-moral development. Most cultural variation in social-moral development also seems to be basically rooted in whether cultural groups (or researchers) make these distinctions or not. Nisan’s (1987) research with children from three groups—secular urban Jews, secular Kibbutz Jews and traditional Arabs in Israel—supported the fact that cultural outlooks have an amazing effect on the understanding of rights and offense. At the same time, like the Shweder et al. (1987) study, this research also asserted that the distinction between morality and convention was imperative on the cultural outlook about the nature of man, society and the world. Huebner and Garrod’s (1991) study of Tibetan Buddhist monks reveals a complex understanding of the concept of karma which permeates metaethical as well as normative levels, indicating that karma as a moral concept influences conventions and spheres of the self as well. In a methodological critique of many cross-cultural endeavors, they urge students of moral reasoning to first understand the culture in which they are going to ask questions. In attempts to interpret the ‘other’ we must be able to overcome limitations of our psychological systems, which includes much more than just language. They point out that any inquiry of karma without a corresponding understanding of the karmic world is meaningless.

In a study involving teachers and students, Zimba (1994) found that Zambians attributed moral meanings to many social conventions, traditions and beliefs. The study discusses the insufficiency of understanding the moral realm or the moral agent when perceptions of harm, welfare, justice, rights and obligations are applied only to the individual minus important aspects of their social and cultural identities. Research conducted with Nigerian communities also showed a coexistence of morality and
Edwards (1987) emphasized the role of culture in creating and distinguishing the moral from other non-moral domains. She found that cultures differed greatly in the ways adults communicated the “reasons for doing right” to their children. Her comparative research with Kenyan Oyugis and American children emphasized the role of both cultural authority as well as rational considerations in children’s understanding of right and wrong. In an attempt to bridge the dichotomies between cognitive-developmental and anthropological paradigms, she describes development as a process inclusive of both self-construction and social transmission. She also urges social scientists to appreciate both aspects of development instead of focusing on one and viewing the other as diametrically opposite.

The review till now indicates two important issues to be addressed by future research in moral psychology. One is a clear need to define morality in more culturally inclusive ways which is possible only with more cross-cultural comparative research. The other is to bridge paradigmatic differences between cultural anthropological, cultural psychological and cognitive-developmental paradigms to reach a more holistic understanding of social-moral development.

Much research in India about social-moral development illuminates contrasts with the western world view. A lot of these cross-cultural differences are attributed to a hierarchical social structure which values interdependence of its members. A majority of Indian researches have been done with a Hindu population only. Although not representative of all intracultural communities within India, the researches bring forth unique aspects of a Hindu world view which impinges upon patterns of social-moral reasoning and decisions of individuals. A closer look would reveal intricacies.
Studies on Social-Moral Development in India

Like most research interest in social-moral development, preliminary studies with Indian samples also aimed at verifying the universal applicability of Kohlberg's theory. Parikh (1980) used Kohlberg's moral judgment interview along with other family environment measures with urban, upper middle class parents, children and adolescents from India and drew comparisons based on similar studies done with American samples. Interesting findings emerged when many researchers consistently found the Kohlberg coding manual inadequate to cover all aspects of reasoning evident from the Indian data sets. Although research testing Kohlberg's theory with Indian samples demonstrates the presence of all three levels of moral functioning and their age related achievement, some concepts unique to Indian philosophical systems, like *Ahimsa* were unscorable using the Kohlberg manual (Vasudev & Hummel, 1987). Similarly, works testing out Gilligan's claims found little support as both men and women from the Indian samples were using the justice and care orientations (Vasudev & Hummel, 1987, Sengupta, Saraswathi, & Konantambigi, 1994).

Consistent mismatches with the western theories and models created fertile ground for a closer investigation of Indian frameworks and socio-cultural contexts. During this phase prominent studies used culture as a source of psychological explanation and western models were modified to suit local values. This process was referred to as "explanatory indigenization" (Sinha, 1998, pp 26). Unfortunately, studies by Indian scholars in the area were few and far between resulting in the lack of alternative, culturally grounded explanations of responses which diverged from the western model. Social psychological studies consistently referred to the concepts of *dharma* and *karma*, but little clear empirical examination of these concepts or their influence on social-moral development in the Indian context ensued.
Research about social-moral development across cultures draws important linkages to the conceptualization of the self and whether it differs across cultures. Large amount of literature in the area of culture and self asserts that cultures shape selves into becoming what they are. Cross-cultural comparisons have consistently referred to the emergence of varied self-conceptualizations across cultures. Shweder and Miller (1985) indicate how person centered cultures fundamentally emphasize individuals and rights whereas socio-centric cultures emphasize roles, statuses and congruent duties. Within the Indian context, a duty based ethical code merges with a role based conception of society to rationalize the moral order in terms of natural duties. Deme (1992) emphasizes the long-term effects of joint family living in Hindu households which shapes a socially conforming self-image of Indian men. Hindu men live in family contexts where awareness about social pressures is tremendous. Hence a “socially anchored self” emerges which is concerned more with the reactions of others.

The ‘co-existence of contradictions’ can be found in abundance within the Indian context (Sinha & Tripathi, 2001, Tripathi, 2001). Alternative views asserting the development of individual interests and autonomy at different life stages within this system are also available (Mines, 1988, Shweder & Mennon, 1998). Even within a web of hierarchical group relationships, there is enough scope to develop individual identity and move towards the actualization of the real self. Atman. This remains a guiding philosophy in the Indian context influencing everyday life and early socialization practices such that individualistic pride (Ahamkara) is toned down (Saraswathi, 2005).

In the Indian context, the self is mediated through an overarching framework of dharma which focuses on the performance of duties in diverse conditions and
stimulates feelings of righteousness. Dharmci is understood as a person’s inner moral nature and consists of righteous action as well as the adherence to a natural and moral order. Dharma in the Indian social-moral context is essentially understood as the performance of duties pertaining to one’s station in life (Mascolo, Misra, & Rapisardi, 2004). Ramanujan’s (1990) informal essay on an Indian way of thinking, emphasizes contextual importance for the description of dharma as asramadharma (dharma to do with the stage of life), svadharma (conduct right with the jati or class or svabhava), and apaddharma (conduct necessary in times of distress or emergency). Thus, even if the concept of dharma seems broad and is understood as a universal order, its application is very context and situation specific. The hierarchical social structure situates the Indian selves in an intricate web of familial and social relationships and provides the necessary context to execute one’s dharma.

Explaining the natural order as a moral order in India, Shweder and Miller, (1991) discuss the concept of karma wherein events happen because of ethical purposes to equalize the distribution of punishments and rewards. Parish (1994) mentions the concept of karma in his ethnography about equality and hierarchy among Hindu Newars of Bhaktapur, Nepal. For the Newars, karma is a central, political concept when it comes to distributive justice in a caste-based, hierarchical Hindu society. A “gratuitous” distribution of misery and privilege becomes intelligible when viewed within a framework of the theory of karma, transmigration and moral consequence for individual actions. He also refers to the idea of just dessert among the high and low caste groups where sins (pap) are punished and acts of dharma are rewarded, justifying the status quo within the society. Shweder, Much, Mahapatra and Park (1997) negate the fatalistic ideas associated with karma and see it as one which emphasizes personal responsibility in regulating behavior to get benefits for self. The
position of dharma is also central to the concept of karma as a person can improve his present position by doing his dharma (whatever is morally obligatory in a particular situation) to the best of his potential. Both these concepts govern social-moral reasoning in the Hindu, Indian context and influence self-conceptualization in significant ways.

A major chunk of cross-cultural, comparative research on social-moral development in India comes from a series of studies done by Richard Shweder, Joan Miller and their colleagues. Based on years of systematic ethnographic research work in the temple town of Bhuwaneshwar, Orissa, Shweder et al. (1987) clearly indicated the presence of divergent rationalities and multiple post-conventional moralities across cultures. This research was critically acclaimed as an endeavor demystifying the predominance of 'universally applicable' western theories.

Through the in-depth analysis of an interview conducted in India, Shweder and Much (1991) emphasize the importance of "second-order" cultural meanings and state that much of the interview (in the form of stones and narratives) was unscorable using the Kohlberg manual. Similarly, drawing inferences from observations in an American preschool, they demonstrate the impact of shared cultural meaning on appropriate behaviors within specific environments. This shows it is important to place the moral judgment interview within a cultural context and understand how the respondent makes meaning out of her cultural world. Studies on sleeping arrangements also show how sleeping practices were contingent on moral ideas, cultural values, and knowledge about family life and individual members rather than just the availability of space or resources (Shweder, Balle-Jensen, & Goldstein, 2003). These studies strengthen the cultural psychology paradigm by demonstrating how mentalities and cultural practices are closely linked in development.
Researches with Indian and American subjects by Joan Miller and her colleagues have made substantial contributions in unraveling moral development cross culturally. Miller (2005) reiterates that the morality-of-care perspective is culture bound and culturally variable frameworks of care need research attention. Research by Miller and her colleagues in India has specifically contributed to a deeper and a more systematic understanding of the idea of duty and interpersonal obligations, as it exists in India and the United States. Their research in Mysore, India, reveals that unlike Americans, Hindu Indians demonstrated an absolute understanding of social responsibilities. The Indian sample had a very broad view of interpersonal morality which was not influenced by the magnitude of the need or the nature of the role relationships involved. This was because, in the Indian cultural context, obligation to serve the social whole was understood as a fundamental moral commitment (Miller, Bersoff, & Harwood, 1990). Cross-cultural evidence from these studies has led to the full integration of interpersonal responsibilities under the moral rubric. In another study, Bersoff and Miller (1993) found that Indians used a more contextually sensitive approach to moral judgments and also relied on external loci of control to regulate behavior than Americans. Indians also prioritized beneficence prescriptions ahead of justice prescriptions. Along with justice concerns, they used role oriented obligations and contextual information as important factors to judge social issues. Studies also indicated qualitative differences in the understanding of reciprocity within social and familial relationships in India and America. Indians categorized reciprocity expectations in moral than personal-choice terms indicating that they play a major role in familial and social relationships (Miller & Bersoff, 1994).

Most of these researches adopt a cultural psychological perspective and integrate interpretive ethnographic methods with efficient multitrait - multimethod quantitative
designs. One can interpret this as an important step to reduce the gaps between methodological and disciplinary paradigms, allowing each side to inform the other. These researches also score better than others on statistically explaining cross-cultural differences along with an adequate understanding of the socio-cultural contexts. Drawing from personal experiences, Miller (1997) states that living in India for research helped her gain a denser understanding of family life practices in Hindu households. These consistent visits for prolonged periods also enabled her to reflect efficiently on why some western practices may seem alien, if viewed within a Hindu Indian perspective. Anecdotal instances by Shweder (1997) also show the capacity of qualitative methods like participant observation to activate dormant cognitive and emotional structures in the minds of investigators, especially those who are from different cultures. This also strengthens the methodological stance taken by cultural psychology in the process of deciphering the ‘other’. A series of studies done in the Indian cultural context using the cultural psychological perspective led not only to the expansion of the concept of morality but also to the creation of a new coding manual. The “Big Three” explanations of morality forwarded by Shweder et al. (1997) is one such effort. The next section explains the “Big Three” explanations of autonomy, community and divinity which constitute social-moral development across cultures.

“Big Three” Explanations of Morality: Autonomy, Community and Divinity

Evidence from different cultures denotes that morality encompasses concerns within autonomy, community and divinity as well (Miller, 2005). A cluster analysis of moral discourses by Shweder et al. (1997) from their research in Orissa, India revealed three clear clusters or ethics- autonomy, community and divinity, within which moral discourse takes place. The model stems from a deep understanding about
cross-cultural variability in self-conceptualizations. Thus each ethic brings forth a particular kind of self-conceptualization within which certain ethics operate. This framework of ethics helps capture a variety of human experiences and interpretations. Autonomy, community and divinity are three ethical discourses which promote different moral goods. The authors claim that the Hindu ethical world view is incomplete without any of these ethics. They also emphasize that when individuals experience moral dilemmas, the three ethics are in conflict with one another. As already evident in many of their researches, Shweder et al. (1997) advocate that cultures differ in their construction of moral world views, and thus one or the other ethic becomes predominant in specific cultures. For example, in the United States the ethic of autonomy is elaborated and applied to many aspects of daily life, while in the Indian context the ethic of autonomy gets absorbed within discourse about the ethic of community and divinity. The authors, however, caution against an interpretation that there is no concept of community or divinity in the United States or that Indians do not hold a strong sense of individual autonomy. Deeper understanding of each of the ethics exemplifies the range of moral discourses that the “Big Three” explanation can capture.

The ethic of autonomy includes regulative concepts of harm, rights and justice. It refers to an individual’s will to choose and protect his need to have personal preferences. This ethic presupposes the conceptualization of the self as an individual preference structure aimed at increasing choice and personal liberty.

On the other hand, the ethic of community refers to concepts of duty, hierarchy and interdependence and deals with various roles or stations of life that constitute a society or community. Here the self-conceptualization depends on one’s roles and stations in life which are intrinsic to one’s identity and also part of a larger
interdependent social structure. This social structure is a "collective enterprise with a
history and standing of its own" (Shweder et al. 1997, pp. 99).
Lastly, the ethic of divinity comprises concepts of souls or spirits and the religious-
spiritual aspects of human agency. The self is conceptualized as a spiritual entity
which connected to some sacred and natural order of things. As far as possible, this
spiritual self avoids moral transgression or sins of every kind and prefers gaining
virtue to aid its journey towards spiritual purity.
The authors claim that issues about morality and moral discourse can be
accommodated within the three ethics across many cultures. The framework offers a
broadened perspective of morality, and demonstrates an ability to accommodate many
post-conventional moralities or divergent rationalities found across cultures. In a study
exploring various moral issues in the United States and India, Jensen (1998) explains
the Big Three ethics framework and its functioning within progressive and orthodox
groups. The study also developed the coding system and sub codes within each ethic.
Subsequent refinement of the coding system resulted in the construction of the ethics
differences in the use of the ethics where middle aged and older Americans used the
ethic of autonomy lesser than younger Americans. Arnett, Ramos & Jensen (2001)
showed that American emerging adults displayed the use of autonomy and
community in equal proportions while divinity was used less frequently. Thus, the
ethics framework can be assimilated within research designs to ascertain
developmental differences as well. Vamio (2003) also found the three ethics useful to
code religious ideologies among adolescents in Finland. Haidt, Koller and Dias
(1993) showed the use of the ethic of autonomy by urban adults, high socio-economic
status college students. Students from elitist colleges in both Brazil and United States
had more in common with each other. In an interesting study by Rozin, Lowery, Hardt, and Imada (1999), three moral emotions of contempt, anger and disgust were mapped on the three ethics of community, autonomy and divinity by American and Japanese university students. The authors propose that the three emotions of contempt, anger and disgust (CAD) are typically elicited when the three ethical codes of community, autonomy and divinity (also CAD) are violated. While the results were encouraging, the study informs readers of the need to test the contempt, anger and disgust hypothesis across diverse cultural settings and with people outside university classrooms. These studies reckon the efficacy of the “Big Three” concepts as an appropriate framework of analysis to capture complexities within moral reasoning, especially those which may not fall within a justice and individual autonomy framework.

The present study also uses the “Big Three” conceptualization as an analytical framework to explore how autonomy, community and divinity are used in the contemporary Indian context. The framework seems promising as it can account for a wide variety of moral responses, especially those which are culturally relevant. It is presumed that the framework will also facilitate the understanding of cultural continuity and social change.

A summary of the review of researches is presented below:

- Kohlberg’s research from the cognitive-developmental paradigm provided the stage theory of moral development. This theory was used to find levels of moral functioning and presence or absence of all stages across cultures.

- Issues about the inadequacy of the coding manual and a western bias in Kohlberg’s conceptualization of morality were raised by cultural psychologists.
Research within the emergent field of cultural psychology proved the presence of divergent rationalities or multiple post conventional moralities. Similarly, cultural variations in other basic concepts of human development (self, emotion, and attachment) were documented using a cultural psychological perspective.

The domain distinct perspective challenges the field of cultural psychology and raises pertinent questions about findings on social-moral development. Their studies on the disadvantaged groups like women within hierarchical societies are especially intriguing.

An integration of both, cultural psychological perspective and the domain distinct perspective is a challenge faced by researchers studying social-moral development across cultures. The bi-directional influences of culture and individual interpretation need to be explored more systematically without de-emphasizing the importance of one for the other.

Based on the review of various research studies, the conceptual framework of the study is described below.

**Conceptual Framework of the Study**

The conceptual framework of the study is situated in the present socio-cultural context of urban India. In a rapidly urbanizing socio-economic milieu, changing family structures influence everyday family practices and provide a context for social interactions. Besides this, there is a sizable increase in the levels of education across urban India. At the same time, the influences of a swiftly globalizing national economy cannot be ignored, especially in an agrarian and industry-dependent state like Gujarat.

All these influences have raised standards of living in the urban middle class. Specific to Baroda city, Van Wessel (2004) found that increasing consumerism and better
standards of living were dependent to a large extent on status competition between members. But at the same time, consumerism was understood within a moral framework, especially when people evaluated their individual selves. People recalled past conditions of a simpler life, and a close-knit community to draw attention to the flawed aspects of their materialistic existence in which individual identities were pursued through acquisition of materialistic assets. This indicates a changing social environ in which individuals and families constantly move towards modernization but still idealize the old, traditional social ways.

The emphasis of the study is on understanding processes of social-moral reasoning which operate within this dynamic context involving Brahmin and non-Brahmin caste groups. Cultural influences include family life practices, beliefs, and Hindu worldviews, specific to the Maharashtrian community residing in Baroda. At present, there are approximately 4-5 lakh Maharashtrians living in the state of Gujarat. Concentration of the Maharashtrian groups is especially found in cities of Ahmedabad and Baroda. By virtue of the royal family of State of Baroda, The Gaekwads, being Maharashtrian, the city of Baroda displays a denser mix of Maharashtrians and Gujaratis. While there would not be radical differences between the cultural influences experienced by the Maharashtrian community and many others in urban India, it is essential to keep an open eye to local as well as regional flavors unique to each group.

For the present study, the cultural psychology approach seems appropriate because the emphasis is on unearthing the mentalities behind cultural-familial practices and not on evaluating the practices. What remains to be seen is the compatibility of all mentalities within the indigenous, cultural framework of social-moral development. Past research indicates that the big three conceptualization of morality is much more
inclusive of culturally mediated influences than others. As the "Big Three" explanations were developed from research on Indian samples, the study expects prominent use of its components in the contemporary Indian context. It is assumed that most responses received in the study would fit within the "Big Three" conceptualization and the study would be able to explicate how the "Big Three" concepts of autonomy, community and divinity operate in the Indian social context.

Figure 2 depicts the assumed overlapping influences of social norms, indigenous frames of reference like *karma* and *dharma* and personal spheres of decision making on the social-moral reasoning of individuals. But it is imperative that good research has scope for explaining any divergence from the conceptual framework, and this research also attempts to do the same. Hence, overarching influences of education and social class, concerns of justice and fairness or critical evaluations of social practices that are not compatible with the conceptual framework will be addressed separately, if need be. The distinct domain perspective is one such forum providing ample scope to encourage intelligible discussions about these divergences.
Rationale of the Study

The review clearly shows that studies about social-moral development in non-western cultures have significantly contributed to expand understanding about social-moral development. There is thus a need to look at subtle structures underlying the reasoning process in a cultural context. Most of the frameworks guiding social-moral development are communicated tacitly in Indian families, making it difficult for researchers to tap exact influences. This study is an attempt to bring the unconscious,
natural and habitual aspects of behavior into a conscious, reflective mode. To understand social change aspects, the study explores how traditional models are interpreted in contemporary times. The aim is to create a "custom complex", the basic unit of analysis in cultural psychology, to understand social-moral processes of reasoning in Hindu, Maharashtrian families. Applicability of the three ethics of autonomy, community and divinity has been established in various cultures and the framework successfully taps culture-specific variations in social-moral reasoning.

This study is another attempt to test out the "Big Three" ethics framework in the contemporary Indian context and suggest new components, if evident from the results. Based on the review and rationale, the objectives of the study are as follows.

**Broad Objective**
To map out local-cultural patterns of reasoning used to resolve hypothetical social-moral dilemmas in the Indian context.

**Specific Objectives**
- To describe prominent patterns of social-moral reasoning based on the factors considered and justifications used to resolve the hypothetical dilemmas.
- To highlight similarities and differences in the decisions and reasoning patterns across caste, gender and generation.
- To know how the "Big Three" ethics of morality (autonomy, community and divinity) (Shweder, Much, Mahapatra & Park, 1997) operate in the contemporary Indian context and if they are significantly associated with the variables of caste, gender and generation.