Religions and Development
Research Programme

Religions, Ethics and Attitudes towards Corruption: A Study of Perspectives in India

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Religions and Development

Research Programme

The Religions and Development Research Programme Consortium is an international research partnership that is exploring the relationships between several major world religions, development in low-income countries and poverty reduction. The programme is comprised of a series of comparative research projects that are addressing the following questions:

- How do religious values and beliefs drive the actions and interactions of individuals and faith-based organisations?
- How do religious values and beliefs and religious organisations influence the relationships between states and societies?
- In what ways do faith communities interact with development actors and what are the outcomes with respect to the achievement of development goals?

The research aims to provide knowledge and tools to enable dialogue between development partners and contribute to the achievement of development goals. We believe that our role as researchers is not to make judgements about the truth or desirability of particular values or beliefs, nor is it to urge a greater or lesser role for religion in achieving development objectives. Instead, our aim is to produce systematic and reliable knowledge and better understanding of the social world.

The research focuses on four countries (India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Tanzania), enabling the research team to study most of the major world religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and African traditional belief systems. The research projects will compare two or more of the focus countries, regions within the countries, different religious traditions and selected development activities and policies.

The consortium consists of six research partner organisations, each of which is working with other researchers in the four focus countries:

- University of Birmingham, UK: International Development Department, Department of Theology and Religion, Centre for West African Studies, Centre for the Study of Global Ethics.
- University of Bath, UK: Centre for Development Studies.
- Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi.
- Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, Ibadan.
- University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
- Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan.

In addition to the research partners, links have been forged with non-academic and non-government bodies, including Islamic Relief.

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Contents

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Summary

In countries where religion plays a central role in people's lives, it is expected that many people, including public servants, will derive their moral and ethical values from their religion. Religion provides many with a language of ethics and, often, an actual 'list' of rules by which to live, some of which may be relevant to fighting corruption. Problematically, however, many of the world's most corrupt countries also rank highly in terms of levels of religiosity, suggesting that the relationships between widespread religious adherence and levels of corruption are not straightforward. Attempts to reduce corruption have had limited success, leading to a renewed interest in the role that religious values might play in future initiatives. This study assembles a picture of people's religious beliefs, values, perceptions of corruption, and notions of tradition and modernity, based on extensive semi-structured interviews in several locations across India.

Corruption is widespread, institutionalized and taken for granted in India and religion is central to many people's lives. However, little is known about how religion, morality, ethics, and notions of modernity and tradition influence the context in which corruption occurs or people's perceptions of its nature, causes and potential remedies.

Until recently, research internationally has tended to adopt a quantitative approach. If considered at all, religion and tradition have, like corruption itself, been treated as discrete, objective phenomena. Very little attention has been given to the ways in which people interpret either 'religion' or 'corruption', or how they are perceived to be related. In contrast, this research sought to explore the beliefs, ideas, and meanings embedded in local conceptions of 'religion' and 'corruption', and how these are thought to influence attitudes and behaviour.

The research aimed to provide insights into whether and how religious values and organizations might support efforts to fight corruption. In-depth interviews were conducted with 120 representatives from a variety of social groups, including the government, academia, the corporate world, development organizations, the media, youth and religious associations, mainly in Andhra Pradesh and Punjab. The interviews explored questions such as:

- What does it mean to be religious?
- How are people's attitudes towards corruption influenced by their religious beliefs?
- How do perceptions of modernity and tradition intersect with religion and corruption?

The research also examined how Hindu and Sikh religious leaders and organizations are perceived, to determine whether they might play a role in anti-corruption efforts.

Some of the key findings are:

- Religion is universally believed to be an essential part of life for Indian people, but its importance varies between individuals and the ways in which people understand and justify their religiosity differ. A distinction is made between ritual practices and the living out of religious tenets in everyday lives, with many believing that overt religiosity does not necessarily signify that a person is 'truly religious'.
- Religion is seen as important for how people construct value systems, but these are subject to myriad influences. The family is said to play much the most important role in developing values. However, the personal, professional or socio-political environment in which a person finds him or herself exerts a strong influence, and often in practice there are contradictions between personal and professional moral codes.
- Some argue that certain religious ideas may encourage tolerance of corruption, for example, *karma* – the attribution of a person's position and fortunes in this life to actions in previous lives. In addition, some are said to 'bribe God' by donating the proceeds of corruption to religious organizations. Religious leaders no longer seem to have moral influence.
- There is little agreement about what constitutes corruption. Some favour narrow/legalistic definitions, including acts such as bribery, misuse of office and misappropriation of public funds and donations. Others advocate broad/moralistic definitions, which view a large number of acts as corrupt, including gift-giving/'tipping', nepotism and womanizing.
- Corruption is generally blamed on greed, materialism, the desire to succeed, cumbersome bureaucracy, loopholes in administration and failure to implement rules and laws.
- Tradition is not itself seen as promoting a 'culture of corruption' and so cannot be regarded as an obstacle to anti-corruption work. Indeed, in India, most consider that modernity, secularization and consumerism have contributed to the erosion of tradition, and so are responsible for the perceived worsening of corruption.
- Many are not comfortable with a binary distinction between tradition and modernity, regarding themselves as both traditional and modern.

- Corruption continues to thrive in India, unchallenged by religion, partly because factors other than religious values and practices influence people's attitudes and behaviour and partly because religious leaders and organizations have been discredited in the eyes of many. However, some believe that religion-based morals and narratives could contribute to curbing corruption and creating an environment in which honesty, integrity and hard work are rewarded and celebrated.

Some of the implications for those seeking to comprehend and fight corruption include:

- Corruption, values and the role religion plays in people's attitudes and lives can only be understood through in-depth research in specific cultural and religious contexts.
- The potential contribution of religion to tackling corruption is limited because in contemporary Indian society, values are subject to many non-religious influences and religious leaders and organizations lack legitimacy.
- Nevertheless, there is untapped potential for religious ethics and narratives to contribute to curbing corruption if religion is not merely interpreted in terms of ritual practices, but its values lived out and translated into moral behaviour. It is believed that spiritual training and values must be infused from childhood. However, it is also thought that the re-assertion and reiteration of moral and ethical ideals can make a difference later in life.

1 Introduction

> The wealth earned through pious means flourishes;
> *Those who earn through dishonest means are destroyed.*
> Atharva Veda, 1200 BC

The concept of corruption has emerged as an area of multi-focal inquiry, evident from the “increasing number of articles [that] are now being published on [the] subject and [that] several international organizations are intent on combating [its] various forms” (Jain, 2001, p. 71). Academic scholarship has also involved itself heavily with the issue of corruption, and has endeavoured to explain context-specific instances of corruption through various models, approaches, studies, and analyses. The phenomenon has been studied in relation to economics, politics, market structures, governance, bureaucracy, development, and to an extent, even culture and morality. Various understandings of corruption render it a field of much contention, marked by a lack of consensus on its meanings, causes and consequences, and a theoretical inconclusiveness as to its remedies.

In India, neither the prevalence of corruption nor the anxieties over it are new. The number of public officials, politicians and corporate executives - amongst others - implicated in corruption scams and scandals continues to make headlines regularly, even after some sixty years of independence. Corruption is a taken-for-granted reality, and one with a strong multi-sector presence in India. One cannot help but empathise with the views of N. Vittal, the former Central Vigilance Commissioner of India, that the average Indian citizen “cannot go to any public organization or office today and get the services which they are supposed to get without either paying bribe or bringing influence by way of recommendations or references from VIPs” (Vittal, 2003). While the manifestations of corruption are numerous, its popular conceptions as a disease-like epidemic, or even a cancer, have been widely endorsed (Narayanasamy et al, 2000; Padhy, 1986; Vasudevaraju, 2000; Varadarajulu, 2000).

While attempts to conclusively define ‘corruption’ would be tantamount to a contest in meaning-making by those with varying degrees of economic, political, cultural or religious authority, it suffices to say at this point that the definitions of corruption that inform much policy-making are centred upon and emanate from both political and economic spheres of thought. A significant quantity of academic research into the causes and consequences of corruption also draws on theory from economics, public administration and political science. Such approaches have produced a materialistic, rather than spiritual, understanding of corruption, resulting in a focus on issues of good (or bad) governance,

bureaucratic (in)efficiency in post-colonial state formations, political scandals that erupt from the politics-business nexus and rent-seeking behaviours.

Although such understandings may be actionable for policy formulation, they do not adequately capture the complexity of the field beyond paying lip-service to how cultural factors embodied in religion, morality, ethics, and notions of modernity and tradition determine the nature, content and context of corruption. The interplay between such cultural factors and the phenomenon of corruption has often been sidestepped in the larger analyses dealing with other, more quantifiable, variables such as income levels, political climate or level of capitalist development, leading to a limited, largely political economy-based understanding of corruption.

Our study, which examines religions, ethics and attitudes towards corruption, seeks to address this oversight. It explores firstly the hitherto uncharted relationship between religion and corruption, before examining related concepts of morality, ethics, modernity and tradition – interrelated as they are in the subject discourse. It is suggested that these concepts serve as conduits though which religious discourses operate in the everyday lives of people, influencing the likelihood that they will engage in corruption at a personal level, and offering guidelines to abide by, points of reference to frame notions of 'right' and 'wrong', and sometimes a framework by which to judge others within specific cultural contexts.

This study seeks to understand corruption as neither a political and economic phenomenon nor a set of textual tenets, but as a 'lived reality' embodied in religious, social and cultural practices. The study explores the following questions to develop an understanding of how religious beliefs, values, morals, and ethics direct/influence perceptions of corruption in different socio-cultural contexts:

- What does it mean to be 'religious'?
- In what ways do religions influence value systems and codes of conduct - personal as well as professional?
- What do people understand or accept as corrupt or un-corrupt behaviour within their society?
- How is corruption characterized in religious (not just secular) terms/texts?
- How are people's attitudes towards corruption influenced by their religious values or beliefs?
- How do perceptions of tradition and modernity intersect with the phenomenon of corruption?

- What role do religious organizations play in promoting ethical conduct?
- To what extent are religious organizations accountable about their own functioning?

1.1 Background[1] and rationale of the study

In countries where religion plays a vital role in the lives of most people, it has often been assumed that many, including public servants, derive their ethical framework from their religion. Faith provides many with the language of ethics and, often, an actual 'list' of rules to live by, some of which can be interpreted as being of particular importance to fighting corruption. In many countries – including India – some religious organizations have been active in denouncing corruption.

Despite this, many of the most corrupt countries in the world, according to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, also rank high in terms of religiosity using indicators such as those produced by the Pew Global Attitudes Projects. This raises some important questions: do people separate public and private morality? Are attitudes towards corruption informed by religious teachings? Do public servants in particular see religious teachings concerned with ethics as applying to their work, or do they see them as either irrelevant or difficult to implement in practice? Does the specific religion make a difference to attitudes towards corrupt behaviour? Do the actions of religious leaders themselves, either in terms of condemning corruption publicly or engaging in corrupt activities, make a difference to followers' attitudes towards corrupt behaviour? Has the incorporation of religious leaders into the public sector had an impact on either corrupt behaviour or perceptions of corruption?

This research seeks to provide a better understanding of the relationships between religions, ethics and corruption that may be useful to anti-corruption actors and their partners, as well as make a significant contribution to our understanding of how attitudes towards corruption are formed. The research was undertaken in India between May 2007 and May 2010.[2]

1.2 Methodology

The study[3] employs qualitative research as its principal methodology and adopts a social constructionist approach to develop an understanding of how religion may or may not influence attitudes towards corruption. Semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were used for data collection. An important function of the different methodological tools was to enable

engagement with a wide range of people, including leaders and ordinary members of selected religious organizations, policy makers and staff in selected public and corporate sectors, members of NGOs, youth, media persons, academics and those engaged in anti-corruption policy design and implementation. This methodological approach enabled us to gain access to people's views on religion and attitudes towards corruption through personal interaction and dialogue.

The methodology was designed collaboratively by all the senior researchers in the team. It suggested an interpretive, qualitative approach to research, one best suited to exploring the links between religion and corruption, drawing heavily on Pavarala (1996, p. 23), who argues that corruption is not "an inherent quality of behaviour" but a "negotiated classification of behaviour." If this is the case, traditional practices (and religious beliefs) in many developing countries do not themselves promote a 'culture of corruption.' That traditional practices and beliefs in many developing countries have been viewed for many years as inherently corrupting is, Pavarala argues, a function of the power of influence, where "people are socialised into perceiving subjective meaning as objective reality" (1996, p. 23). In his view, therefore, neither tradition nor modernity are, objectively, hindrances to the institutionalization of anti-corruption strategies. The social constructivist approach used in this study seeks to explore the claims made by people about their traditional practices and beliefs, as well as about modernity. It also assesses how these claims might be used to inform practical and achievable anti-corruption policies.

Pavarala's methodological approach is useful for the present study given its sensitivity, not only in dealing with the phenomenon of corruption, but also towards the investigation of people's cultural practices and religious beliefs. Due to believers' claim that traditions and religious beliefs have objective utility (and subjective reality) and can therefore be of value in designing anti-corruption initiatives, an interpretivist (social constructivist) approach is adopted in preference to a positivist one. Interpretivism strives to describe and analyse the beliefs, practices and behavioural patterns of (a) relevant social group(s). In terms of methodology, social constructivism (interpretivism) employs largely qualitative methods to investigate social phenomena. In addition, an interpretive approach has two crucial methodological implications for this project:

- A semi-structured approach that does not rely on the use of selected theory as a precursor to investigation.

- Selection of subjects is purposive, but their representativeness is unknown, which affects the extent to which generalizations can be made from the findings.

Due to the limited range of secondary literature available concerning the relationships between religion, ethics and attitudes towards corruption, either in India or elsewhere, this study is, fundamentally, an exploratory one. After extensive discussions, the India team decided that two religions – Sikhism and Hinduism – would be the focus of the study. The choice of these religions was partly based on the team's cultural and linguistic familiarity with possible research sites and partly on the nature of the religious practices and scale of operations of the religions concerned. Both Sikhism and Hinduism have places of worship all over the country and their religious scriptures offer rich insights into issues related to morality and ethical conduct. Whereas Hinduism is the dominant religion in India, with several sects and communities, Sikhism is a minority religion that is nevertheless engaged widely in religious affairs.

The team was also interested in the charity and donor activity of these religions, which, it was hoped, would provide further perspectives on the relationships between religions and corruption. The donation of money as a religious practice involves very large sums of money that circulate between places of worship and the general public. For instance, the Golden Temple at Amritsar, which is the highest seat of the Sikh Gurus, and a temple enshrining Lord Balaji at Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh, are places where significant sums of money[4], including several hundred kilogrammes of gold, are received as donations from devotees on a daily basis.

In addition to identifying how religion plays a role in shaping public morality in general and attitudes towards corruption in particular, it was also considered to be important to explore whether the practice of religion itself entails acts that may be understood as corruption, so as to subject religion itself to scrutiny before assessing its potential role in changing public mindsets.

1.2.1 Research sites

Data was collected in several research sites, selected because of their importance to the religious traditions under study or their representativeness.

- **An important *gurdwara* in the capital city of Delhi and the Golden Temple, Amritsar**: The Golden Temple is the highest seat of the Sikh Gurus and is among the largest *gurdwaras* (Sikh places of worship) in the world. The Gurdwara is managed by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee (SGPC), which is a statutory body comprised of elected representatives. It is concerned primarily with the management of the sacred Sikh shrines under its control within the territorial limits of the Indian states of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, and the union territory of Chandigarh. Members of SGPC are directly elected by an electorate comprised of the Sikh Nation: men and women above 18 years of age who are registered as voters under the provisions of the Sikh Gurdwara Act, 1925. This act enables SGPC to control all the historical *gurdwaras* as well as *gurdwaras* under Section 87 of the Act. The elections to SGPC are held every five years. The body is also known as the Parliament of the Sikh Nations. Apart from the management of *gurdwaras*, it runs many prestigious educational institutions, including medical colleges, hospitals and several charitable trusts. The Golden Temple, which is managed by the SGPC, receives huge amounts of money in donations from the public. These funds are intended for public welfare and the running of the *gurdwara,* including activities like the community kitchen (the *langar)* where anyone can eat free of charge.

- **Amritsar**: One of the major cities of the northern state of Punjab, Amritsar is home to the holiest shrine of the Sikhs – the Golden Temple, also known as Harimandir Sahib. The city is the spiritual and cultural centre of the Sikh religion. In addition to interviews with representatives of religious organizations, we also interacted with members of the secular sector in the city.

- **Chandigarh**: a union territory and the capital city of Punjab (for interviews with people from the secular sector).

- **Hyderabad**: the capital city of the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh (AP) (for interviews within the secular sector).

- **Brahma Kumaris at Hyderabad:** a new religious movement (NRM) of Indian origin, with a significant international presence in the area of spiritual education.

- **Lord Venkateswara Temple, Tirupati**: Tirupati is a temple town located in Andhra Pradesh (AP). It is located in the foothills of Tirumala, the location of the richest and most visited temple (of any faith) in the world. The Tirupati Temple at Tirumala is an ancient pilgrimage centre and enshrines the Hindu god, Lord

Venkateswara. The temple is managed by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) which, apart from overseeing the temple's operations and finances, is also involved in a variety of socio-religious and literary/educational activities within AP and India. TTD employs about 14,000 people, who maintain the twelve temples and sub-shrines under its control and execute its social activities. In the end, this part of the study could not be carried out in Tirupati, as the fieldwork period coincided with the reporting of several scams about TTD and an incident in which it was alleged that temple priests had been involved in corrupt acts.

1.2.2 Selection of respondents

The lack of academic literature exploring the relationships between religions and attitudes towards corruption meant that it was imperative to talk with people who had a knowledge of religious scriptures, the management of religious centres, and the philosophy and practice of religion, in order to gain insights into the specific positions adopted by the religions under study on corruption, morality and ethical codes of conduct. The experts met and interviewed during the first phase of the field work included heads of religious organizations, members of statutory bodies that run religious centres, members of the priestly class and academics specializing in religion studies. The opinions of these specialists determined the subsequent direction of the research inquiry.

After obtaining and analysing the responses of leaders and members of religious organizations and experts on religious studies, the team decided to focus on the perspectives of public servants and members of various other groups in society, including corporate executives, NGO representatives, and youth. It was decided that, while the focus on institutional settings, like the Sikh *gurdwaras*, had been useful, the research would gain more by seeking to understand secular perspectives on religion and attitudes towards corruption. The study therefore concentrated on this aspect.

Informants in the 'secular' category were selected using non-probability sampling. There are two types of non-probability sampling: theoretical and purposive. Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.45) define theoretical sampling as "the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his [sic] data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges." In purposive sampling, "the sample units are chosen because they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration

and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study" (Ritchie et al, 2003, p. 78). The structural characteristics of the sample population are predetermined because research based on non-grounded theory seeks to verify (or falsify) an already established theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 48).

Respondents were identified through both theoretical and purposive sampling procedures. Through a process of snowballing, the researchers asked their contacts or the interviewees themselves to identify other possible respondents who could address theoretical issues, had specific characteristics or could address certain thematic issues. The social groups identified for conducting personal in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) included:

- Bureaucrats/public servants
- Corporate executives/business persons
- Media persons
- NGOs/development workers/ civil society groups
- Academics
- Youth
- Representatives from religious organizations

An effort was made to include roughly the same number of people from each religious group, and to ensure a gender balance among the respondents. Focus groups were conducted predominantly with youth, and students in particular, enabling us to obtain 'thick' data to enrich the finer points of the research findings. A list of the interviewees in Punjab and Andhra Pradesh is included as Appendix 1.

1.2.3 Research instruments

Given that the nature of our research entailed obtaining qualitative data through personal interaction, semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus group discussions seemed to be the most logical choice. Semi-structured interviews are particularly useful in gaining specific information and also allow better control over the flow of information resulting from an exchange. Unlike questionnaires, the exchange in a semi-structured qualitative interview offers scope to broach issues at length and go into details that are missed by other methods.

Interview and FGD guides for interviews with informants from both the religious and the secular sectors were prepared, with a list of topics/issues covering themes relevant to examining the role of religion in shaping individual attitudes and public morality. The interview guide for informants at religious sites and the interview/ FGD guide for the secular sector were revisited and finalized (Appendices 2 and 3 respectively), based on experiences during a pilot and discussions with advisers in Hyderabad and during a meeting of the whole research team in Birmingham.

1.2.4 Data analysis and coding

Data was analysed through a system of coding, one that allowed it to be 'broken apart' in analytically relevant ways, and permitted the researchers to establish links to help in thinking creatively with the coded data, as well as potentially providing a new conceptual framework and theoretical insights. The three steps of coding, as explained in Strauss (1987), were used to analyse the transcripts of the interviews and focus group discussions: open, axial and selective.

In open coding, the text is reviewed word-by-word and line-by-line for 'fracturing' i.e. breaking down the data analytically to identify first-level themes and concepts. The first provisional concepts that emerge are sorted into groups of related phenomena, which are in turn labelled as categories and sub-categories. These have the potential to be developed into analytical abstractions for generating internal and external comparisons and explaining the data.

In the next phase of axial coding, connections are made in new ways between categories and sub-categories. The texture of the relationships between categories and sub-categories is built by coding more concertedly around the 'axis' of a single category, even to the extent of dimensionalizing it. A phenomenon is analysed in terms of its context, conditions and consequences. As axial coding proceeds, patterns in the data become apparent that may not necessarily confirm relationships, but may point towards variations and contradictions in the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

In selective coding, the researcher identifies one or two core categories that are central to the research project and all other subordinate categories and sub-categories are cumulatively integrated around the 'core-codes', as reflected in the analytical sections 3 and 4. The 'core-codes' provide a basis for developing a coherent theory. Many analysts, including the present researchers, choose to

present their findings thematically, based around the categories that have been developed following these (grounded theory) coding techniques, without developing a true 'grounded theory'.

It is important to reiterate here that data analysis was not treated as a distinct end process; instead, a substantial amount of analysis was carried out as data collection progressed. We moved from data collection to data analysis and back, and this reflexivity helped in looking out for more meaningful and in-depth information during the interviews, which led to a deeper understanding of the existing circumstances.

Twelve analytical categories or sub-categories emerged during the open coding, which in effect incorporated responses to the themes/questions addressed during the interviews and focus group discussions (See Table 1). The sub-categories that emerged through open coding were collapsed to create eight broad analytical categories, and the data were also segregated on the basis of region and social group within these eight analytical categories, which were:

i. On being 'religious'
ii. Religions and value system – secular/professional vs. personal codes
iii. Definitions and perceptions of corruption
iv. Discourses on corruption in religious texts
v. Religions and people's attitudes towards corruption
vi. Tradition, modernity and corruption
vii. Role of religious organizations in promoting ethical conduct
viii. Accountability of religious organizations

Table 1: Analytical categories

On being 'religious' 1. Do you consider yourself religious? If so, in what way? (Visits to places of worship, participation in rites and rituals, observances, abstract belief in God, etc.) 2. In what ways does your 'being religious' affect your personal behaviour, in both your private and your public roles?
Religion and value system – personal code of conduct 1. What have been the important influences in the shaping of your own value system? 2. Do you have a personal code of conduct that you try to observe in your dealings with others? Where does such a code come from? For heads of religious organizations: 1. What are the links, if any, between 'being religious' and 'being moral and ethical'? 2. How does participation in religious rituals influence one's morality? 3. What role do you think religion plays in an individual's life?
Secular/professional vs. personal codes: do people separate public and private morality? 1. Are you governed by a professional code of ethics? What do you think are the sources of such a code? 2. How do you think personal and professional codes of conduct or morality coincide? Please give us some example when you/other people you know faced a conflict between the two at any time? 3. Do public servants in particular see religious teachings concerned with ethics as applying to their work, or do they see them as either irrelevant or difficult to implement in practice? 4. Is religiosity, according to the various groups in the study, more to do with personal morality than public morality?
Definition of corruption 1. How do you define corruption? What kinds of acts would you categorize as corruption?
Corruption in India 1. What is your understanding of corruption in India? 2. What do you think are the causes of corruption in India? 3. What do you consider are the various consequences of corruption? 4. Do you think there is anything in the cultures or religions of the people in India that makes us less or more tolerant of corruption?

Religions and corruption (R & C) – a) Teachings that discourage individuals from engaging in corruption

1. Does your own religion have any explicit teachings that discourage individuals from engaging in corruption? [e.g. anything in the text that ordains moral conduct over the profit motive in the case of businessmen]
2. Is there a religious way of understanding something like corruption? {text} (What are the reasons that people indulge in corruption?)
3. What actions are deemed immoral/unethical according to Sikhism/Hinduism?

R & C – b) The role religion plays in shaping people's attitudes towards corruption

1. According to you, what role does religion play in shaping people's attitudes towards corruption?
2. To what degree have your own attitudes towards corruption been influenced by your religious beliefs?

An assessment of the impact of the formal teachings of various religions on local attitudes to the identified issues.

3. Are attitudes towards corruption informed by religious teachings?
4. Why do you think people who call themselves 'religious' may still be corrupt?

R & C – b) The role religion plays in shaping people's attitudes towards corruption

1. According to you, what role does religion play in shaping people's attitudes towards corruption?
2. To what degree have your own attitudes towards corruption been influenced by your religious beliefs?
3. An assessment of the impact of the formal teachings of various religions on local attitudes to the identified issues.
4. Are attitudes towards corruption informed by religious teachings?

R & C – c) Can 'religious' people /religious organizations be corrupt?

1. Why do you think people who call themselves 'religious' may be corrupt?
2. Do the actions of religious leaders themselves, either in terms of condemning corruption publicly or engaging in corrupt activities, make a difference to followers' attitudes towards corrupt behaviour?

Tradition and modernity

1. What do these terms, 'traditional' and 'modern', mean to you?
2. Would you consider yourself more traditional or more modern?
3. Is there anything specific about traditional values that fosters or encourages corrupt behaviour?

Commercialization and consumerism

1. Is modernity compatible with religious ideas and values, or does the influence of religion decline with the modernization of society: Has the transition towards consumerism had an effect on cultural values or morality in any way?
2. In what ways have modernity and consumerism affected people's values, morality and traditions?
3. Are we witnessing a progressive decline of moral, ethical and religious values?

Accountability of religious organizations

1. How does a large organization like SGPC, which is in charge of the administration and maintenance of one of the most sacred sites for Sikhs, manage to run its affairs in an ethical manner?
2. Does the responsibility of working for a religious organization and doing 'God's work' necessarily ensure that SGPC becomes immune to the kind of unethical and corrupt practices one sees in non-religious organizations?
3. How are SGPC and those holding key positions in the organization accountable to people?
4. How does SGPC deal with the possibility that a considerable portion of its donations/contributions are from devotees who could have earned their money unethically or through corrupt practices?

Role of religious organization/faith-based organization/spiritual training in promoting ethical conduct

1. What role can a religious institution like the SGPC play in promoting more ethical conduct in our public life? {What do you think are the causes of corruption? What role can SGPC play in the formulation of anti-corruption strategies?
2. In your own training to be a civil servant/business manager/etc., were there any inputs of a spiritual/religious kind that emphasized moral and ethical conduct?
3. If not, do you think such inputs could be useful?
4. Is there a distinction between the attitudes of the 'servants of god' and those of the 'servants of the public'? Do 'public servants' consider themselves to be 'servants of the public'?

2 Attitudes towards corruption – religious, ethics and cultural perspectives: a review of the literature

A review of Indian scholarship on the connections between religions, values, morality, ethics and the phenomenon of corruption touches upon the following issues relevant to an exploration of how religiosity affects perceptions of corruption:

i. An overview of the 'levels' of corruption in India
ii. Definitions/rhetoric of corruption drawn from literature in the Indian context that adopts a broad, moralistic position on corruption.
iii. References to and the role of Indian epics and ancient texts in the academic literature on interpreting corruption in India – the concept of *dharma*.
iv. The modern situation in India as a society that aspires to be westernized and the question of whether a transition towards consumerism ushered in an erosion of cultural values, morality and traditions.
v. Empirical studies that explore the links between religion and morality.
vi. The debate over whether a system of universal ethics guides people's ideas and attitudes or ethical orientations are embodied in specific cultures.

2.1 Corruption in India: an overview

The problem of corruption has been an integral part of India's economic, political and social life since achieving independence from Britain in 1947, and probably even before. Political and bureaucratic corruption at different levels of government has been seen as impeding the implementation of development programmes and policies (Kohli, 1975). It has been the subject of several committees and commissions of inquiry. Various state governments have, from time to time, declared their intentions to control the phenomenon (defined legally and administratively) and have created special agencies, such as the Anti-Corruption Bureau, seemingly to little avail, as an obsession with corruption and measures to counter it continues (Jain, 1993; Padhy, 1986).

The India Corruption Study conducted by the Centre for Media Studies, New Delhi, and issued by Transparency International India, is a comprehensive survey of eleven public services in twenty major states, and focuses on the corruption experienced by the common person in attempting to access these services. The study revealed that:

> Common citizens of the country pay a bribe of Rs. 21,068 crores (about £2,600 million) while availing [themselves of] one or more of the eleven public services [investigated] in a year. As high as 62 percent of citizens think that the corruption is not a hearsay, but they in fact had the firsthand experience of paying bribe or 'using a contact' to get a job done in [a] public office (Centre for Media Studies, 2005, p. 1).

While petty corruption has perhaps always existed as the unspoken price of routine transactions involving interactions between public officials and the public they are meant to serve, more recent anxieties about corruption concern political scandals and financial scams within a globalized and liberalized economy, and reveal a more complex dimension of the phenomenon. Politicians have become so closely identified with corruption in the public eye that a *Times of India* poll of 1,554 adults in six metropolitan cities found that 98 per cent of the public are convinced that politicians and ministers are corrupt, and 85 per cent believe that corruption is on the increase.[5]

Electoral practices that involve heavy fundraising by political parties, resulting in ties being forged with private business interests, have also been widely recognized as a potential source of political corruption. While a certain consensus seems to exist concerning the immoral, pervasive and apparently irresolvable nature of corruption, another view sees corruption as necessary to facilitate business given the centralized, rigid and dishonest nature of the bureaucracy. India is included in Transparency International's Bribe Payers Index (2006), which ranks the world's thirty leading export companies according to their propensity to offer bribes abroad.

Ritu Sarin, who compiled the India Global Integrity 2006 Report, points to two important pieces of legislation that have deliberately not been enforced by the government. A Lok Pal Bill aimed at preventing corruption in high political office has been under discussion for more than three decades. The other initiative is intended to root out corruption from the judiciary via a proposed National Judicial Council, but this has also been under examination by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court for a long time.[6]

Venkataraman (2002) comments on the religious nature of Indian society and wonders about the role of the religious ethos in shaping public morality: "Is not [a] religious ethos contrary to corruption and dishonest practices? The unfortunate situation in India is that those who call themselves most religious are often found to have indulged themselves in dishonest practices on many occasions."

This comment alludes to the complexity of Indian attitudes towards corruption. How individuals perceive corruption is obviously at variance with whether they engage in it themselves, if at all. If corruption is an undeniable aspect of life in India, then it may be inferred that everyone participates in it, or contributes to it to some extent, directly or indirectly. This renders slightly redundant a 'black and white' approach to understanding corruption that involves recognizing it as inherently bad/immoral, leading to the necessity (and feasibility) of corrective measures to reduce or eliminate it. As Pavarala (1996) suggests, the existing questions and anxieties surrounding corruption might be better understood in terms of our attitudes, belief systems, and cultural and religious affiliations, rather than mere actions.

2.2 Defining and interpreting corruption in the Indian context

There has been a reasonable amount of research and theorizing on corruption in India. This has produced several definitions, explanations, taxonomies and typologies for public discourse on the problem. Given the nature of corruption, the available sources rare agree concerning the concept – except, perhaps, with regard to bribery - and interpretations of corruption tend to vary with specific social contexts and archetypical assumptions. While scholars seek to provide a working, 'universal' definition of corruption, the literature reviewed here suggests that we are unlikely to find a definition that is universally comprehensible across and between cultures.

In his study of definitions given by members of the elite in the state of Andhra Pradesh, Pavarala (1996) demonstrates that corruption is "indeed a site for contested meaning." He groups his respondents' understanding of corruption into two main definitional tendencies: those tending to prefer narrow or more 'legalistic' definitions, and those preferring broader, more moralistic ones. He seeks to explore the politics of definition that are inherent in the way particular elite groups align themselves with either of these definitional tendencies. The narrow/legalistic definition lists a limited number of acts under the category of corruption and approximates the definition of corruption as established by the law. Whilst such definitions are usually a simplistic reflection of existing legal provisions, they nevertheless are an expression of the spirit of the law, and therefore are fundamentally legalistic. Although legal codes are usually products of complex negotiations among dominant elites over issues of morality and moral boundaries, narrow/legalistic definitions are expressed in language that is typically instrumental, rational and even amoral. Broad/moralistic definitions, on the other hand, include

aspects identified by the law as corruption, but often go beyond a legalistic view, articulating an abstract, amorphous morality. Broad/ moralistic definitions of corruption list a large number of acts under the category, including gift-giving, nepotism, cheating, fraud, lying, lobbying and adulteration of food. Some definitions even include 'intellectual corruption', 'corruption of the soul' and 'moral corruption'.

In defining corruption, some Indian scholars characterize it as a modern day ailment afflicting social and cultural values. Muthukumaran (2000, p. 47), drawing on definitions from the Oxford and Webster's dictionaries, understands corruption as a form of "moral deterioration", synonymous with "especially widespread use of corrupt practices, especially bribery or fraud" (Concise Oxford Dictionary). The label of 'corruption' thus applies to those "guilty of dishonest practices such as bribery; [or those being] without integrity; crooked; debased in character, depraved, perverted, wicked, evil (Webster's)." Guhan (1997, p. 9) also uses *The Oxford English Dictionary* to describe corruption:

> Corruption may apply to an object (physical decomposition, putrefaction, spoiling of quality, adulteration); to the perversion of language or taste, to morals (to destroy moral purity, to debase, to defile); or to public office (to destroy or prevent the integrity or fidelity of a person in his discharge of duty, to induce to act dishonestly or unfaithfully, to make venal; to bribe). The last two aspects are captured in the etymology of the word, based on the Latin verb to break, *rumpere*, which implies that something is broken, such as a moral or social code of conduct or, more narrowly, a law or an administrative rule.

Vasudevaraju (2000) similarly draws on dictionary definitions to expand conceptualizations of corruption to include its popular connotations of rottenness, putrid matter, impurity, bribery, widespread moral deterioration, fraud and so on, whilst others, like Narayanasamy et al (2000), regard corruption as a social cancer. John (2000, p. 61) builds further on the epidemiological metaphor in characterizing corruption when he states that "though corruption is not an exclusive phenomenon found only in India, this hydra-headed monstrosity of corruption is a devious blight on the socio-political life of India." In a similar vein, Padhy (1986, p. 1) describes corruption as "a deep-rooted evil and a universal malady afflicting each and every society in one form or another at one time or other." A particularly interesting analogy is offered by Balagangadhara et al (2008), who describe corruption as a cancer, contending that "if the people of India constitute the cells of the country and if 'corruption' is the disease, the only possible immunological mechanisms are the social and the moral principles, of course." Varadarajulu (2000, p. 83) imagines corruption as a menace that has "spread its tentacles to legislatures, the

judiciary, the trade unions, the media and the independent professions like doctors, lawyers, contractors, chartered accountants and teachers."

While these broad interpretations take a view of corruption as having grim moral and ethical implications for society as a whole, other definitions provide a more specific conceptual understanding of corruption as it exists in various political and economic spheres. These definitions record the occurrence of corruption in various instances, from bureaucratic (dys)functionality to economic rent-seeking. They thus capture an economy of corruption that has become fundamental to the everyday business of state-citizen relations. Visvanathan (1998), in recording the "early years" of corruption in India, discusses the Kriplani Commission report that commented on ticketless train travel on Indian railways by politicians. He says:

> For the Commission, corruption is a failure of citizenship. Whether it is the bribe, ticketless travel or theft, all these are exemplary acts which undermine the state. Corruption in India is not the tragedy of the commons but the farce of the free lunch, illustrated best in the idea of ticketless travel. The Kriplani Commission ruthlessly lists the categories of people who refuse to pay and their attitudes to it (Visvanathan, 1998, pp. 16-17).

Heidenheimer et al (1989) have organized definitions of corruption available in the social science literature around three basic models: "public-interest-centred", "public-office-centred" and "market-centred" (see also Amundsen, 2000; Pavarala, 1996; Sandholtz and Koetzle, 1998). Sangita (2000, p. 91), for example, provides an example of a definition of corruption that is concerned with the public interest: "public-interest centred definition stresses the violation of common interest that provides direct or indirect benefits to the public officials."

The decisive role of the state is reflected in 'public-office-centred' definitions of corruption. Jain (2001, p. 73) says that, despite a lack of precise definition, there is a general consensus that "corruption refers to acts in which the power of public office is used for personal gain in a manner that contravenes the rules of the game." For Iyer (1997, p. 88), a common meaning of corruption is bribery, defined as the "payment of a sum of money to a government official, public sector official or politician for something which is in his or her power to do or refrain from doing, or for indirectly bringing about a desired result."

Sangita (2000, p. 90) states that "public office centred definitions revolve around the violation of public trust placed in the office. In other words, deviation from bureaucratic norms like rationality, universalism, and achievement orientation in meeting responsibilities generates corruption." Guhan (1997), summing up a critique of definitions that tend to be either too broad or indeterminate (misuse, violation), or too narrow (bribery), stresses the need for an operational rather than an abstract definition. He cites the definition applicable to public servants in India offered by the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, in which corruption entails:

> … taking gratification other than legal remuneration in respect of an official act. The word 'gratification' is not restricted to pecuniary gratifications or to gratifications estimable in money. The offence consists of accepting, or agreeing to accept, or obtaining, or attempting to obtain, any such illegal gratification as a motive or reward for doing or forbearing to do any official act or showing or forbearing to show, in the exercise of his official functions, favour or disfavour to any person or for rendering or attempting to render any service or disservice to any person (Guhan, 1997, p. 10).

The practice of the misuse of public office has more recently been termed political corruption. Padhy (1986, p. 3) defines three varieties of political corruption: "(i) Nonfeasance (failing to perform a required duty at all), (ii) malfeasance (the commission of some act which is positively unlawful) and (iii) misfeasance (the improper performance of some act which a man can properly do)." Ganesan (1997, p. 29), writing about the need for electoral reform in India, says that "it can be safely assumed that the springboard or source of all governmental corruption is present-day politics."

Another kind of corruption discussed in the literature is market-centred corruption. Sangita's (2000, p. 90-91) definition of market-centred corruption refers to a situation in which officials look upon their position to maximize personal gains by dispensing public benefits. Van Klaveren's definition represents, primarily, a market-centred view that is concerned with concepts of demand, supply and exchange drawn from economic theory. He conceives corruption in terms of:

> [A] civil servant who regards his public office as a business, the income of which he will, in the extreme case, seek to maximize. The office then becomes a 'maximizing unit'. The size of his income then [depends] upon the market situation and his talents for finding the point of maximal gain on the public's demand curve (Cited in Heidenheimer et al, 1989, p. 9).

Those who have theorized the causes of corruption have looked at a variety of factors, like the modernization paradigm and problems of underdevelopment (Huntington, 1968; Myrdal, 1968; Scott,

1969; Theobald, 1999), the ties between politicians and the bureaucracy in the Indian context (Encarnation, 1979; Root, 1998; Wade, 1982), the nature and the functioning of Indian bureaucracy from colonial times onwards (Dwivedi, 1967; Dwivedi and Jain, 1988), corruption as a result of a crisis in politics (Heywood, 1997; Ray and Ghosh, 1996; Root, 1998; Seshia, 1998; Singh, 1997), and existing electoral practices including the patronage system (Dwivedi and Jain, 1988; Heywood, 1997; Narayanasamy et al, 2000; Root, 1998). Among economic causes are poor governance (Morris and Shekhar, 2002; Ray and Ghosh, 1996); liberalization and the deregulation of the economy (Jenkins, 2006; Root, 1998; Rudra, 1991); low income levels of government employees (Abueva, 1970; Alam, 1989; Jain, 2001; Ray and Ghosh, 1996); rent-seeking behaviour (Bardhan, 1997; Hutchcroft, 1997; Khan, 1996); and social structures within which individuals interact (Kingston, 2003, 2004 and 2005).

Yet others have described the consequences of corruption, including a belief that the inherent 'evilness' of corruption is harmful to societies and governments (Caiden, 1988; Muthukumaran, 2000; Sangita, 2000), political consequences that undermine democracy and lead to political instability (Bayley, 1966; Guhan, 1997; Narayanasamy et al, 2000; Sangita; 2000; Vasudevaraju, 2000); undermining of development goals like economic growth (Azfar et al, 2001; Hutchcroft, 1997; Jenkins, 2006; Khan, 1998; Root, 1998); and the economic consequences produced by the efficiency implications of corruption (Azfar et al., 2001; Aidt, 2003; Bardhan, 1997; Heywood, 1997).

These classification schemes may be helpful in sorting out an often confusing variety of activities that are considered by many to be corrupt, but they tend to impose an order on things that may be inherently less orderly in real life. As a consequence, classification schemes are likely to have limited value in comparative and cross-cultural comparisons (Pavarala, 1996). Understanding of corrupt behaviour needs to be culture-specific, as practices that one society may disapprove of and label as corruption may be considered acceptable in a different socio-cultural context (Sandholtz and Koetzle, 1998).

Azfar et al (2001) also raise the issue of culture-specific definitions of corruption, but fear that they may undermine the validity of international comparisons. They ask:

> Can we always unambiguously identify corruption? In some countries and cultures, when a public official provides a service, it is common to respond with a gift or tip. At what point does a gift or a tip become a bribe? (p. 44).

Dwivedi (1967, p. 245) is also of the view that "an unethical act in one culture may be socially acceptable in another." Ruud (2000, p. 273) notes that common definitions of corruption "can easily be repudiated from a culturally sensitive reading of say African or Indian material." Citing an ethnographic study of the Indian state by Gupta (1995), he says that state-centric definitions have a cultural bias that ignores the 'cultural embeddedness' of practices categorized as corruption. Commenting further on the ethnocentrism in definitions of corruption, he observes that practices like bribery, graft, embezzlement, kickbacks, nepotism, favouritism, extortion, fraud, bending of rules, gifts and 'considerations and commissions' are dissimilar phenomena, with different moral bases.

2.3 References to religious values and beliefs in the academic literature on corruption

A recurrent theme in the literature on religion and morality, specifically Hindu thought, is the concept of *dharma,* commonly translated as 'duty' or 'righteousness'. This significant theme resides in texts that prescribe a moral course of action and a code of conduct, advancing an idealistic prescription for how one should lead one's life. The most widely cited text that offers Hindu perspectives on *dharma* is the *Bhagvad Gita*, a dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna in the *Mahabharata*, the great Indian epic. *Manusmrithi*, *Arthasastra*, *Rajatarangini*, and *Harshacharitra* are some other examples of ancient Indian works which reveal the history of corruption (John, 2000, p. 61).

Bhatia (2000), in examining duty- and rights-based discourses in India, explains *dharma*:

> Krishna tells Arjuna to fight the war to fulfill his *dharma*, that is, his moral duty as a warrior. Krishna's discourse on how Arjuna can seek a compromise between the moral ideals of *dharma* (fulfilling his duty as a warrior) and *moksha* (releasing himself from the world of *karma* [rebirth]) constitutes the central theme of Hinduism's theory of morality. The story of the epic *Mahabharata* essentially attempts to provide a solution reconciling the two conflicting worldviews: the 'world-supporting' principles of morality (*dharma*) and 'world-denying' realms of morality (*moksha*)…For our purposes, the ultimate message from the story of *Bhagavadgita* is that the concept of *dharma* as duty is a part of a larger religious and philosophical system that governs both the moral and the social order of the society" (Bhatia, 2000, p 306).

Chandra (2002) draws upon *Arthshastra*, Kautilya's celebrated work on the state, which describes *dharma* as one among many of its objectives. He also discusses the Buddhist philosophy that

considers *dharma* the central objective of the state and the Brahmanical thinking that advises the ruler to combine kingly duties (*niti*) with morality (*dharma*). Basu (2001) also offers a definition of *dharma* based on Robert Lingat's seminal text, *The Classical Law of India:*

> First, as applied to the universe, *dharma* signifies the eternal laws that maintain the world…the next sense of *dharma* Lingat identifies is actions in conformity with the moral order that help humans realize their destiny in this life and benefits in the next. However the most common sense of *dharma*, as he points out, is the sum of duties incumbent on a person based on his or her status or *varna* (caste and gender most crucially) and *ashram* (stage of life) (Basu, 2001, p. 1060).

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According to McGregor (1973, p. 70), "*dharma* tells us what our duties are, both social and religious. It tells us what vices to avoid, mainly those flowing from *Kama* (lust), *Lobha* (covetousness) and *Krodha* (anger)." Thus *dharma* as conceived of by religion and religious texts becomes a code of conduct to be followed by human beings in routine actions. Sheth (1995) draws upon the *Bhagwad Gita* to offer a similar definition according to which, whenever *dharma* (collective behaviour guided by values) is in jeopardy and society is dominated by *adharma* (violation of values), a God reincarnated as human comes to the rescue. Sapre and Ranade (2001, p. 372) have also written about the significance of moral and ethical values that are mentioned in ancient Indian scriptures in relation to the quality of leadership. Thus, ancient scriptures, such as the *Bhagvad Gita*, provide elaborate guidelines for human conduct, based on *dharma* and eternal universal values.

Mohapatra (1998, p. 320) discusses the popular notions of corruption and *dharma* (duty). Drawing from the "rich tradition of *Malika Kaliyug* literature in Oriya language," he characterizes the breakdown of social order:

> Every *yug* [era] has certain distinguishing characteristics and as time passes its end is played out as a battle between evil and good. In all these eras, there were instances of violations of norms and principles, but it is only in *Kaliyug* [the end times] that the violation is seen to be all pervasive. This is the era in which institutions of society tend to crumble. The social dislocation, the perversion of social roles and the decay of personal morality (most importantly the sexual mores) constitute both the symbol and the substance of corruption.

There are further references to Indian epics and ancient texts in the academic literature on corruption. Ray and Ghosh (1995, p. 7), for example, draw attention to the conceptual challenge of exploring the

impact of religion on behaviour, observing that "in many ways India represents a great contradiction, in that a country where millions revere the great epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* which unequivocally glorify the virtues of justice, honesty and triumph of 'good' over 'evil', is still identified as one of the most corrupt countries in the world." Others, such as Bardhan (1997, p. 1320), describe corruption as "an ancient problem"; drawing attention to Kautiliya's *Arthsastra*, a fourth century B.C. treatise on public administration, which identifies "forty ways of embezzlement." Padhy (1986, p. 25) goes on to describe these forty examples and refers also to prescriptions within the *Vishnu Smriti* that order the "[...] banishment and forfeiture of all property of a judge found guilty of corruption and injustice." Chakravarti (1998, p. 271) also mentions the treatise in his discussion of punishment for corrupt officers, arguing that "Kautiliya has prepared a long list of offences that the officers ranging from ministers and judges to petty officials and clerks might have felt tempted to commit due to financial motives."

Braibanti (1969, pp. 358-359) offers twelve partial explanations of corruption, including "personal virtue" and "religious teaching." Exploring various strands of ancient social thought (such as Chinese, Japanese, Islamic and Hindu), he notes that the importance of personal virtue "is found in some aspects of Hinduism especially the injunctions of kingly morality of the *Manusamhita.*" He further observes that men continue to steal despite their respective religions advising them to behave otherwise. He notes an absence of evidence to "show that any one religion is more effective than another in eliminating corruption from government."

The relation of religion to corruption is viewed as ideological by Caiden (1988, p. 23), who says that "there are religious doctrines that preach all is divinely determined, including corruption, and that nothing is to be questioned or challenged lest divine retribution occur." Dwaraki (2000, p. 182) regards materialistic desire as a source of corruption and opportunism. He conceives of religiosity and materialism as binary forces that influence conduct:

> Religiosity … had all through contributed to the maintenance of acceptable levels of morality both at the individual and at the social levels…a poor man, justice being on his side, may lose his piece of land and pacify himself with the conviction that, although the rich man could manage to win in the earthly courts of law, he will definitely have no chance in the court of the Almighty on the 'Day of Reckoning' because one has to speak oneself there as one cannot get a lawyer to speak at any price.

In another interesting study, Dehejia and Dehejia (1993, pp. 150-151) dwell upon the rise of the right-wing Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to posit a curious connection between religious activity and economic instability:

> On the one hand, the modern (urban) Indian absolves himself of moral and ethical responsibility towards his fellow citizens through the absolution and solace of religious ritual. On the other hand, in the economic sphere the modern Indian, free of religious constraint, pursues his own ends, and is oblivious of legal and ethical constraints…The corruption and bribery stemming from this religious and economic attitude have undermined the very legal structures that are a prerequisite for stability and growth.

While some of these views may appear to be somewhat general and empirically not very strong, they attempt to link religion to an understanding of corruption. The wisdom propounded in ancient scriptures is invoked within a broader realm of societal norms, to explain variables that produce patterns of corrupt behaviour in a given social structure. The existing literature analyses and explains corruption from a religious perspective, but provides little illumination of the link, if one should even exist, between religious values and their influence on the attitudes of people towards corruption.

2.4 Culture and corruption: the tradition and modernity debate

The literature on corruption is replete with cultural explanations of the phenomenon. Scholars who identify with this school of thought view traditional bonds of kinship and other parochial loyalties in developing countries as the primary factors responsible for corrupt behaviour (Levine, 1975; Neher, 1977; Smith, 1971). Tilman (1968) attributes the “tolerance” of corruption in developing countries, in part, to a cultural “environment where there is little or no social stigma attached to bribery [and] nepotism.”

This line of thinking seems to search for the cultural essence of developing societies to explain the existence of corruption. However, others contest this perspective, even accusing its proponents of “cultural arrogance” and of dabbling in various essentialisms in the construction of the cultural ‘other’ (Pavarala, 1993). Some turn the argument around and instead blame Western cultural influences, such as consumer culture, for creating the conditions for corruption. For them, culture as a source of corruption broadly refers to immoral attitudes, a crisis in leadership, the decline of honest practices, consumerism and modernizing forces that give rise to a general, progressive degeneration of the

social order. Sheth (1995), for example, probes into the contemporary modern predicament in his essay on values and identity by observing:

> We notice today a widespread and growing concern among people about what is commonly described as a decline or erosion of values in society. A citizen's unsavoury encounter with corruption or inefficiency in public institutions or with abusive or coercive behaviour of people in power quickly invites reference to degradation of values. Similarly, the mounting evidence of support for violence and sexual anarchy as well as the rising vulnerability of the younger generations to immediate pleasures of body and mind lead to reinforcement of the belief that the society is being bereaved of its basic values (Sheth, 1995, p. 75).

In a similar vein, Bhattacharya (1996, p. 98) laments the westwards gaze of Indians in search of role models. He questions this attitude by painting a rather grim picture of Western society, referring to specific instances of "exploitation of man and nature for personal appropriation"; "all pervasive rent-seeking behaviour"; and, "having more – the driving force, necessarily at the expense of others – guided only by a consciousness of personal rights, ignoring and even denying the existence of duties to others." Bhattacharya seems to suggest the prior existence of a set of values and beliefs that has undergone change for the worse over a period of time. These analysts' characterization of the present and the nature of man appear to be based on a linear notion of time, with progressive decline and a simplistic interpretation of the change that 'modernity' has ushered in. Braibanti (1969, p. 357), however, notes that governmental corruption has existed in all forms of bureaucracy at all times and emphasizes that "to imagine that in earlier periods of history all was pure and idyllic in this realm …is to make an incomplete and imperfect reading of history."

The dominant imagination and simplistic interpretation of 'modernity' has been interrogated and contested to reveal the contradictions inherent in the processes of culture, control and meaning-making. Van Biljert (2003, p. 54) reflects on the ethos of modernity by reiterating the tradition-modernity binary in simple terms:

> Modernity is often regarded as the opposite of tradition. Tradition means permanence, stability, venerable age, establishment, regularity, emotional appeal. Modernity signifies novelty, the reign of reason, rejection of tradition, rejection of magic and superstition, and quite importantly, rapid increase in technological innovation.

He then evokes Weber's thesis to posit that modernity resides neither in reason, novelty, and technology, nor in anti-magical and anti-traditional thinking, but rather in a deeply felt ethics. He explains that modernity is not a set of negatives and rejections of the past, but is about the why and how of our actions: "The ethics of modernity are aiming at the fullest possible self-realization. But this is not done for one's own sake, but for the sake of society as a whole. Great emphasis was laid on the privacy of conscience - the well-known tenet of the freedom of conscience - coupled with a strong sense of public responsibility" (ibid, p. 54).

Sheth (1995) analyses widely shared popular beliefs about the supposed erosion of values, examining a host of writings that document the social and moral decline that is said to coincide with the modern condition. He quotes, for instance, from an essay by M.N. Srinivas (1993), who discusses the negative effects of social change with respect to phenomena like

> …corruption and violence in socio-political relations, growing disaffection among ethnic groups, a constantly growing hold of greed and selfishness within the family, a slavish obedience to consumerism, an ever-expanding craze for upward mobility and political power, and self-centred exploitation of any resources such as education and wealth" (Sheth, 1995, p. 76).

Sheth (1995, p. 78) divides these values into three categories:

- Values guiding an individual's personal conduct in relation to others (moral)
- Values in relation to specific social roles (ethical), and
- Stability and well-being of a given group or community with reference to allocation of social assets and rewards (socio-political).

Moral and ethical values are, in his view, rooted in the religious and spiritual spheres of the social, as opposed to the socio-political spheres that are associated with the governance of social division and hierarchy. He further debunks the popular belief that our morality and ethical orientation were shaped in ancient times and that those periods represent the zenith of moral conduct and behaviour. He revisits several other models of values, such as Nietschze's materialism, Spinoza's spiritualism, Weisskoff's three approaches to the study of values (namely naturalist, humanist and ontological), and Niebuhr's ideas about internal and external morality, concluding by expressing the need for a global faith and the reinstitution of a moral superstructure to guide human actions:

> The emerging society, like any in the past, needs to be guided by a moral order, a moral superstructure, if you like. Can we contemplate or design a distinct moral superstructure to suit the new society? If greed, selfishness, and violence are likely to be dominant features of social behaviour, is there a way to modify the present values to reflect the new reality? ... A society with greed and lust as elements of its moral code cannot retain its basic health and integrity for long. We have, it seems, no choice, but to fall back on the old moral code and adopt it as the code for the coming civilization. The global village should be supported by a global faith (Sheth, 1995, p. 88).

In another exercise, Bhattacharya (1996) reviews a literary corpus to discuss themes of moral degeneration and social crises that in his view have particular relevance in the West. Looking at several issues, such as political corruption, consumerism, crime, drug addiction, and familial disintegration, he refers to the results of a survey, 'Important Values to Young People', published in *The Times of* India (1995), to highlight the attitudes of Indian young people in 31 cities:

- For 32 per cent money is valued most of all;
- For 31 per cent self-respect is most important;
- For 11 per cent social status is most important;
- For 9 per cent the sense of accomplishment is most valued;
- For only 3 per cent is honesty valued most;
- For only 2 per cent are hard work and courage most valued.

He also examines a survey conducted in 1994 by the Foundation for Organizational Research and Education (FORE) in six Indian capitals, which reveals that earning money has become more of an imperative since 1983, at the expense of other values such as creativity, security, integrity and being useful to society. The survey provides insights into so-called 'young over-achievers', who are perceived as high-handed and abrasive, ferociously demanding instant gratification and, if denied, changing jobs frequently (Bhattacharya, 1996, p. 103). Citing M.N. Srinivas' (1993) analysis of changing values in India and Rajni Kothari's study of the threat to the nation state posed by globalization, the author outlines various issues, such as corruption in the public and private sectors; juvenile crime; the criminalization of politics; the prevalence of dowry practices across caste, sect, religion and class; an apparently more pervasive climate of sexual permissiveness and consumerism encouraged through the mass media; and, finally, the spread of stress-related ailments and disorders. For the author these are deeply disturbing trends.

In developing and prescribing courses of action against corruption, it is suggested that intellectuals tend to overlook the sheer size and importance of the Indian bureaucracy. Srinivas (1993), for one, however, notes that "there is no escaping this indispensable instrument of the state." He recommends that the bureaucracy must become the focus of any attempt to influence public policy and suggests the conceptual application of a 'Chinese boxes' approach – a popular puzzle where multiple boxes fit within each other and, like matryoshka dolls, are often used to represent multiple layers of encapsulation - to study the mindset of a bureaucrat. The immediate box represents the bureaucratic ethos existing within the larger Chinese box of the governmental environment. This is placed within the larger box of the socio-economic-politico-cultural environment of India. The bureaucrat is also enclosed within another box representing the "socio-economic and cultural matrix of which he is a product and which exists at the core of his thinking and feeling" (Bhattacharya, 1996, p. 106). If effective interventions for change are to be successful, Srinivas suggests, building an understanding of these complex myriad layers of interaction is crucial. In a somewhat idealistic fashion, he develops and conceptualizes his argument along class-based lines: the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. The bureaucracy, he argues, consists mainly of the 'haves', who should, in turn, serve the interests of those who are less fortunate. The class-based nature of the administration, however, results in the sabotage of this principle through red tape and corruption, leading to a transfer of the benefits meant for the have-nots to the haves. For these reasons a system of values needs to be built up, one that will liberate the bureaucrat while simultaneously enabling him [sic] to facilitate freeing others from the impoverishing structures - what Paulo Freire terms as *praxis* (Bhattacharya, 1996, p. 107). Srinivas (1993) also evokes ideas that are in Bhattacharya's eyes platitudinous, by highlighting the "unique strengths of India" as described by Nani Palkhivala:

> All the 12 religions of the world flourish here; our people express themselves in 15 different languages and 250 dialects; a population larger than the combined number of Africa and South America live as one political entity as a democracy; ours is a 5,000 years old civilization, the oldest in the world, one that millennia ago had reached 'the summit of human thought', in the words of the American philosopher Emerson; there is an unusual attribute among the poor of India that sets them apart from other countries: '*there is richness in their poverty*' says Galbraith (Cited in Bhattacharya, 1996, p. 109).

As asserted by Partha Chatterjee, a degree of cultural superiority may be evident in these essentialist descriptions of India as being strong in the 'inner domain'. The nobility of poverty and the homogenized notion of the Indian population are particularly problematic, given the universalist appeal that the author tries to construct through them.

Another manifestation of modernity is the character of a state as secular. As opposed to a secularism that directs an *absence* of religion from state affairs, however, in India there is a qualitatively different manifestation, in which the state strives to accommodate *all* religions. Embree (2002), in his essay on "Religion in public space", explains the peculiar tension and contradictions of India as a modern secular state, committed to a policy of neutrality and non-intervention in religious matters on the one hand, while on the other having to accept the expression of a variety of religious beliefs and practices as compatible with the functions of the state, in order to preserve its unity and integrity. Embree quotes a working definition of a secular state by the American scholar, Donald Eugene Smith, as more suitable to Indian pluralistic society: in this view, a secular state is one that: "guarantees individual and corporate freedom of religion, deals with the individual as a citizen irrespective of his religion, is not constitutionally connected to a particular religion nor does it seek either to promote or interfere with religion" (Embree, 2002, p. 55).

Embree also distinguishes between 'secularization' as a historical process of change and secularism as an ideology. The former, seen as a characteristic feature of Western societies, "is a marked decline in the influence of religion in terms of social behaviour, beliefs, and intellectual dominance due to structural changes" (2002, pp. 69-70). Embree contends that as an ideology, secularism advocates non-religious or anti-religious principles as the basis for personal morality and social organization, but may not, in effect, be identical in its social manifestations to secularization. Using the example of the Sikh Gurdwaras Act of 1925 and the management of the *Kumbh Mela* temple, he demonstrates how the modern Indian democratic state claims neutrality in religious matters and yet participates in the most sectarian of religious events. He quotes Ved Prakash Luthera in stating that separation of the state and religion in India is neither possible nor desirable because "unlike the West, religious organizations in India do not have the kind of mechanisms separate from the state that permit them to manage their own affairs without reference to the state" (Embree, 2002, p. 64).

In their critiques of the role of religion and Indian modernity, Pantham (1997) and Bhatia (2000) argue that models of secularism which dictate a secularism characterized by total separation of religion and the state are unfair, alien - effectively Western - impositions on Indian society. They cite influential academic writers, including Ashis Nandy, T. N. Madan and Partha Chatterjee, to emphasize that India must move away from Western 'enlightenment' notions of secular rights to a more indigenous notion

of rights, within the context of its multiple faiths and religious traditions. The pervasive role of religion in the modern Indian state formation reinforces the need to critically analyze the former in defining the modern condition.

2.5 Linking religion and morality: empirical studies

In an interesting study that explores connections between religion and morality across different societies, Rodney Stark (2001, p. 621) develops the thesis that "it is particular conceptions of God, not participation in rites and rituals, that empower religions to sustain the moral order." He formulates the following hypotheses to test his views:

- H1: In many societies, religion and morality will not be linked.
- H2: The linkage will tend to be limited to more complex cultures.
- H3: The effects of religiousness on individual morality are contingent on images of gods as conscious, morally concerned beings; religiousness based on impersonal or unmoral gods will not influence moral choices.
- H4: Participation in religious rites and rituals will have little or no independent effect on morality.

Using data from the World Values Surveys[7] of 1990-1991, Stark examines the relationship between images of God and the moral order across 33 nations, including the United States of America, nations in the Western hemisphere, nations in Eastern and Western Europe, Islamic countries and India. Respondents in the survey were interviewed about a host of items, including homosexuality, prostitution, abortion, divorce, lying, euthanasia and suicide. There was a lack of cross-cultural consensus about most of these items. However, three were judged to be immoral by a significant majority in most nations:

- Buying something that is stolen (stolen goods).
- Failing to report damage accidentally done to a parked car (hit and run).
- Taking the drug marijuana or hashish (smoking 'dope').

Responses were coded through using a numerical self-assessment scale of one to ten, where a response of 'one' denoted a respondent's view that such an action was never justified, and 'ten' that it was considered always justified. These indicators of morality were then juxtaposed with a participant's assessment of the importance of God in their life, in order to establish potential correlations.[8]

A second question explored the effect of rituals on morality, including church, mosque, or temple attendance. Stark claims his findings challenge Durkheim's argument that religion, as manifest in collective rites and rituals, determines morality. In contrast, his study emphasizes the importance of 'God' over that of ritual, claiming that it is belief in God, rather than in rituals, that is the fundamental basis of religion and morality. He explains that, "people may take part in ritual activities, especially those pursued in public, for many non-religious reasons. But, belief in God is religiousness per se" (Stark 2001, p. 624)

In discussing religion in India, in particular Hinduism, Stark argues that Westerners generally believe that Indians' relationship with God is short-term and fundamentally utilitarian because of the polytheistic nature of Hinduism. He goes on to clarify that Hindus actually worship only two gods, Vishnu and Shiva, with the others representing different *avatars* or incarnations of these two. Arguing that morality is central to Hindu thought, the author explains both *dharma* (morals, duty) and *karma* (action) as specified in the religious law books, the *dharmasastras* and *dharmasutras,* saying:

> While observing *dharma* is regarded as an end in itself, it is closely related to another central doctrine concerning the sanctity of the caste system: that anyone's position in *this* life is God-given and earned through sin or righteousness. Hence if the lower castes suffer hell on earth, that is regarded as simple justice in that they *are in hell*, having earned their punishment in a prior life. Thus in terms of moral edification, for a Hindu to observe the misery of low caste life is tantamount to an actual visit to hell (Stark, 2001, p. 631).

Stark concludes that the level of importance placed on God will be negatively correlated with tolerance for immorality, irrespective of ritual participation. His results show that hypotheses 3 and 4 are strongly supported and would have been misleading if no questions had been asked about God, forcing one to believe that religion fails to support morality in India.

Although Stark's study raises important questions concerning the relationship between religion and (im)morality (which we ourselves also explored through interviews with respondents), his analysis suffers from the classic limitations of positivist research. For instance, 5 and 6 on a scale of 1 to 10 only indicate that the latter is stronger than the former but not what these numbers actually mean. It is impossible to know how the different numbers translates into anything other than a statistical measure, or what they actually say about the importance of God in people's lives. His analysis itself is

based on a superficial understanding of religion and immorality. The three acts of ‘stolen goods’, ‘hit and run accident’, and ‘smoking marijuana’, identified in the World Values Surveys as being regarded as immoral by a substantial majority, seem unconvincing choices, given that a host of other issues, such as homosexuality, prostitution and abortion, are as if not more controversial issues as far as morality is concerned.

Another further problem with this study is its understanding and treatment of religion in India. While Hinduism, for instance, is portrayed as representative of Indian religion, the analysis does not take into account or even acknowledge the many different ways in which Hinduism is practised and differences in Hindu across the country. Furthermore, it is completely oblivious to the existence of other Indian religions that may help to inform morality, even amongst Hindus. Pointing out the complexity of Hinduism as a religion, historical text and system of thought, McGregor (1973, p. 68), for example, observes that: “During the thousands of years that Hinduism has lived, grown, constantly changed, deepened and broadened, it has absorbed into its being many other great religious traditions and cultures [with the result that]…it is not easy to say what is specifically Hindu in origin and character.” Thus Stark’s analysis operates on a shallow plane of concepts that are reduced to the crudest form of numerical variables and subjected to statistical analysis based on a narrow understanding of religion and morality.

Another study that links religion to people’s attitudes with regard to specific practices, such as the payment and evasion of tax, was carried out by Torgler (2006), who examined religiosity as a factor that potentially affects ‘tax morale’, or the intrinsic motivation to pay taxes. Noting a dearth of studies that analyze the connections between religiosity and tax morale, the author also argues that several studies in the 1990s sought to explain the reasons why people pay taxes, but not why they evade them.

In Torgler’s study, religiosity is measured by indicators such as frequency of church attendance; being an active member of a church or a religious organization; having had a strong religious focus in their upbringing; and having a religious education. These are complemented by qualities that are less objective: ‘being’ religious; having trust in the church; the importance religion is perceived to have in a person’s life; and having clear guidance on what is good and evil. Using data from the World Values Surveys (1995-1997), cross-country comparisons of people’s willingness to pay tax and trust in paying

taxes (tax morale) in more than forty countries (including India), representing about 70 per cent of the world's population, were carried out to assess the relationship between tax morale and religiosity.

A strong correlation between religiosity and tax morale is indicated by the results of this study. Since the number of observations made for adherents of Hinduism was relatively low, the author suggests that the results obtained should be treated with caution. The effect of corruption on tax morale was also examined. It is reported that:

> The results indicate that a higher degree of perceived corruption crowds out tax morale. If taxpayers notice that many public officials are corrupt and many others evade taxes, they might get the feeling that their intrinsic motivation is not recognized or honored. Thus, taxpayers get the feeling that they can as well be opportunistic. The moral costs of evading taxes decrease. The positive effects of religiosity on tax morale remain robust, with a small increase of the marginal effects for some variables (Torgler, 2006, p. 18).

Torgler concludes that it is relevant to systematically integrate ideas borrowed from various social science disciplines, integrating non-economic factors into any analysis of tax compliance, because tax morale is not just a function of opportunities to evade paying tax, tax rates and the probability of detection.

These two studies, though limited by the inherent restrictions of the empirical data on which they are based and an impoverished view of religion in India, do serve to fill gaps in an otherwise under-researched area and take into account many factors not previously considered in analyses of the correlation between religiosity and morality. The next section reviews the literature on ethics in relation to attitudes towards immoral or unethical practices, along with the interrelated concepts of morality and religiosity.

2.6 Ethics and belief systems

In the literature on ethics, there are both studies that explore the ancient texts and those that look at modern writers who prescribe ethical codes of conduct for modern life. Much of Indian modernity appears to be aligned with ideas of modern gurus, such as Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, which became the basis of the nationalist movement. Their speeches and writings borrowed from *Vedanta* became the new 'gospel' of Indian national emancipation and laid the foundation for the new Indian nation in the making (Van Biljert, 2003).

Chakraborty (2005) similarly examines the ideas of Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, and Sri Aurobindo who, according to him, were unique harbingers of Indian modernity in that "they all had a first-hand intimate grasp of Western culture, and yet lived the Indian ethos in their bone and marrow" (Chakraborty, 2005, p. 1). He further spells out the predicament of modern-day people who have succumbed to baser instincts:

> Today we are increasingly beginning to live in a world bound by politics, economics and technology. The 'moral world' is an empty phrase. This trio securely ties man to the tether of desire. Hence, no purpose is beyond desire. And therefore, character has become a feudal, reactionary word. Why should I fight with myself? I am free, so I have the license to give full play to my raw and baser instincts. This is the revolutionary spirit of our times. Principles and ethics act as fetters for the revolutionary urge. Short-term measurable gross national product (GNP) is always given priority over long-term immeasurable gross national character (GNC) (2005, p. 2).

Chakraborty employs Tagore's thesis in announcing the demise of moral character, suggesting that the pursuit of pleasure has led to a deterioration of values and loss of ethicality. He quotes an example from *Katha Upanishad,* which he claims is "a powerful illustration of Tagore's diagnosis" (ibid, p. 2). An encounter between teenaged Nachiketa and Yama, the Lord of Death, during which the former seeks to know the self from the latter and chooses *shreya* (the wholesome) over *preya* (the pleasurable), says Chakraborty, "symbolizes the ethical character-making education" (Chakraborty, 2005, pp. 2-3). Furthermore, he discusses the concept of 'moral rhythm' in cosmic creation, known as *ritam* in *Rig Veda*, which can be maintained by ethical conduct. Chakraborty then describes the ethical vision of Swami Vivekananda, who stressed the need for renunciating the finite for the infinite. This search for the infinite is said to begin with a feeling of selflessness – doing good for others rather than the self – and end in the principle of oneness, *ekatmanubhuti.* Describing the individuation of modern day people, whose ethical relations are embedded in a framework of utilitarianism, Chakraborty notes:

> Accelerating pressures on students towards careerism from their parents, for example, is sure to breed greater unethicality in the days to come. Careerist managers all over the world are known to vote for themselves ever higher remuneration packages unconnected with enterprise performance and unrelated to the interests of various other stakeholders. MPs in India have matched managers without the least compunction. Judges and teachers and administrators have not been willing to stay behind either. And all this is in a country where the poverty level is defined as earning Rs. 1,200 per annum for a family unit of four! (2005, p. 4).

Chakraborty revisits the concept sof *shreya* (the wholesome) and *preya* (the pleasurable), citing Gandhi's emphasis on the importance of 'means' in the context of ethics: "Impure means result in an impure end." He describes how there are other major issues, apart from the tightening of regulations by advanced OECD economies concerning bribery in international business and instances of corruption:

> More pernicious and devastating are the sly tactics used by big MNCs like Monsanto and many more in the field of biotechnology, or those engaged in armaments production in these countries. Unethicality of such business ventures, especially in relation to the relatively weaker economies beggars description. The cross-country corruption indices by Transparency International (TI) capture nothing of such economic/technological terrorism. In fact, the TI indices are derived from opinion polls amongst the MNCs themselves who are doing business in developing economies (2005, p. 5).

He reiterates Gandhi and Tagore, insisting that "a materially promiscuous, psychologically complicated life, flowing from techno-economic growth, will cloud man's inner vision" (Chakraborty, 2005, p. 5), leading to an inevitable decline in ethical standards. Thus, there is a constant overtone of a moral prescription in the author's view, including honesty, strength of character, choosing *shreya* over *preya,* tuning into the moral rhythm, pursuit of the infinite over the finite, detachment from material life, cultivation of the feeling of oneness, and ethical living.

Whilst drawing on an impressive corpus of modern thought, Chakraborty's analysis appears to endorse a binary of good and bad, manifested variously as ethical/unethical, modernity/tradition, detachment/materialism and finite/infinite. These binaries cast modernity as a progressively degenerating and corrupting phenomenon that results in an undesirable loss of past glories, which can be regained only through recourse to moral and ethical prescriptions. Propagating a universalist discourse on living an ethical life, the author raises some pertinent issues, such as his critique of Transparency International's corruption index, which ranks nations according to perceived corruption levels. It further opens up discussion on other relevant themes, such as business ethics, utilitarianism and other moral dilemmas.

In an essay on the need for Indian ethics in an age of globalization, Van Biljert (2000) considers the predicament of a global society driven by the forces of technological revolution, consumerism and greed and offers solutions based on Indian culture and morality. In highlighting the way in which

consumerism appears to be self-sustaining, the author conceives of ethics as playing an important role in shaping our consciousness. By drawing on the writings of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, he argues that "one of the premises of Indian spirituality throughout the ages has been that man has the potential within him or herself to develop into a higher being" (Van Biljert, 2000, p. 149). Inspired by the spiritual vision of these *gurus*, he stresses the potential for a total transformation of human consciousness away from the material attachments of the world. Borrowing from the Vedantic philosophy, Van Biljert proposes four major characteristics of such an ethical consciousness:

> … it is visionary in that it reveals hidden potentials in human consciousness, especially potentials that lead to improving the quality of life in a non-physical sense. Second, it strengthens our sense of beauty and stimulates creativity in all respects, including artistic creation. Third, it is disciplined by rationality and logic, and thus kept within the boundaries of empirical experiment. Fourth, it encourages respect for human dignity (Van Biljert, 2000, p. 151).

In the context of globalization and its supposed potential for denigrating the human condition, Van Biljert argues that ethical consciousness should be promoted through spiritual growth in order to transcend our shortcomings. He advocates dissemination through the mass media, including the Internet, so that everyone is able to "imaginatively think of alternatives to the economics of pathological greed, consumerism, gross inequality, and irreparable damage to the environment" (2000, p. 152).

Chakraborty (1997) offers a historical perspective with regard to the perceived decline of ethics in general and business ethics in particular. His description of the business situation in India since the Second World War is framed in metaphors of catastrophe:

> … with the launching of the era of state-planned and controlled economic development, things seem to have been going from bad to worse - though usually below the surface. This cumulative ethical depression began to break loose as an ethical cyclone with economic liberalization adopted by India in 1991. This storm has been exposing the supportive role of the 'politics-bureaucracy' alliance in fostering and feeding upon economic terrorism of various kinds…since increasingly expensive elections are not state-financed, the stimulus to politics-business corruption remains strong in an otherwise democratic system (p. 1529).

Touching upon different issues related to business ethics, such as promotion of high levels of consumption, replacement of manpower with machines, and 'corruption in a poor society' versus 'corruption in an affluent society', the author laments the effects of globalization. He claims that

competition between global corporations to enter Indian markets, coupled with the eagerness of Indian businesses to collaborate with them, has spawned fresh varieties of unethical business.

Gupta takes a distinction between ethics and morality as a starting point, in which morality is seen as belonging to a pre-modern time and impinging on the self (Gupta, 2004). Based on a simple definition of ethics, according to which the self and the other deserve equal consideration, Gupta (2004, p. 14) draws a distinction between the applicability of ethics and morality:

> Morality was about the self and attaining high levels of spiritual or other kinds of perfection … ethics on the other hand are not an individual attribute as it is a quality that marks social interactions. In other words, one cannot be ethical alone as it becomes relevant only in the context of social relations...Ethics seek justification in the lives of mortals and not in the eyes of God.

He also offers a definition of business ethics, observing that it is pointless to boast about ethics if a company's business is witnessing a slump, as "Business ethics demand that profits be made on a sustainable basis by observing norms that respect other people. Fairness, transparency, and individual ambitions must all find a place in the practice of business ethics". He goes on to characterize business ethics as

> Not about morality but transparent norms of interrelationships; socially-aware entrepreneurship as opposed to philanthropy; concern for the stakeholders like employees, customers, and creditors as opposed to the shareholders; a code of ethics rather than a code of conduct; employee morale than mere compliance; and a commitment to quality emanating from work satisfaction and not just achievement of profit (Gupta, 2004, p. 15).

Pande (1993, p. 205) offers an explanation of what he perceives as a new attitude that reflects the tenets of utilitarian economics, Parsonian sociology and psychiatric counselling:

> To the positivists the human separation of fact and value reduces moral values to a variety of sentiments and attitudes i.e., to socially conditioned psychological facts which can be understood relativistically. In the absence of religion and religion-based ethics, this socio-psychological relativism could only act as a solvent for morality understood traditionally. What the new ethics seeks to give man [sic] is freedom from traditional religions and moral faith so that he might plan to satisfy and fulfil himself as best as he can rationally.

This approach to ethics, which allows for a degree of relativism, seems to be more realistic: Pande (1993) suggests that if there is a need to resolve a conflict between interests and moral values, it may done by having recourse to a clear conscience, without necessarily privileging either. This perspective seems to de-privilege the notion that morality and ethics are a matter of achieving a transcendental state of being by implementing a universal set of values in one's life, like self-abnegation, detachment, honesty and strength of character. It also leads us to question whether universalistic moral philosophies bear more on human action than the socio-cultural context within which an action takes place.

Fleischacker (1999, p. 107), for example, argues that moral norms are generally enmeshed in cultural ones and that cultural context is more determinative of human action, for the reason that individuals

> …tend to guide their decisions much more by the rich, specific way of life embodied in the cultures in which they were raised than by the vague abstractions promoted by universalist moral philosophies. Utilitarianism and Kantianism have devoted adherents only in universities, while Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc. have enriched the lives of millions of people.

Whilst proposing that ethical orientations are strongly related to cultural backgrounds, French and Weis (2000) analyse business ethics by making a distinction between an 'ethics of care' and an 'ethics of justice', based on Hofstede's text on culture and work-related values. The former is based on character traits such as sympathy, compassion and friendship, which are social virtues, while the latter places a premium on individual choice and equality. Hofstede's masculine-feminine cultural dimension implies that feminine cultures tend to express values in terms of an ethics of care, as opposed to the masculine cultures that favour an ethics of justice. Hall's (1976) 'High Context-Low Context' distinction, in which communication contexts vary across nations, may provide further help in developing our understanding here. An HC person tends to be less rule-driven and is flexible in resolving a problem, while an LC person does not make much of an effort to understand the moral stance of the former.

Using a set of six moral issues, French and Weis (2000) examined subjects from countries such as France, Germany, USA, Turkey, China and India. In their research methodology, a pair of 'negotiators' from each country were tasked with resolving a series of situational tasks including organizing fair

income; paying for something that was accidentally broken; lying; breaking a promise; stealing; and deciding on punishment. The authors characterize Indian culture as experiencing an erosion of values, identifying a strong perception of widespread corruption. They also point to the predominance of strong family and authority values over individual ethics. Their findings reported:

> The Indian negotiators, coming from what had been identified as a masculine culture, should have argued from a meritorian justice basis. That was the case in seven of the twelve negotiations. The Indians relied more on a deontological approach to ethics than did any of the negotiators from feminine cultures. Three particular values marked their negotiations – the obligation to be truthful and the related obligation of helping and/or not hurting friends" (French and Weis, 2000, p. 132).

In conclusion, the authors claim that increasingly an 'ethics of care' is informing the resolution of moral conflicts. Hence for the practical application of ethics, they suggest that the discourse must not be confined to the ethics of justice. Their suggestion is that this sense of care inheres from the realm of cultural values and human influences, and perhaps constitutes a case for a more contextual approach to the resolution of ethical dilemmas. At one level, it may be that the conceptualization of cultures as masculine and feminine is reminiscent of Partha Chatterjee's inner and outer domains, apparently overlooking the complexity and analytical richness of the category of 'culture'. However, if an ethics of care is indeed becoming more important in resolving moral dilemmas, our study on religion and corruption must investigate the implications of taking an ethical stance informed by an ethics of care.

In another study that identified culture as a significant determinant of ethical attitudes, the impact of culture on the ethical attitudes of business managers in India, Korea and the United States is assessed with reference to Hofstede's cultural typology (Christie et al, 2003). The study examined the relationship between four cultural dimensions (Individualism vs. collectivism; large vs small power distance; strong vs weak uncertainty avoidance; and masculinity vs. femininity) and the ethical attitudes of business managers. Some of the observations of the study (Christie et al., 2003, p. 268) are noted below:

- Business managers in countries with a high individualism score tend to look at business practices such as gift-giving, nepotism, software piracy or sharing insider information as more unethical than business managers in countries with a high collectivism score.

- Business managers in countries with a high power distance score take superiors' orders, whether ethical or unethical, more seriously than business managers in countries with a low power distance score, that is, they are less likely to challenge directives.
- Business managers in countries with a high score in uncertainty avoidance focus more on the legality than the ethicality of actions: they tend to perceive business practices which are done 'legally', such as the export of harmful products, the marketing of products that are injurious to health, or the firing of older employees, as less unethical than business managers from countries with a low score in uncertainty avoidance.
- Business managers in countries with a high masculinity score are less likely to perceive ethical problems in practices such as firing older employees, dishonesty in advertising, damage to the environment or marketing products that are injurious to health than business managers in countries with high femininity scores.

Other factors influencing ethical attitudes, such as personal characteristics (age, gender, religion, employment), organizational factors (organization size) and industry factors (industry type, level of competition) were also taken into account by the researchers. Their conclusions indicate that 'national' cultures have a strong influence on the attitudes of business managers toward both ethics in general and various questionable business practices in particular. They recognize that culture is too complex a concept to be treated as a single, independent variable, suggesting that it needs to be unpacked into various interpretable components/dimensions to arrive at any valid conclusions.

2.7 Conclusion

The need for a more rigorous understanding of corruption and any accompanying corrective action has been emphasized by Lobo (2001, pp. 65-66):

> Corruption is one uncomfortable situation that we do not like to be living with or be caught in. But so far our approach has been cautious, unsure and unscientific. We are carried away by emotions; there is no body of knowledge to tell us how to stop this disease, no philosophical or rational base for action, no technology for dealing with the malaise. As a result, the disease is spreading. Corruption must be made a subject for scientific research and study, what are the causes, what are the effects, how can it be eliminated/ controlled, how do people learn the art of managing the system, why do they do what is destructive for society – otherwise like children, we are both innocent and vulnerable.

Despite the naiveté of his somewhat crude questions and his description of corruption as a 'malaise', Lobo does identify gaps in the literature on corruption, especially those that relate to human nature. The 'whys' and 'wherefores' of engaging in corruption should, we argue, lead us to enquire into the social and moral context within which they arise.

As far as the situation in India is concerned, the preponderance of religion in the public sphere and the conception of secularism as encompassing all religions (as opposed to the European view of secularism as the absence of religion from public affairs) warrant an examination of religious practices and social and cultural mores that influence people's thoughts, practices and actions. Religion and the socio-cultural ethos are a powerful source of moral and ethical frameworks for many people in India. In this country of multiple religions, a majority of Indians look to religious texts, myths and parables for guidelines on ethical and moral codes of conduct. Concepts and terminology associated with all or particular religions may determine people's attitudes towards practices generally considered moral or immoral. It is another matter that they may apply these concepts selectively, subject to the contingencies of circumstance, or may not apply them at all, just holding them as belief systems.

As has been brought out in this literature review, several views compete for primacy. They offer cogent starting points for an examination of how religious values, beliefs and culture influence the perceptions and attitudes of individuals and organizations towards corruption. However, they have not been adequately theorized, as attitudes towards corruption have been subsumed in research on morality and ethics, which constructs the questions within a broader framework of cultural and social mores. Available empirical studies, on the other hand, fall into the trap of over-simplification and shallow analysis. Our study seeks to fill some of these gaps in the existing literature on corruption in order to improve understanding of the relationships between religion and corruption, as well as religiously influenced perceptions of corruption in different socio-cultural contexts.

3 Social constructions of religiosity and corruption

In this section, the terrain of beliefs, ideas and meanings embedded in the construction of the notion of 'religiosity' and of 'corruption' as a social problem in India is explored. As researchers, we sought to understand socially constructed realities and locally contingent and emergent meanings. The objective was to locate and clarify some of the key interpretations and deliberations among social groups regarding the terms 'religion' and 'corruption' and the perceptions of people when they categorize themselves as 'being religious' and/or others as 'being corrupt'. While seeking to understand the influences that shape people's value systems, we also attempted to ascertain the extent to which our respondents' patterns of thought and behaviour are underwritten by religion and to what extent non-religious factors shape their personal and professional codes of practice. Are there differences in interpretations of religiosity and corrupt practices among different social groups belonging to the same religion? Do perceptions differ among respondents belonging to different religions? This section also addresses the question of the role religions exercise in defining both personal and public morality.

3.1 On being 'religious'

Not a single respondent among those we interviewed or held discussions with claimed to be an 'atheist', although a majority said that they are not religious in any 'dogmatic', or 'narrow' sense. One interviewee, an anthropologist and public servant, claimed, "*I have never really been a religious-minded person [as he]…challenges the opinions, beliefs, and ideas propagated by religion and analyses them very critically*." However, he clarified, "*I am an agnostic; I'm not atheistic*." Our interaction with representatives from different social groups (both Sikhs and Hindus) revealed considerable diversity in the interpretation of 'religiosity', as well as what they consider to be 'religious'. Professionals such as bureaucrats, corporate executives, media persons and academics wanted to be categorized as 'partly' or 'moderately' religious (which they did not think in any way meant being 'less' religious), as they were not particularly ritualistic in their outlook. Others in the same categories emphasized the spirituality and values dimension of religion. Those in the development sector insisted that it is only through the 'practice' of teachings that one justifies a claim to be religious. Respondents who were traditional businesspeople were emphatic in highlighting the importance of the ritualistic and symbolic, as well as the values and ethics, characteristics of religion and made no bones about the defining role that religion plays in their lives. Responses from the youth and students on professional courses varied, many reflecting one or other of the four viewpoints mentioned here.

3.1.1 'Moderately' or 'partly' religious

A majority among the bureaucrats, young corporate executives, media persons and academics amongst our respondents preferred not to be categorized as 'very' religious, at least in accordance with the 'strictly' ritualistic sense of the term. The Sikh respondents indicated that they do not strictly follow some of the prescribed religious practices, such as visiting a *gurdwara* regularly, reciting the Holy Scriptures, baptism and the wearing of religious symbols. Among Hindus, rituals like temple attendance, fasting on holy days, doing *pujas* (special prayers), pilgrimage and wearing *bottu* (vermilion) on the forehead were suggestive of a person's religious inclination.

Although it was clear from the appearance of our Sikh respondents that a majority support the prescribed symbols of their religion, they felt that this is not enough to be called religious, As one bureaucrat, who is the managing director of a public sector company, claimed, "*I am religious by appearance because we have some [overt] symbols, and so I display those symbols, but there's nothing in my day-to-day conduct that comes straight from the religion as such*."

Another senior Sikh bureaucrat who routinely recites *bani* (Holy Scriptures) and reported that he had been to all the major pilgrim centres of Sikhism still did not want to be categorized as 'strictly' religious, as he felt that his actions are not guided by ritualism. In his view, he is religious to the extent that he always follows "*the basic tenets of every religion – humility, service to humanity, and welfare of the needy and downtrodden*."

A Sikh media person who considers himself religious said that "*at the very crux of it, it means accepting and trying to understand certain core values of religion as a part of your life and at a very superficial level it means adhering to the various symbols*." A public servant and president of a pharmacists' association in Punjab, well-known for his expertise in religious discourses, suggested that there are two types of religious people. The first kind of Sikh is the person who *looks* Sikh – is externally religious (i.e. by way of dressing), and the second is the person who follows the path set by the *gurus*. The second is important, but he emphasized the need to be the first kind also, as religious practices inculcate the discipline of learning and knowing about the religion.

His views about following the words of the *gurus* found an echo in the views of a female academic , who considered herself religious in her "*inner self*":

> *I'm Sikh, but I cut my hair. So I don't believe in rigidity of religion. Being religious means to help someone and to follow the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib. In that way I am religious. As a Sikh person, I think we must go to gurdwara at our convenience because, at this particular time of my age, where my children are my priority, if I leave my children and go to gurdwara or do paath everyday, that's not religious. I do not believe the rigidity of religion. I am religious otherwise.*

The bureaucrats, corporate executives, media persons and academics from Hyderabad, who are Hindus, are also liberal in terms of their interpretation of their religiosity and want to be identified as going beyond the ritualistic aspect of religion. They regard religion as a higher reality not limited by "*rules which define a particular religion*." A dynamic female civil servant was quick to confess that, although she believes in 'prayer', she is a "*quintessential cosmopolitan*," and does not take going to temple regularly as being religious: "*I go there because it is a place which has a particular energy. I could find the same energy in a mosque or a church. And then… it is not as though I must go there. It is not a dogma*."

A female academic from a state university in Hyderabad felt that, although she celebrates all the religious festivals at home, and goes to temples with family members on important days, she thinks that to "*love all, help all and not to hurt anybody*" is the essence of being religious.

A corporate executive in his early forties, working in a well-established telecoms company who we interviewed in Punjab felt that very few can call themselves 'religious' in both letter and spirit, and acknowledged that he is "*definitely not one of them*." He mentioned certain principles or parameters that SGPC has recently listed in an affidavit submitted to the High Court, as to who precisely is a Sikh. The affidavit states that anyone who does not smoke, take meat (especially *halal)*, take tobacco, drink, colour his hair and trim his beard or hair is a Sikh. This informant commented that:

> *Out of these six parameters I may be qualifying in the four, may not be qualifying in the two. So going by the book as I initially said, I am not a Sikh, because I do drink occasionally, I don't eat non-vegetarian food, I don't smoke, I don't trim my beard, but yes, occasionally I do colour my hair. So on these parameters; I don't qualify as a Sikh.*

He insisted, however, like our other respondents in this category, that if we consider the practice of teachings, he thinks he is tolerant and does not harm or cheat anyone. On the basis of these qualities,

he claimed to consider himself better than others who claim to be good Sikhs, but do not, in his view, qualify on the basis of the practical parameters.

A young proprietor of an IT company in Hyderabad was clear that religion is about realizing oneself and not about the rituals. In the long course of history, he believes, people have forgotten the real meaning of religion and mistake the rituals that they practise for religion. A well-travelled corporate person with experience in both finance and advertising said that he respects the religion into which he was born, but claimed that he is not a highly religious person in the ritualistic sense: "*If you mean religion as a dogma which blinds you to other possibilities, I am not religious. I am not good at it. I don't think I subscribe to that. To the extent of faith, and belief in the philosophy of the religion in which I am born, to that extent yes I am religious*."

3.1.2 Religion as spirituality and as a way of life

Some of the bureaucrats and several corporate executives, in both Punjab and Andhra Pradesh, also placed less importance on religiosity per se, while emphasizing the need to be 'spiritual' and follow the underlying philosophy of and the values associated with religion.

A former chief secretary of the government, in his late 70s, claimed that he does not have any faith in rituals, or what he called "*superstitions*." For him, the basis of every religion is spirituality and he would rather follow the teachings of the *gurus*, who were "*mystics of the highest order*." Religion for him is a thing of personal faith and spirituality. Similarly, an IAS officer and a Managing Director of a public sector company in Hyderabad said, "*I don't run from temple to temple and perform all religious ceremonies*." Instead, he claimed, he believes in what he calls "*humanitarian religion, where one human being is not pitted against other being in the name of religion*."

The self-disciplinary aspect of religion was stressed by the mid-level management executives in Hyderabad, some of whom expressed a universalist view of religions. For example, a female Executive Engineer employed by the government of Andhra Pradesh deemed that all religions teach the same thing: "*humanity, kindness, love etc... Being religious makes me more human, more kind to others, more responsible, more dutiful, more work-minded, and develop some kind of a feeling of love towards everybody*." A radio producer from the state-controlled *All India Radio*, Hyderabad, was of the opinion that:

> *We must be religious in a very broad sense, although I won't say that I really subscribe to any one particular kind of religious belief. Religion interests me in a cultural sense, basically as a thing which defines the way people behave and live. In India, culture and religion are not separate things*.

A woman programme manager of an international corporate NGO in Hyderabad was sure that the meaning of religion is really in the way it is practised. It should, in her view, be interpreted as "*believing God is in everything and in spirituality and meditation. I practise whatever religion has taught me.*"

3.1.3 'Practising' religious ideals

The development workers interviewed for the study largely attributed their inspiration to work in the social sector to religion and its teachings. As a doctor by profession and social worker by choice, a female president of an internationally acclaimed home for the destitute called her institution "*a laboratory of the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib*." The main thing in the Book, in her view, is to work for the well-being of all creatures – *Sarbat da bhala*. She understands herself as Sikh by religion, considering every word of Guru Granth Sahib to be true and asserting that that one should abide by the teachings. She thinks that rituals are important because "*if you do not go to the Gurdwara, it would be difficult to know what the Gurus themselves have written*." However, she argued, if one only follows ritual and forgets ethics, it is of no use: "*Do not just chant wahe guru wahe guru, act according to the written rules and follow ethics*."

A physician and social worker in a renowned medical centre in Punjab responded that he believes in God and the teachings of religion: "*I don't question whatever it says. And I try and follow whatever it says and so, I think I am religious. Whatever I am I am because of Sikhism*." He seemed to indicate a belief that not only his appearance, but also his values come from his religion, and asserted that Sikhism is unique in many ways – "*the tenth Guru gave us the tag 'Khalsa' and he gave us this form, he gave us this particular appearance. So, he said that with this appearance you can't hide anywhere and every Sikh is the messenger of the Almighty – that itself alters your behaviour and everything, in personal and official life*."

The interviews with some young managers of projects working at different levels in international NGOs in Hyderabad confirmed our observation that those working in the social sector derive practical guidance from religion to shape their personality, because in their view, it tells a person what is

ethically right and wrong. They underlined the belief that religion must be reflected in the way we live life and not just praying to God, "*We need to be good citizens and help others*."

3.1.4 Total identification with religion

A total identification with religion and the Guru's *bani* (words) (or God) among two of the traditional businessmen interviewed in Amritsar and Hyderabad stood in striking contrast to the moderate stances discussed so far. These respondents were outspoken concerning their faith in God, the religious scriptures and rituals, which they consider form an indispensable part of their personal and community lives. Although they claimed that being religious has nothing to do with business as such, we infer that such a close identification with religion may also result from the need to build an image of good conduct among members of society and their credibility among customers.

A senior citizen with a flourishing business in the central market of Amritsar declared unequivocally: "*Of course, I am religious, with God's grace!*" He passionately attributed his success to the benevolence of God and declared that everything that he is today is because of the will and blessings of God. He declared himself to be religious and asserted that it is this faith that brings meaning to his life, considering this as the only way in which a man can rise above an obsession with 'I', 'me', 'myself': "*We must feel indebted to God.*"

It is important, however, to question what precisely our respondents meant by 'being' religious. For this particular participant, being religious seemed to indicate that a duty towards God (*dharm*) comes first: one should be grateful to the Gurus, and should do one's work with the thought that ultimately one has to be answerable to an omniscient God. "*My actions should be such that my religion should be proud of me, and people would not be able to point fingers at my religion – when I am alive and even after my death (Eth-Uth*)." Appearing to be religious, does not, however, necessarily make someone religious:

> *Anyone can look religious by wearing the prescribed dress and symbols but a truly religious person is one who does not take away the rights of anyone, one who does not talk bad about others - Maariya da bhala kar' [Do good even to those people who wicked or evil]. Moo mein ram bagal mein churi [if we claim to be religious but do harm to others, then we are not religious]. Three tenets of the Sikh religion: kirat karni, pher naam japna, pher vand chakna [work hard, remember God, consume after sharing]. It is not that you become religious and stop doing work and start asking for money – work here is before worship – it is a must to work. A religious person must also be aware of the society around him/her and their needs.*

The traditional businessman we interviewed in Hyderabad was equally resigned to the influence of religion in his life:

> *I am very religious and I frequent temples very often. I have faith in God. I don't need a philosophy to believe in God. I like to be absorbed in rituals. Religious beliefs are totally a part of me – I go to temples for satisfaction, nothing linked to business. It makes me feel happy and peaceful towards your life.*

3.1.5 Religion means different things to different people

The different notions of religiosity held in society at large tend to rub off on the attitudes among youth as well. The responses from among the students and aspiring professionals – young women and men - broadly fall into one or the other interpretations of 'being religious' explained above.

Among the youth, young Sikh women are 'okay' with not being 'too religious'. They seem to think of themselves as religious, but there is a clear discomfort with some of the restrictions that religion imposes:

- *I am religious, but I do not compromise on my looks. I like cutting [hair]. And I like Western outfits, although, my parents are very much against it. This does not make me less religious.*

- *I am religious but that does not mean I sit and (do paath) pray all the time. God should be in a person's heart; we should follow what the Gurbani tells us.*

- *I feel I do paath [prayer] only when I need something.*

On the other hand, young professionals from management and engineering departments in Punjab quoted verbatim from 'the book' and flaunted their grasp of the essence of the religion. Nevertheless, they too are sceptical about the practicability of some of the religious teachings in their personal and professional lives:

- *For me religion is basically a way of life. I consider myself to be religious, I don't trim my beard and secondly I try and do paath [prayer] whenever I get time for it. That is not possible because of the busy schedule, but whenever I get time I do paath. I know all important granths [religious books] of my religion. I can read them fully.*

- *Yes, I think I am a religious person. Whenever I am doing work, I feel that someone is watching me – whatever I am doing.*

- *Religion tells us how to lead a good life.*

- *I follow the teachings our Gurus gave. I don't go to gurdwara – not regularly, but I do paath [prayer]. It gives me a feeling that someone is looking after me.*

- *If you ask others, they will say, I am not religious, as I have cut my hair. But I follow the teachings of the guru. If I cut my hair it does not make me less religious.*

- *Many people think I don't go to gurdwara, so I am not religious. As students of technology, we have such busy schedules and no time to go to gurdwara. But I have Wahe Guru in my heart and that is more important than going to gurdwaras.*

In Hyderabad, the youth tended to endorse spiritual interpretations of religion, and there were similarities among the responses of both men and women for universalist and supposedly more 'progressive' or individualistic interpretations of 'being religious':

- *I am religious. For me, religion is for doing good things. It just shows you the path for good things. Every religion is same to me.*

- *For me, I think it is to be able to connect myself to my conscience. I can judge what is right and wrong with the help of the divine power I pray to; that is what religion is for me. The rituals part of the religion – not really, no, I don't believe in it.*

- *I am religious, and according to me it consists of the ritual, the customs, it teaches you how to behave in your life, and give respect to others.*

- *I am religious but more spiritual. I just believe in one God.*

- *When I am stuck in life, and I call my dad and mom, something like the positive energy is there, I strongly believe in that power.*

- *For me, religion is nothing but believing in God and good value system. For me, God is one.*
- *I am a tall believer in God. I started believing in God and religion when I was passing through really tough times… I started learning all these shlokas and mantras and prayers to God. You need some great power to actually lean on, not just your parents.*
- *I believe in God as being a force behind everything, the invisible thread of the garland.*
- *It is a way of life, it is a gross reductionism to call it a religion... religion should be a route path to reach god.*
- *Love your God. Trust Him. Thanks to my religion, I believe in God.*
- *It's the single most focal point in a person's life.*

3.2 Religions and value systems: ethical codes of conduct

> Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than about living. We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount.
> General Omar Bradley (1967)

One of the central objectives of our study was to investigate how people relate religion to their personal values and to their professional conduct and aspirations. An important lesson contained in the following paragraphs is that values are rooted in a multiplicity of culture-specific factors, such as family ideals, upbringing, religion, education and social status, which manifest their influence in varying degrees in the lives of different individuals. Moreover, values governing human behaviour may differ according to the personal, professional and socio-political context. The responses to our enquiry regarding codes of conduct indicate that any value system is a composite idea or belief-set, and it is difficult to identify a systematic and unambiguous list of factors that dictate the personal as well as professional codes of ethics of a particular person. This section presents a collage of factors that our respondents believe are the important influences that have shaped their value systems.

3.2.1 Family ideals and upbringing

Understandably, almost all the respondents were non-committal in attributing their value system to any single source of influence. For most, codes of behaviour are a combination of several ideas and stimuli – "*it is not possible to segregate the important influences – as one grows, one imbibes them from all around*." However, from among the numerous factors that over one hundred people interviewed during the course of the study identified as influencing their moral or ethical behaviour, our analysis clearly indicates that the most dominant category is 'family ideals' and 'principles taught by parents', followed by religion.

It was interesting that bureaucrats and other professionals like media persons, corporate executives and academics did not simply quote from a code of conduct booklet they follow in their occupations, but cited other sources from which they draw their personal and professional codes of conduct. Family values emerged as exercising a big influence, even on the ethics they adopt in their respective professions: "*We have to face them [parents] if we indulge in corrupt practices and they would not tolerate it*." This senior Sikh bureaucrat felt that once a bureaucrat gains a reputation as an honest person, he/she may be given 'bad' postings, but being aware of the importance of integrity, in his views ethical people can do no other.

> *I think these [values] came from my family. I still remember, more than thirty-five years back when I joined my service…. I come from a lower middle class family. My father worked very hard to earn his living. We were not very comfortable, economically speaking, when I joined service. Still, the first thing which he had told me as I was on my way to join the service was that he should not hear any complaint regarding my integrity, come what may.*

A similar response came from a dynamic female bureaucrat in her early forties, who believes herself to be brutally honest in her dealings. She confirmed that, more than professional training, "*where nobody advises you to be corrupt*", what helps someone in public life and a position of power to make ethical choices is their family and upbringing:

> *I don't know if it is about being religious as much as it is a part of upbringing and the way you have been trained by your family, and the other places you have gone to and what you have learnt. I may be Hindu but I am an Indian by soul and in today's world I am global. When you are talking about the ethics that define you, I don't think that so much comes from religion as much as how you have been brought up. So I think it is about your own genetic coding to a large extent and your upbringing, your environment and what you face in life and how you deal with that.*

A middle aged Sikh corporate executive in a senior managerial position felt that his value system comes "*essentially from my middle class background; parents have the maximum influence*." He explained that when he had asked his father to buy a colour television, the latter had refused, saying that such a TV was too expensive and that he was unwilling to build a fortune unethically. His father had explained that "*he was investing in our lives, whereas other families are investing in material things. [In his view] his investment has stood us well*." A director of projects at a corporate NGO, whose father was a freedom fighter, also felt that a value system "*definitely comes from home and depends on how you have been brought up*."

The responses from youth also attributed the family as the basis of a value system rather than religion directly. Moreover, they asserted that the behaviour of some people associated conspicuously with religion is sometimes not desirable. They consider the essence of religious teachings to be more important than a show of being religious. Higher values such as honesty and hard work were emphasized. Some said that people have to be practical in following the values derived from religion. One's peer group, exposure to life outside the town/village, an 'inner voice' and so on were also cited as influences on value systems. Some contended: "*For me it's from home. They have put our ideologies in our mind*." Others felt that, although the influence of parents, teachers, etc is the most profound, it is relevant only up to a certain age, when friends and peer groups tend to take over. However, finally, in their view, a person has to rely on his or her own conscience when faced with a difficult decision in life. Many respondents from among all the groups of young professionals-to-be attributed their value system as being derived principally from their family rather than religion. Others, however, were quick to point out that a family may have been influenced by religion: "*Where did our parents get that code of conduct? They have got it from religion. Whatever they are teaching us, they are teaching from religion. What we are imbibing may be coming indirectly from religion*."

3.2.2 Religion is 'fairly important'

A substantial number of respondents in each of our secular sector categories considered religion to be a major factor in shaping their value system and influencing their personal and professional conduct. Both Sikh and Hindu bureaucrats, media persons and academics listed religion as a crucial aspect that inspires their decisions and conduct in all spheres of life. However, the nature, extent and mode of influence of religion differs from person to person, depending on their interpretation of 'being religious'.

While one of the traditional Sikh businessmen and all the development workers strongly emphasized the significance of religion in their lives, a businessman from Hyderabad and the corporate executives made a clear distinction between personal morality and their business decisions and activities. Among the youth, doubts were voiced about the practicality of religious values in professional life. The Sikh youth were enthusiastic, quoting from the Book and underscoring the value of the Word in their lives. The young men and women from the Hyderabad were more philosophical and some even rationalistic in their views.

A Sikh bureaucrat from Chandigarh who had joined the service in 1974 said that he has remained honest even when experiencing difficult times in supporting his family, asserting that "*I have imbibed my core values of sacrifice and humility from the Sikh religion. Thinking and behaviour evolves because interaction of various forces at work that may come from religion, from society, or from family. It is a mix of all those*." However, he did disclose that he had come across people who could, on the face of it, be described as very religious, but when their value system is examined at close quarters, it is found to be totally disappointing. Another retired IAS (Indian Administrative Service) officer from Punjab, who equates religion with spirituality, considers religion to be the basis for the value system that he follows in life, claiming that he adheres to the essence of his faith and ignores rituals and superstitions. He explained that the theology of Sikhism is against exploitation and that this tenet has played a role in his professional life:

> *I was adviser to the Governor during the militancy period in Punjab. I did my best to see that innocent people were not charged by suspicion. In a way, I can say I had a role in preventing what you now call state terrorism. There, two things guided me: one is my Guru's teachings and the other was Urdu poetry.*

A senior journalist employed with a national broadcasting service in Hyderabad professed that religion gives him a list of rights and wrongs and, although he follows the debate between rational/scientific thinking and religion closely, he has also been deeply impressed with "*what is generally perceived as the cruder form of religion, which is the folk religion*." This, he claimed, had made him a nature lover and a more conscientious consumer of technology. For a Sikh editor of well-established English daily, being born into a religion and a certain value system was enough for him to believe that religion has played a fairly prominent part in his life – "*you just imbibe it*", he told us. The same respondent reported that he had prayed since childhood, and had continued to do so through school and college:

> *To a certain extent, my core has definitely been identified with religion. It is a very important aspect of my life. I saw no reason why I could not go party out at night and pray in the morning. I mean, there was no contradiction involved in my mind. Yes, there are rituals in religion that may seem absurd, at times, but they make the fabric in which religion is interwoven in society. At the same time, at no point would I say that morality is not possible without religion. It is.*

A pharmacist in a government health centre and President of the Pharmacists' Union of Punjab emphasized the importance of religious teachings and stated that his values have all come from religion, but only after he developed a deep understanding of the scriptures and stories about the Gurus. He is of the opinion that, if people think that religion is only about visiting the *gurdwara*, praying there, taking *prashad* (offerings) and asking for *mannats* (wishes), then this is not faith but superstition:

> *If you understand the core spirit (mool bhavana) or root of a religion, then there is no difference between professional and personal code. If I put on a show that I am religious, when actually I am not, there is a struggle between professional and personal code – people who do not have proper professional codes are automatically disconnected with the religion*.

A female development worker from Punjab reported that her value system had been taken from the teachings of the Guru and from her parents, who were deeply religious. What she considers fundamental is the notion of *seva* – service to others. She noted that it was religion that had inspired her work at the house for destitutes she runs. "*When God is in the heart …[she argued] Goodness comes in a natural way*."

This certainty that value systems emanate from religion was also expressed by the director of the Anti-Corruption Bureau of Andhra Pradesh, who we interviewed at his office in Hyderabad:

> *Religion plays a very important role in most people's lives, giving them a good value system. But it does not mean that people who are religious have a good value system – it cannot be a linear relationship between being religious and having a very strong value system. The Bhagavad Gita has a very good influence on me. I don't consider Bhagavad Gita to be just a religious book. It's a very smart book – that teaches you how to live your life in a proper way.*

A highly religiously motivated businessman from Punjab, who attributed everything to the grace of God, stressed the need to spread the 'fragrance' of religion among other people –he considers this the best *seva* (service) to God, but in his view it can only be achieved if one becomes a living example of religious principles. Religion inculcates feelings of both fear and love, he believes: "*Vickt dard, batak baram bajat, sukh sehez Vigase*" [*Darshan* of God will rid you of all grief and problems in life]. He was of the opinion that, even in business, one can adopt ethical practices and still make a profit. "*Guru maharaj [lord] says, dasa nuhan di kirat karo"* [Nobody should be able to point a finger at your profit], In business, in his view, the most important code of conduct is to treat customers well – talk nicely, give respect, give good quality material in full quantity and make a 'legitimate' profit. "*We don't need to do a course to learn this [he asserted]. Only if you follow this conduct, the customer will come back to you. Customers know that here we will get the right thing at a reasonable price*."

While the youth in Hyderabad identified several other factors that define their value systems – "*not religion alone, but our inner conscience*" – in Punjab young students displayed an amazing depth of knowledge of the texts and history of the Sikh religion. They not only expressed a good understanding of the history and inclusive character of Sikh religious teachings, but also freely articulated the significance of the various religious symbols. When asked how religion affects their personal conduct and value system, these young people felt that faith gives them confidence and helps them to face life's challenges better, while the overt symbols of their religion give them a unique identity in public.

3.2.3 Other factors: education, books and socialization

The responses from youth in particular, and also some of the professionals, brought in a variety of other factors, including friends, reading and education, which they felt help to sharpen their ethical radar and enable them to navigate the dilemmas they face in their personal and professional lives.

A female engineer working on an Andhra Pradesh government highways project said that her value system comes from society, education, culture and even literature and novels, while another female civil servant with the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation thought that stories told to her during her childhood, moral teaching by her family and in school, and even the habit of reading newspapers, which she picked up when she was very young, have worked upon her values system. A female

corporate executive from Hyderabad listed parents and family, social background, school, places where she had worked and friends as important influences.

Several others reported that they had drawn the values by which they live from different sources. A corporate executive from Hyderabad felt that socialization into the Indian way of life, which involves respecting parents, elders, neighbours and colleagues, which has impacted on his views and the way he treats or deals with people. A young woman in one of our focus group discussions said: "*I think though it starts at home, as we get out into the world, we are also influenced by other people. We change our opinions according to the people we meet*." Another example is a young academic, who said that she derives her principles from her various teachers, from elementary school to postgraduate studies.

Quoted below is another interesting response which enriches this diversity. It comes from a senior bureaucrat from Hyderabad, who has a postgraduate degree in medicine and had had nine years' experience of practising medicine before he joined the civil service:

> *Basically, my own reading... I'm a bookworm. I read a lot of books ... also, my socio-economic conditions; cultural setting; my preparation for the service; and most important my medical training. I have also been influenced by Leo Tolstoy's story "How much land does a man need"... and the quotation by Mahatma Gandhi 'On this earth there is enough for everyone's need but not for their greed.' Greed really destroys a person. It is said that most of the time we spend our health to make wealth. And the later part of our life, we spend some wealth to recover that health, which we cannot recover because it's a permanent damage. Man is greedy by nature, it is important we draw a line between need and greed.*

3.2.4 Codes of an organization or profession

Among our respondents was a group of people who made references to the ethics and codes related to their specific professions to express their ideas about their personal morality and public roles. A central belief that is evident from the discussion above is that personal values are the basis for integrity in professional life, providing the strength to stay away from unethical behaviour. As will be reported in this section, some respondents carry this argument further and do not speak of personal values being in conflict with professional work. In contrast, others feel that, while religion comes in handy within the home, it is less use outside it, because of the conflicts that they encounter between their personal values and professional demands.

A Sikh doctor who has spearheaded an interest group to fight breast cancer, felt that medical ethics are very different from the ethics governing personal behaviour: "*how we behave with the patients, how we treat them in confidence, how we behave with their families – these are medical ethics*." He affirmed that medical ethics are his professional ethics, related to the doctor-patient relationship and not to anything else. However, he also said that there are times when he tells his patients, "*I can treat you, but only Wahe Guru [revered Lord] can* ***cure*** *you*." He reported that he also follows the concept of donation that is enshrined in Sikhism in his professional life:

> *There is the concept of the Dasvand – 10 per cent as donation. It is not just about 10 per cent of your earning; it can be 10 per cent of your time. I don't think I do anything in 10 per cent, but the concept in Sikhism is that you must do something in the form of donation or social work. I had thought that I would do this kind of work after my retirement, but I am already working on it now by the will of Wahe Guru.*

The doctor-turned-bureaucrat from Hyderabad quoted above gave an example, claiming that if a Naxalite were to come knocking at his door in the night saying that he is bleeding, he could not say to him, "*go away you are an anti-social. I can't say that. I don't have a choice, my job is to relieve people of their suffering and that has really shaped my thinking*." The lady doctor heading the house for the destitute in Amritsar also felt that doctors need to be sensitive to the financial condition of patients, not merely following their professional code of conduct or arbitrarily prescribing expensive tests to earn their cut.

A female academic felt that if a strong value system is in place, it would help people adopt ethical behaviour in their professional lives, for example, "*we would not indulge in corrupt practices like plagiarism [which is against the professional code] [although she added the reservation that this would ensure ethical behaviour] only if our personal convictions are strong*." The Sikh editor from Chandigarh emphasized the need for a strict code of ethics for the media: "*I am uncomfortable if somebody offers me more than a cup of tea or coffee. I just don't like it. And often, if I am doing some interview, I am very happy to pick up the tab. To me I am being corrupt even if I am giving a bribe, accepting one is a separate issue altogether*."

The director of the Anti-Corruption Bureau in Andhra Pradesh said that he diligently follows the virtues of non-violence, vegetarianism, the importance of means over ends and *karma* (action, duty). He

claimed that he does not find his personal conflicting with his professional values, but rather the other way round:

> *There have been tremendous conflicts because as a police officer, I have a very demanding job. A policeman in India is required to work fourteen hours a day almost without any Sundays or any holidays. First few years, there were instances that, you know, I wouldn't be coming home at all. So many festivals… we wouldn't be at home. So there were conflicts between my duty and responsibility as a husband or a father and my professional requirements. And unfortunately or fortunately, the professional requirements override your personal.*

The idea of ethical conduct was considered incompatible with a fiercely competitive environment by a majority of the corporate executives and many young professionals in the making. The corporate executives articulated that, although corporate ethics reflect some of the same values promoted by most religious teachings, there is a big gap between precept and practice: "*It basically depends on the character and expectations of the organization you are working with – nothing to do with religion or values*." They are familiar with the pressures to engage in bribery or dishonest behaviour. While some are resigned to the possibility, others hope to work for organizations where they can conduct themselves in accordance with more ethical practices. Even the businessman from Hyderabad, who is deeply religious in his personal life, expressed his inability to carry all the values that religion preaches into his business practice: "*I have to be flexible, I have no choice*."

The younger generation reflected on the applicability of what they had picked up from their families, religions and other influences in their professional lives, because not too many had at the time of the study ventured into the real corporate/professional world to find out things for themselves. There is a hint of idealism, and most expressed a desire to join companies that stick to an ethical approach. However, even those who quoted from the religious texts or professed strong personal values do not think religion could help if the organization they join demands that they indulge in bribery or other forms of corruption. "[*O]f course [they added], you can quit…You know many people leave the organization [for which they work] because their personal outlook doesn't match with that of the organization, but I don't think everybody will have the same luxury to leave the organization*."

Religion is therefore considered a tool to teach values within the home, which is then reflected in the value system that a person may follow in his or her profession. Companies profess to follow ethical

codes, but in practice it is suggested that these often remain more a written document than a practised policy. Any individual inclined to follow such a code and go against the grain of accepted practice may, according to our informants, face ostracism and disillusionment. The result is often a trade-off between personal values and professional requirements.

3.3 Definitions and perceptions of corruption

In this section we focus attention on the different ways in which the problem of corruption is constructed by members of the various social groups with which we interacted in Punjab and Andhra Pradesh. Borrowing from Pavarala (1996, p. 60), the definitions and interpretations that shape our respondents' understanding of corruption are grouped into two: the narrow, or legalistic, and the broader, more moralistic conceptions, which, as Pavarala recommends, should be seen more as 'definitional tendencies' than fixed categories. The purpose is to explore the politics of definition inherent in the way particular individuals/groups align themselves along either of the definitional tendencies. We have not attempted to create taxonomies of corruption within each of the two tendencies, as that would impose an order on things that may inherently not be orderly. The idea in this section is to represent the multiplicity of views and any ambiguity that exists in the notions of what constitute corrupt activities. We also question whether these definitions point towards a community of shared meanings. Many social scientists seem to avoid such concerns, by adopting legal norms as yardsticks. However, the wide range of reactions that our interviews and discussions elicited reveal what Pavarala (1996, p.53) describes as 'fluidity' in the boundary between corrupt and non-corrupt acts. His contention is that the concept of corruption is "*fixed neither in time nor space; rather, it evolves. There is little agreement, except perhaps with regard to 'outright bribery', about what constitutes corruption*."

3.3.1 'Narrow' and 'legalistic' definitions

Narrow/legalistic definitions list a limited number of acts under the category of corruption and approximate the definition of corruption given in law. These definitions may sometimes be a simple reflection of legal provisions, but more commonly, they are an expression of the spirit and ideas (as against specific provisions) of the law, and are therefore, legalistic in a technical sense.

In our study, almost three-quarters of the bureaucrats, two-thirds of the corporate executives, a significant number (almost half) of academicians/media persons and two development workers (one,

a doctor, and the other a head of legal affairs) offered one or another form of a narrow legalistic definition. The young students and professionals also came up with legalistic definitions, but an equal number of them defined corruption within a broad, moralistic idiom.

Of those who gave a narrow legalistic definition of corruption, the vast majority identified acts that involve 'monetary exchanges' as deserving the label of 'corrupt'. Bribery, misuse of office, misappropriation of public funds and donations were the most frequently cited examples. These respondents were also of the view that corruption involves the use of public office for private gain and is in violation of the public interest. However, it was interesting that none of those who gave a narrow/ legalistic definition identified gift-giving, adultery or nepotism as a form of corruption (see Table 2).

Table 2: Social groups that offered a narrow/legalistic definition of corruption

Social groups that offered a narrow/legalistic definition	**Examples of corrupt acts cited**
Bureaucrats (75%) Corporate executives (60%) Academics/ media persons (50%) Youth (50%) Development workers (30%)	Bribe (monetary exchange) Use of substandard material in construction Misuse of discretionary powers Siphoning off money

We asked all our respondents to define what for them amounts to corruption. As will be clear from the samples of the definitional statements given below, these individual responses relate to individuals' professional and social roles and do not include activities within the private realm of life, such as the family:

- *In public office, corruption is when you are demanding something from somebody or pressurizing the other person to make payment before his or her routine job is done.* A senior Sikh bureaucrat and head of a public sector enterprise in Chandigarh
- *Supposing I have to get a birth certificate made; I am supposed to get it as soon as I fill a form request. But I have to make ten rounds for it. This is corruption. When a medical representative from a pharmaceutical company asks a doctor to prescribe drugs manufactured by their company for two or*

three years and in return they give him or her a car or a sponsored trip abroad. A middle-aged Sikh public servant from Punjab working in a Primary Health Centre

- *I define corruption as taking advantage of someone for a profit, cheating others or making loss to others, e.g. in engineering field, there is cheating in quality of construction work by contractors to make profit.* A 40-year old woman engineer working on a infrastructure project of the Government of Andhra Pradesh
- *Basically, giving a person favour s/he is not entitled to, or disfavouring somebody using your discretionary power for your self-interest – that is corruption. It could be for money or for being in good books of an influential person.* Woman bureaucrat, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation
- *Corruption is rampant, it is widespread and it is increasing. The worst and most disturbing part is that people think of it as normal. It has stopped shocking people. ...The amount of money stashed in the Swiss banks by Indians is something like 1,460 billion dollars. One-four-six-zero billion dollars is the amount of money which the Indians have stashed away in Swiss banks! And the interesting part about this is that this amount is more than the amount deposited in Swiss banks by the rest of the world*. Director of Anti-Corruption Bureau in Andhra Pradesh
- *Corruption is spreading like forest fire in our country and it is difficult to survive/stand apart (like a small green plant in the forest) without it – society has become like this. Although I am a God-fearing person conducting my business honestly, I gave five lakh rupees for admission of my daughter because they were demanded from me – I had to arrange it by hook or crook.* A well-established Sikh businessman from Amritsar and a respected member of the Gurdwara
- *Anything which is not legitimate, offering to get certain things done by taking money, taking a favour is corruption. Something that is damaging for the system, for the taxpayers and ultimately for our work culture*. Director of HR Operations in an IT company in Hyderabad
- *There are two types of corruption – one is speed money to expedite delivery of your work. The other is money paid to do wrong. I have to indulge so many times in the former*. A respectable businessman from Hyderabad
- *When people start charging money for things that they are supposed to do without taking money – that is corruption. Corruption I would label it largely as demanding money. If you are corrupt, you cannot be morally correct*. A senior doctor in a government medical institution at Chandigarh
- *Government makes laws and policies which are good, but the problem is with the implementation of these policies – because of the corruption. I think there are two things, one is, you are siphoning off the*

money meant for welfare and secondly, you are not performing your duty sincerely. A Sikh 30-year old woman lecturer from Punjab

- *If I expect any extra money or extra favour from anybody to attend to my own work, I think that is corruption*. A senior woman academic from Hyderabad
- *If you want to gain more than what you are entitled to legally, it is corruption*. A media person from Hyderabad.
- *I'll give you a peculiar case of corruption. My village is on the highway, you need to walk around half a kilometre to reach my village. And in this stretch, the state-owned Road Transport Corporation (RTC) used to operate 20 services in a day. There are private auto fellows there. The auto fellows have gone to the depot manager of RTC and asked him to reduce the bus service, as it is affecting their livelihood. He agreed to reduce the bus service by 50 per cent if they can pay him Rs. 3000 a month. It was done*. Advocate and Head of Legal Affairs with an NGO in Hyderabad

Other acts which were considered corrupt by both Sikh and Hindu young people, represented by young college and university students from diverse educational and family backgrounds, include:

- *Bribing to get even registration of birth done or to get a death certificate – you have to bribe the Panchayat* [the local governing body in rural areas].
- *When you are driving and don't have you vehicle papers or your helmet, instead of giving fine on a chalan [ticket] of Rs. 500, you can give Rs. 50 to the cop and escape. Everybody, I think, must have indulged in this – maybe petty – form of corruption in his or her life.*
- *I wanted to have a license, so we went to the Road Transport Organization office and wrote a test that one has to write before you get your license. The person there failed me and the second time, I went, he demanded I give him Rs. 500 and he will get me the license. I think this is a kind of corruption.*
- *Whenever our telephone has to get repaired, we have to go and pay Rs. 100 and only then the lineman will come.*
- *I have heard that whenever the government officers sanction a project to anybody, 2 per cent of that money is automatically sent to his place; and it is not even considered bribe as long as you don't demand more than this.*
- *Whoever can pay donation is joining engineering colleges.*

- *To give a bona fide certificate, the office superintendent in the college office is asking us for money. Even if it is just Rs. 5-10, we have to pay. This is corruption on his part.*
- *The root cause of corruption is the Babu [bureaucratic] system in India – we need permission for everything from them and they start using their power to exploit people, which is corruption. We are at their mercy.*
- *Basically for me it's trying to get something extra than what you deserve by using unfair means and that unfair is different for every person. During elections – give money, get votes. That's also corruption.*
- *Policeman refuses to write an FIR [First Information Report] – that is corruption.*
- *Corruption means giving small money so that police doesn't fine you big. As for me, I too did corruption; I too gave bribe. To that extent, I am a part of the system. In fact I am encouraging it by giving bribe.*
- *Being from a business family, I know what corruption for us is. From constable to income tax officer all take bribe. I know that giving bribe is also corruption, but we have to give – we all are a part of corruption – there is no escape.*

3.3.2 Broad/ moralistic definitions

The broad/moralistic definition includes aspects identified by the law as corruption, but often goes beyond a legalistic view, articulating an abstract, amorphous morality, and listing a large number of acts under this category.

In our study, almost one-quarter of the bureaucrats, one-third of the corporate executives, almost half of the academicians/media persons/youth and a significant proportion (three-quarters) of the development workers presented broad/moralistic definitions of corruption and listed several different acts in the corrupt category. In their view, gift-giving, nepotism, womanizing, tipping and dowry all amount to corruption. Some of the more unusual types include 'psychic corruption' and 'moral corruption'. There was a general feeling among our respondents that personal agendas have taken over from the public good. Now, they pointed out, people proudly admit how much they get in bribes. Others blamed the non-implementation of strict rules and laws e.g. by a policeman at a traffic light. Although not representative of all bureaucrats among our respondents, a few in this category also gave broad/moralistic definitions, even though one would have expected them to provide a more restrictive and legalistic definition of corruption, as they are steeped in the norms of public office. – See Table 3 and the definitions below:

Table 3: Social groups that offered a broad/moralistic definition of corruption

Social groups that offered a broad/moralistic definition	Examples of corrupt acts cited
Bureaucrats (25%) Corporate executives (40%) Academics/ media persons (50%) Youth (50%) Development workers (70%)	Not doing your duty Nepotism/favouritism Flirting Tipping Corporate corruption Womanizing/sexual favours Defamation Exploiting the helpless Bias based on looks/caste/religion Dowry Fake certificates for admission Bribing God

- *It means gratification of one's needs. It can be physical need, which means again womanizing or illegal gratification of any kind [and] bribery. It includes gratification, in all senses of the word – physical, material, tangible, intangible and all.* A senior civil servant, Government of Andhra Pradesh
- *Corruption essentially is when you give something and get a favour in return. But there is also moral corruption. It could be a favour of a very different kind and you see that in all fields, you see that in bureaucracy, you see that in politics, you see that in films…a sexual favour... you know the story of the casting couch.* A female bureaucrat, Andhra Pradesh
- *It is the total destruction of the administrative system, justice, ethics – it is total destruction*. A retired Sikh civil servant
- *Corruption is when one's thought is corrupt. In Punjab, people proudly admit how much they get as bribe. And people who do not accept such money are said to have 'khushki' (a disease).* A middle-aged public servant from Punjab working in a Primary Health Centre
- *Corruption is when you do not do your duty. We are all 'public servants', and we are made by the public. Like, in my profession at the public health centre, if someone comes to me with a prescription, and I am chatting on the mobile phone, I ignore my job and continue talking over the phone – I find that more*

important than to attend to the patient, who is the reason I have my post. This is corruption. A middle-aged public servant from Punjab working in a Primary Health Centre

- *If I use my official vehicle outside of office, it is corruption. If I use my position to do some favour to a relative or a friend, it is also corruption. And straight away taking money, in all various ways, is corruption*. Bureaucrat in a central government service in Andhra Pradesh
- *Generally we look at corruption in financial terms, but monetary corruption, which means a payment of money for achieving whatever you want, is one small kind of corruption. Corruption may be of the psyche, of the mind, of the situation, of intent, of process – corruption takes on lots of things and forms just like violence. ...You have a policeman standing, then you will not cross a red light; if you don't have him you'll cross the red light. If you can get away [with it]... you indulge in breaking rules*. A 50-year old senior Sikh marketing professional
- *Beda gark keeta hoya hai [It is ruining everything]. Those who are corrupt cannot be religious. Medical college in name of Guru Ram Das – some ethics must be followed there, but it is only in name. Corporate system also always exploits people – agricultural universities are bought by them [commercial companies] to endorse harmful genetically modified produce*. A Sikh woman President of a NGO in Punjab
- *When you make a conscious decision which is not fair towards somebody, for example in journalism, when I am writing anything, where I am not being fair, it is a kind of corruption. See the way I look at it is, the very concept of corruption is something that corrodes the core value system and as far as I am concerned you'll know when you see it*. A senior Sikh editor of an English daily in Punjab
- *I will relate it to my work and give an example. We have a certain amount given for children who are infected with HIV. In case a child dies, we have a provision of giving the family an amount of Rs.1,200 for the funeral expenses. But some of the NGO partners give Rs. 750 and get the signature for Rs. 1,200. So in living or in death, there is corruption.* A female programme manager of an international NGO in Hyderabad
- *Aged people who are helpless, in order to get pension, have to roam a lot around the government offices to get the money, which they have worked so hard to earn throughout the lifetime. This is the only one thing that which has no definition yet touches every person, every caste, every religion and every place throughout the world. So, this is the one thing which doesn't discriminate anyone*. A development worker from Hyderabad

- *Not just bribes. Bias based on looks/caste/religion is also corruption. Human rights violation is also a form of corruption – when you trample someone's life when people are discriminated against. Corruption has been institutionalized and has undeniably amplified. No scruples. A corrupt man is not ashamed. Twenty to thirty years ago, a corrupt man was marked out. Now he is proud, displays wealth and has recognition. We have given them a high status and regard*. A 45-year old Sikh advocate and a human rights activist

Other acts falling within the broad/moralistic definitional tendency, which were considered as corruption by both Sikh and Hindu young people, represented by young college and university students from diverse educational and family backgrounds, include:

- *If parents have to give money at the time of my daughter's wedding. That is corruption.*
- *Teacher who is teaching in the school is engaged as a tuition teacher. By using him/her as a tuition teacher, you want that this extra income you provide will get some extra mark for your children.*
- *According to me work which is not done according to rules and regulations is corruption.*
- *If the deserving do not get what is due to them – that is corruption. Like there are reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Some people show that they belong to these castes even when they don't.*
- *I know of such cases where people take bribes and donate part of it to the gurdwara. They console their inner voice. For example, my aunty does this because my uncle accepts bribes – bribing the God.*
- *Corruption has some different meanings in different arenas. I'm not fulfilling my duties or responsibilities – that is corruption. My parents are sending me here to study but I am not studying here. If I am not giving my performance up to mark while working in college or office, that is corruption by me.*
- *A person gets his hand injured, he goes to a hospital. Even though it's a small thing, nowadays what most hospitals are doing, they are giving a whole list of scans just so they can earn money. It's not necessary but they are like - you need this operation, that operation. It's really not necessary but they are demanding it. That's corruption.*
- *Any type of favouritism, I would term it as corruption. But it could be as simple as flirting with somebody, to get better service. We tip and the expectation is if we tipped well, I'll be treated better. That's a form of corruption. Flattery is also a part of corruption! Flattery, flirting, tipping – you're trying to better your vibes by sweetening the pot.*

- *Wanting to get something for ourselves, but for me, the important part would be, at the expense of someone else.*
- *Look at say, Reliance [Industries Ltd]. At one point of time they started out as thugs. And they started out as hoarders and cheaters and whatever. Today they are the biggest example of corporate governance. Eventually people would like to believe that you develop a conscience and maybe sometimes, religion comes into play, and we have this whole idea of…in olden days, hell and heaven, afterlife. You might kill 50 people in your youth to accumulate your wealth, but suddenly you're like, okay now…give it back to the society, bribe God and say, you know I am a transformed person, please reserve a double bed for me in heaven.*
- *I think the best example for me would be at my workplace. When I joined ICICI [Bank], initially for the first year I didn't speak to anyone. I used to go to work, finish my work and leave, that's it. I never said hi to anyone. And after my performance rating they didn't promote me. I was so shattered. Then somebody told me you have an attitude problem, this that, you've got to gel with people, you've got to say hi to them. You've got to speak to people. So next year, I started opening up. I started saying hi to other managers and all that and next year I was promoted. Again, I started inching closer to them and getting personal…not otherwise.*
- *In the workplace you have to gel with everybody. But sleeping with your manager to get promoted is definitely no-no. But smiling, hi, how are you, having lunch together is still acceptable. Buttering him up is still more acceptable.*
- *So there is accepting gifts because that's part of…I mean Japanese culture is all about gift giving and gift accepting. And if you don't, you're not building relationships. But if you take too much of a gift, now you're at their mercy. You've lost leverage. You've lost power for your company. And there is always a way about gifts. And again it varies from culture to culture and company to company.*

As is apparent from the definitions above, corruption takes on various forms and explanations for it differ. Within each of the two definitional tendencies presented here, there is a diversity of views. The notion of corruption presented by respondents appears to have come out of their experiences during the course of their working lives and their day-to-day interaction with other members of society. Their choice of definition is dependent on both practical issues at a particular time and their assumptions about the social world and their place in it. It may be futile to assume that a consensus can be

achieved about the norms and values that define and circumscribe what can be called corruption. Our respondents, while struggling to provide clear definitions of corruption, also explained what they believe to be the causes of corruption in India. We will be reading those views in conjunction with our analytical categories in Section 4, which relate directly to the aetiology of corruption and the influence of religious values on attitudes towards corrupt practices.

3.4 Discourses on corruption in religious texts

We have seen in an earlier section that religion means different things to different people. Many of our respondents emphasized the need to identify with the sets of beliefs and teachings that a religion represents/epitomizes, while others considered rituals as symbolic of the spirit of the religion. We asked them to tell us if there is a way in which religion explains what corruption is, or if there are explicit religious teachings that ordain moral conduct and discourage individuals from engaging in corruption.

Our respondents, both Sikh and Hindu, felt that no religion preaches the telling of lies or excuses dishonesty or corruption. In their attempts to correlate religious teachings/texts to what may be understood as corruption, Sikh respondents from Punjab, especially the young men and women, quoted extensively and verbatim from the texts, contending that theirs is a religion of the Book – the *Guru Granth Sahib*, which contains the essence of all religious teachings. Hindu respondents in Andhra Pradesh did mention the wisdom contained in ancient scriptures like *Vedas* and mentioned religious books like the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagvad Gita*, but were not forthcoming in their recall of direct quotes from these sources, except for a couple of quotes from the *Gita*. Many, however, referred to the didactic tales from these books narrated to them in their childhood, which explain what corrupt behaviour is and that it ultimately leads to the destruction of both self and society.

Among Sikh respondents, it was felt that the Sikh religion explicitly instructs against corruption and encourages its followers to help the poor and the downtrodden. Respondents said that if people were to follow religion, there would be no corruption. The Sikh religion goes to the extent of saying that one should not even *think* about indulging in corruption – "*if I have it in mind that my neighbour is making more money and I want to do such things, my religiosity stops me*." Very strong lines were quoted from the Book, which direct followers not to indulge in corruption, including:

- *Hak paraya nanaka us sur su gaya*… [Whatever you acquire through corruption is equivalent as the Hindu having beef [cow] and Muslims eating pigs [pork]]
- *Kirat karo, naam japo, vand chako* [work hard, remember god, consume after sharing]
- *Dasa nuhan di kirat karo* [Work hard to earn your living]
- *Dasvand* [one tenth of your earning should be used in helping the poor or in charity]
- Stay away from *kaam, krodh, moh, lobh, ahankar* [lust, anger, attachment, greed and arrogance]
- *Maya mein raho par maya se door* [Be in this world and not of this world – like lotus]
- *Neecha Anter Neech Jaat Neechiyon At Neech* [Be one /Identify with the downtrodden]
- *Sarbat do bhala*… [The good of all]
- *Jin sehdiya tin paaya naam* [one who does *seva* – service - finds God].

The Hindu respondents stated that, like every religion, the Hindu religion *"tells us to be good in our lives and to others. No religion will tell you that you should do bad things.*" They gave examples of festivals like *Diwali*, which symbolize the victory of good over evil. Alluding to some of the folk tales with which Hindus grow up, several of the respondents affirmed that there are texts, practices and traditions in religion that inculcate a sense of good and bad among their followers. Others stressed the need for *karma:* "*I need to do my job sincerely, whatever I am expected to do. I shall perform my duty irrespective of the consequences.*" The teachings of modern gurus like Vivekananda, Sri Sri Ravi Shanker and the Brahama Kumaris sect were also mentioned by a few. The quotations that some of them came up with included:

- *Karm karo*... [Work hard without thinking about the results/expecting the fruits of labour].
- *Don't pray to God for what you want, God knows what you deserve*.
- *Be in the world, not of it, like the lotus leaf* – Swami Vivekananda.

3.5 Conclusion

In this section we have analysed and explained people's perceptions of religion and corruption, as well as their understanding of what religion says about corruption. The following section aims to ascertain if there is a link between religious values and people's attitudes towards corruption.

4 Interpreting the influence of religion on attitudes towards corruption

As we saw in Section 2, the available literature on the relationship between corruption and religions offers comparisons between various datasets and points towards explanations that are aggregated at the country level, but does not tell us anything about how individuals' attitudes towards corruption are formed, the impact of religious (and other socio-cultural) influences on attitude formation, or the way that individuals condemn or justify corrupt behaviour using the language of religion. Our research seeks to explore at the individual, as well as the regional levels, how attitudes are formed in relation to religion, and the impact that religion has (or does not have) on attitudes towards moral issues.

David Nussbaum, Chief Executive of Transparency International, has pointed towards a direct link between values, religion and corruption. As mentioned in Section 2, some argue that in countries where religion plays a vital role in the lives of most people, it tends to be assumed that people derive their ethical framework from their religion and that personal values play a significant role in moral decision-making related to corrupt practices. Religion provides many with the language of ethics and, often, an actual 'list' of rules to live by, some of which can be interpreted as being of particular importance to fighting corruption (Marquette, 2010).

In this section an analysis of people's perceptions of the role of religion, including values, texts, leaders and organizations, in forming their attitudes towards/against corruption is presented. Do religious beliefs and values in fact translate into less corruption? Are there other factors, besides religion, that have significant influence on people's behaviours/attitudes towards corruption in the public realm?

4.1.1 Religions and people's attitudes towards corruption

One of the important themes that this study set out to explore is whether and how religion plays a role in shaping public morality in general and attitudes towards corruption in particular. All our respondents were of the view that levels of corruption in public life in India are extremely high, and that corruption itself is institutionalized. As one respondent remarked, "*a corrupt man doesn't feel ashamed – not very long ago, a corrupt man would be mobbed and attacked*." Just as no single, clear-cut or precise definition of corruption emerged from the research, different factors were held responsible for the existence and a perceptible intensification of corruption in India. Religion itself is not considered by respondents as a determinant of the levels of corruption and indeed is seen by most as having minimal influence on attitudes towards corruption. Corruption itself is seen as a putative condition that continues to thrive, unchallenged by religion or faith.

4.1.2 Aetiologies of corruption

When confronted with the question of the causes of corruption, respondents came up with an assortment of insightful explanations for its prevalence. Many attributed the problem of corruption to systemic or structural factors, while others identified changes in societal values, attitudes and systems as causes of the perceived acceptance of corruption. However, none linked corruption to religion or religious values unless they were specifically asked to do so.

Younger respondents tend to feel that the main reason corruption exists is because there is too much dependency on human beings and a lack of transparency: "*The moment processes are made transparent, I think corruption could be cut, at least in the bureaucracy – red tape – to a large extent*." They are confident that technology can help to improve the speed of bureaucratic processes and remove human discretion.

Students and youth also seem to have been disillusioned by seeing or hearing of incidents of corruption concerning religions themselves, for example when building materials supplied for religious places are taken away by officials, or there is corruption in mid-day meals schemes. They seem to think that corruption is part of their lives, indulging in it themselves without feeling guilty, for example bribing a police official to avoid a fine for breaking traffic rules. It is assumed that two of the main reasons for increased levels of corruption are, first, that everyone wants more money, and second, everyone wants to shorten administrative processes. They also blamed loopholes in the system and disparity of income levels for precipitating and reinforcing corruption. They supposed that rich people indulge in corruption because they want to keep, or even widen, the existing gap between them and the poor.

Bureaucrats felt that in India, the culture of pleasing political bosses to get posted to places more amenable to their families is widely prevalent. Others felt that the sociological reason for civil servants becoming corrupt is demoralization because preference is given to corrupt or more pliable officers. Indicating the shameless tendency in 'Indians' to admire those who "*break the rule rather than follow the rule*," a development worker explained how, if a new rule comes out today, the first thing people will think about is how to violate the rule rather than how to implement or follow it: "*And everything follows from there. We don't have a sense of discipline; you can see it on the road and you can see it everywhere*."

A mention was also made of the lack of role-models in a country where "*honesty is no longer a virtue.*" Another major cause of corruption in India is considered to be the attitude that "*we feel that we can get away with it*." Of course, greed, the temptation to make easy money, short cuts to save processing time, lack of strict punishment or penalties to discourage corruption, the urge to become 'big' and lead a luxurious lifestyle were among the list of the causes of corruption mentioned. One cause that came out is the serious mismatch between the demand for and supply of resources, as stressed by the Director, Anti Corruption Bureau:

> *India being a country of 1.2 million people, obviously all resources are at a premium in terms of its availability. They are scarce. It may be land, it may be schools, it may be services, it may be treatment in the hospital. It can be food grains, it can be water supply or electricity…. There are many more number of hands and mouths and feet which are chasing the little amount of resources. This is one big reason for corruption. The other reason I find now is materialism – the instinct to acquire wealth and pleasures of life in terms of equipment, electronic goods etc. In India people want all the good things of life to come without matching it with adequate hard work – by resorting more and more to shortcuts and shrewd methods of acquisition.*

A young corporate executive described how, in the professional arena, "*When you want to get things done the desire to just go there and achieve it is far greater than religion. And people want to be successful at any cost. I think religion takes a back seat. In professional lives we are surpassing values*." An sense of moral 'convenience' emerged as a strong theme: "*When we are in the need of giving bribe or any type of corruption; we forget our religious values and values given by our family. We only look for the short term benefits which we are getting from the situation in question. When there's work to be done, we forget religion – and ask for forgiveness later*."

4.1.3 Religion: a discredited entity?

Nearly all of the respondents agreed with a media person who felt that, "*in the present times, religion is a discredited entity – organized religion has become politicized and does not have force of the word behind it*." Nevertheless, several respondents in our study expressed their faith in the potential of religion to act as a powerful force in the fight against corruption. They were, however, quick to add the opinion that this can happen only if the "*true meaning*" of being religious is understood: "*If anyone really follows religion and knows the values through religion, corruption should be nil in the country or the world*." They said that religion can introduce discipline, but, "*we have become very pragmatic; we*

are not actually practising what the religion teaches us; we disregard ideas of the religion which do not suit us – then, how can religion help? If we bend the rule once, we can do it again."

Many respondents strongly felt that, "*If people follow religion, there will be no corruption*." In their opinion, if religion is given the place it deserves in the lives of the people and the moral values and ethics embedded in it are not just preached, but also followed, "*definitely religion can settle our problem and make this place a better place to live in*." They were also strong in their view that "*No religion tells you to be corrupt. No faith tells you to be corrupt*." Thus their contention was that, "if somebody calls themselves religious, and is still corrupt, they are not following the religion in spirit."

At the same time they expressed anguish over their perception that many who call themselves religious may still be corrupt: "*most religious institutions are now managed by the moneyed people and the type of people whose reputation is they have made money through wrong means and some of them are suspected of even misusing God's money*." They believe that religion today emphasizes rituals and "*does not inspire a change in heart to take man closer to God*."

A Sikh public servant stressed that Sikhism regards all people as equal – the provision of food by twenty-four hour community kitchens in *gurdwaras*, where everyone sits together to eats also symbolizes equality: "*But there are gurdwaras here in Punjab which do not allow scheduled caste people inside. This happens even in temples, also. Guru Nanak or any other God did not teach this*." He lamented that, "*religion has the rules, but who follows them?*" Another example given was of extravagant weddings in Punjab, which are an expression of conspicuous consumption, but are felt by many to showcase wealth accumulated by unfair means: "*I don't think religion can help in making them less wasteful*."

There was a wide consensus on the role of the family in ensuring that religion is followed in "*letter and spirit*" and influencing morality: "*if religion has to play a role, family and parents should inculcate good values from childhood – catch them young, like if you want to make your child an athlete - don't wait for the child to grow up and then start*." However, a senior corporate executive was less optimistic: "*When a child is young, even fifteen or sixteen, we can shape up his/her beliefs, or actions, but when they come out into the open and start interacting with others, they suddenly come to realize that those were*

the values by which the world does not operate today, and they sometimes go through a very negative kind of metamorphosis." Still others felt that only if the foundation of religious values is deep and there are "*refresher doses*" can youngsters be expected to stand on somewhat firmer ground – otherwise the problem is acute.

A majority of the respondents, especially young people, expressed their disillusionment with both what is termed religious and those who claim to be religious. They consider female foeticide to be a glaring example of how people are not following religious values. In fact, most reported that they have doubts about overly religious persons, questioning their true character and purpose, as '*they are the most corrupt and most inhuman persons*." A senior Sikh bureaucrat gave an example to illustrate this:

> *As far as Sikh religion is concerned, if we strictly go by the religious ethics, drinking is prohibited and so is non-vegetarian food. But all that has got diluted and there is very small percentage of people who do not drink, but still they claim to be religious. Maybe 90 per cent office bearers also drink and take non-vegetarian food. So I think people have adjusted themselves to that extent and it is no longer a taboo.*

Among the other examples of respondents' disappointment with the standing of religion in contemporary times is the tendency for people to use religion to misrepresent themselves as spiritual beings. For example, it is felt that people belonging to the business community visit temples more often than those from service class, "*they will stand there for long time and then start fleecing the public when they are back in their shops*."

However, the senior Sikh bureaucrat quoted above did point out one example of a religious injunction that is still adhered to: "*Sikh religion prohibited smoking and it is true, and I can say with certainty that 99.99 per cent of people who profess to be Sikhs do not smoke*." This one example may strengthen the weak case for the potential of religion. However, for any such potential to be realized, probably many other factors have to be in place.

4.1.4 Corruption continues to thrive, unchallenged by religion or faith

The bureaucrats and respondents from other professional groups in both Punjab and Andhra Pradesh did not feel that religion has much to do with shaping attitudes towards corruption, instead believing that outside pressures are at work. They felt that, even if a civil or public servant starts out with the best of ethical intentions, as taught by his or her family or religion, over time these get mixed-up and

dominated by whatever is in the administrative system or society as a whole. They recalled that during their training, there was 'big talk' about ethics and moral values, but that these may not govern civil servants' orientation in the long run in the face of compelling pressures exerted by "*big business, big industry and big politics – one needs very strong efforts to stand up to these*."

Several bureaucrats gave examples of times when they had resisted all such pressures, but said that it was lucky if their boss or commissioner was an ethical person, because if he or she was not, they would have been posted to a god-forsaken place. They felt that religion does not play any part in defining ethics in bureaucracy – "*in Punjab, everybody is saying that if there is money, it is only with the bureaucrats or with the politicians*." Several other respondents mentioned the strong and exploitative nexus between bureaucrats and politicians and asserted that it will take a 'revolution' of sorts to change this. Others labelled politicians as "*probably the most corrupt, and politics is now seen as a flourishing [family] business*."

Respondents felt that only if a person has strong convictions would they be able to resist corruption: "*One needs to draw a line between need and greed, necessity and extravagance. This is shaped to a very less extent by religion – more by circumstances, but not by the religion*." However, many also argued that this depends how religion is interpreted, "*Because I have seen many people from the same religion behaving differently – it all depends on your personal moral conscience. The same statement can be interpreted in different ways, from the same religious texts*." For example, one corporate executive from Hyderabad observed, "*Is there any religion that can claim that nobody from among them is involved in corruption? People of all religions are directly or indirectly a part of corruption. So, religion has no role in stopping corruption*."

Some of the women we talked to suggested that, "*The stage corruption has reached is beyond religion and culture – only financial stability and growth, enhanced social status; higher education and equality [will lead to a reduction], but not culture and religion*." Their view that "*religion doesn't play any role*" was echoed by a businessman from Hyderabad who pointed out that:

> Personally, I haven't seen great impact of religion on corruption. I have seen those who claim to be religious are at the same time, highly corrupt. See if you are a business person, and your religion says don't give bribe, you think you won't give bribe? You will. So, what has religion got to do with human nature? It doesn't hold good. There is no link

> between both these. And the unfortunate truth is, first of all, all religions we talk of ... are corrupt."

A media person from Punjab was not so sceptical, feeling that religion does give a person a very basic twinge of conscience and that it is culture that shapes how one treats corruption. He explained this by arguing that, if mega billion dollar companies like Infosys and Wipro can survive without corruption, the "*scenario*" must be changing: "*For a long time people believed that without corruption, you cannot succeed. Nobody wants to be corrupt (and also know when they are corrupt). People like Narayana Murthy [Founder and Chief Mentor] of Infosys can be change agents*."

4.1.5 The religion-corruption nexus

Many of our interviewees reiterated several times that no religion teaches its followers to indulge in corruption. However, some also pointed out that religion or spirituality is in no way instrumental in curbing greed in human beings. A development worker from Hyderabad was unsure if people understand the "*true spirit*" of religion nowadays: "*Religion has also become one of the sources of income. You become a God man or God woman and exploit the sentiments of the public*." Another corporate executive from Chandigarh narrated incidents of teenage girls using the excuse of going to the temple to meet their boyfriends.

A couple of respondents brought out certain attributes of religion that they think facilitate the tolerance of corruption. One such aspect that relates to the victims of corruption is "*Hinduism makes people fatalist*." Hindus believe that they have to suffer for the wrong *karma* (deeds/actions) of their previous lives, from which there is no escape, so people who are compelled to give money or suffer at the hands of corrupt government servants consider it their destiny or punishment for the bad *karma* of their previous birth and tolerate it. Hindus therefore remain silent about corruption instead of being intolerant and confronting the government or those departments that engage in it: "*we justify to ourselves, whatever I'm suffering today is my fault. This focus on fatalism makes Hinduism a very tolerant and mild religion*."

Another way in which the notion of *karma* is used was pointed out in our discussion with the Chief of the Anti-Corruption Bureau in Hyderabad, who made an interesting observation about the perpetrators of corruption: "*Unfortunately what is happening is we're increasingly making God a stakeholder in our*

corruption." He was referring to people who are making more and more money by unfair means and then trying "*to bribe God*" by constructing temples, reallocating their ill-gotten wealth into charity and philanthropy, or giving gifts to God in order to add to their *karma* bank. He gave the example of one particular minister in the government of the south Indian state of Karnataka, who had donated a diamond-studded gold crown worth Rs. 42 crores (Rs. 420 million) to the Tirumala temple in Tirupati. He informed us that:

> *These days his name is coming very regularly in the newspapers in connection with a scam. So in India we have a very interesting thing. We make God also as a stakeholder in our corruption activities. And this is how we sort of now expurgate ourselves of our guilt associated with corruption. I know a large number of businesses who will donate 5 per cent to temple or maybe to some charity. This is how we try to overcome our guilt conscience, by co-opting God as one of the stakeholders. This is very unfortunate. People overtly say that they are religious, by going to temples regularly and …they are still corrupt.*

4.2 Tradition, modernity and corruption

> Culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experiences and guide their action (Geertz, 1973, p. 145)

As mentioned in the review of literature, Tilman (1968) attributes the 'tolerance' of corruption in developing countries, in part, to a cultural "environment where there is little or no social stigma attached to bribery [and] nepotism." Some contest this perspective, even accusing its proponents of 'cultural arrogance'. Pavarala's study of elites in Andhra Pradesh establishes, on the one hand, that there are those who regard 'traditional' kinship ties as an impediment to 'modernization', but that on the other hand, some have turned the question around, defending indigenous values and blaming instead western cultural influences such as consumer culture (1996, p. 119). He explains, "In a sense, the two views are similar in that both look towards some perceived 'essences' of Indian culture; while one blames some of these essences for creating conditions for corruption, the other contends that those essential elements of the culture espouse noble ideals and tend to inhibit any corrupt behaviour."

Several respondents attempted to find cultural explanations by describing the interplay of tradition and modernity with the prevalence of corruption. The majority of our respondents were urbanized, English-educated, and to an extent, cosmopolitan, but not everyone believed that elements of the 'traditional'

culture are responsible for creating a culture of corruption. They were not entirely comfortable with the binary of tradition and modern, thinking that the modern may well co-exist with the traditional, given that modern is understood as 'progressive'. However, substantial numbers of the interviewees deduced that the rising wave of consumerism has produced social pressures that have led to a decline in values, which in turn results in corruption.

4.2.1 Modernity may well co-exist with tradition

Tradition was described by the respondents as something which has continuity over a period of time. In general there was a consensus among them that, in spite of the intrinsic conflict between the two, the modern can co-exist with the traditional, as long as modernization is not equated with westernization. In fact, most respondents felt that tradition and modernity do not matter. Instead, what matters is the basic values system, which does change with time. They explained that traditional and modern are terms which are relevant at all times: "*Today what I am calling traditional must have been modern for my father and whatever is modern for me today might be traditional for the coming generations*." It was recognized that tradition and behaviour keep changing with the times although, as articulated by a development worker from Punjab,

> *I don't think that these two things will have to be mutually contradictory all the time. Modern means that your way of thinking is modern. More contemporary, more you move away from what has been there. It definitely co-exists with tradition. I am going to follow the traditional part of my religion but my religion allows me the freedom to think in a very modern way. It does not say that you are bound to thinking only in this way*.

Many Sikhs from Punjab were also of the opinion that the traditional/modern dichotomy has no meaning – they claimed that the Sikh religion is modern, even postmodern: "*The term traditional Sikh has no meaning. The revolution of Sikhism, right from Guru Nanak Dev to the tenth Guru, covers the modern period. My own thinking is that some of our gurus were post-modern in their outlook*." For example, they gave the example of the rules of living that a Sikh is expected to follow in life – the *Rahat Maryada* – and designated it as totally modern in its stance. They even voiced a feeling that one does not need to worry that young people are moving away from religion, "*No, there may be distancing from ritualism, but not from teachings. No permanent damage, even if not following Khalsa identity*."

The bureaucrats, executives and members of other social groups from Hyderabad also identified tradition as something handed on from generation to generation, while modern is something contemporary "*and something to do with liberalization*." They did not think that "*traditions necessarily mean outdated. You don't have to reinvent the wheel, every time. Try to amalgamate the modern into the existing and see.*" They acknowledged that in Hinduism, there are practices that must change with modern times, like *sati* (immolation of a widow on her husband's funeral pyre), child marriage, dowry and the concept of the four *Varnas*: "*If you respect only tradition, you would have lived seeped in the same obnoxious practices of castes. I consider myself modern because I reject all traditions that do not apply to me.*"

The young and middle aged alike preferred to call themselves "*both traditional and modern – I think that is what all of us are*." They came up with examples such as, "*I am going to the gym, which was probably not done in the past, because I feel the need to be fit and traditionally, I pray every day. I do it because it is traditional and gives me solace. I rationalize what I am doing*." The young students and professionals in Hyderabad also expressed the view that tradition stands for not questioning already existing values: "*For me, being modern doesn't mean you wear the most hip clothes, it comes from the mind and again I feel like I am modern because I am courageous enough to question*."

Youths from Punjab echoed similar sentiments when they described modern as:

> *It's about a person's thoughts. It's about your modern outlook and the way you see the world. If you have a proper outlook towards the world, and you are able to treat other people equally, respect others' ideas and you respect other religions in the society, then you are modern. If you only 'look' modern – that is not modern*.

Both young students and professionals from Punjab were eager to be categorized as modern: "*I would say that I am modern because I look to learn from other things not just my religion and my value system. I also look to get my values from other religions*." They asserted the need to question the sanctity of traditional values and only if "*they are good, adopt them, otherwise remove them from your life, don't follow them*." Many of the respondents were categorical in stating that modernity does not mean going away from religion. They asserted that they would rather look at being modern as an exercise "*in evolving your mind, evolving your thoughts, your thought processes*." No one denied that there may be a conflict between modern ideas and traditional beliefs, in particular seeing this as

associated with the gap between older and younger people: "*The term generation gap comes from this conflict only*." One engineering student in his third year made an effort to explain how tradition and modern may clash:

> *Whenever a Sikh goes on a protest march or something, we carry swords. That is basically a symbol. But actually in the present days, the sword cannot fight with a gun or for that matter a pistol, right? So this is how the thought process has to change slowly. There are new ways, new values, new cultures, and new perspective which must find a way into the religion. We have to start accepting the fact that what has been done by our Gurus, was in those times, according to the situation that was prevailing, right? Now the times have changed. And a new era has started. So it is necessary that new things should come into our thought and into the religion. And this should be accepted with open arms, rather than criticizing that the modernization has spoiled or ruined the new generation.*

A female academic from Punjab also pointed out that, although sometimes modern is misrepresented or misconstrued as "*showing off, a big car, children studying abroad*", being modern also has advantages, "*as it liberates you from the rigidity of religion. Modern clothes are comfortable, short hair more manageable. In traditional upbringing, women could not claim property – we will teach our daughters differently*." A female academic we interviewed in Hyderabad had this to say:

> *Tradition is taught by our elders and modern by media, education etc. We should adopt whatever is convenient for us. Modern means comfort - whether it is dress or even food, if it is suitable and according to your convenience. Whenever there is any festival, I will be very traditional, do pooja and give traditional look to my house. But when I go out for parties, I love to sing and dance, tell jokes. There is conflict in the mind only when the family members are around, otherwise, it's okay.*

However, some of the young women from Hyderabad brought up the issue of double standards among those who call themselves modern: "*I seriously feel that there is conflict in the minds of men, because no matter how liberal they are, the moment they see a woman smoking, Oh God! She's smoking!*"

Executives from the corporate sector did not consider profit to be a bad word or motive in a commercial set-up, as long as consumers are getting value for money. As one respondent expressed it: "*You are going in a wrong way if you say that this is 99.9 per cent pure quality and effectively it is only 98 per cent quality, then you are making unfair profits*." They said that, even if one's thinking is modern, a person can follow traditional values: "*Modern means innovation – it doesn't mean the way*

you dress – we see westerners and ape the same thing, like people coming to office in faded jeans. But then if a traditional person comes to office in bathroom slippers, he, or she, is breaking office decorum too."

Views differed on whether tradition, including the traditions associated with religion, promotes corruption or not. Some of the young women from Hyderabad, for example, felt that in Hinduism, the traditional concept of *pashchatap* (repentance) encourages corruption: "*We steal money, take a dip in Ganga [considered a holy river] and we are purified – no more a corrupt person. What a wonderful way of escape – there are ways around corruption.*" However, a women bureaucrat was of the view that values or tradition do not promote corruption, instead blaming it on greed and consumerism:

> *I think it goes beyond that. I think it is just we as the country, we are endorsing corruption. I think that is the issue. If we as the country can find everyone who is corrupt and hang them, if we could – then? It has nothing to do with traditional or modern – it is all about greed. Corruption is about greed and wanting to climb the ladder of power.*

4.2.2 Consumerism is the 'culprit'

Sheth (1995, p. 79), in his paper concerning the concept of values and their decline in modern society, argues that a popular expression of the problem of declining values is often accompanied by an explicit or implicit belief that it is an especially disturbing problem of modern times. However, in his view,

> *This belief is in consonance with the popular tendency to glorify the past by adopting what is known as the Rebecca myth. This myth is based on the fictional story of a man who remarried after the death of his wife Rebecca. His obsessive love for Rebecca forced him to expect the new wife to behave like Rebecca in all respects. It is culturally comforting and reassuring to believe that the society in the past functioned with greater conformity to values in the past. However, the history of human civilizations contains plenty of evidence to suggest that social beliefs and concerns about decline of values have been a part of social life in all cultures through the ages.*

We have given evidence in the previous section that our respondents were able to strike a balance between their 'traditional' and 'modern' selves, while at the same time confessing that, at times, this entails having to deal with conflicting situations in their day-to-day lives. Their interpretation and manifestations of being 'modern' fit well with pursuing traditions that they deem as valuable while

rejecting others that they consider to promote corrupt or unethical behaviour. However, the 'Rebecca myth' mentioned above did manifest itself when we asked interviewees and FGD participants about the ways in which 'modernity' and consumerism have affected people's values and morality. The common response was that we are indeed witnessing a progressive decline of moral and ethical values. The blame was put squarely on the brand of 'modernization' or 'modernity' that promotes consumerism, individualization, materialism and westernization.

It was alleged by some that, without doubt, people today are more ambitious; they have become selfish and do not care for their relatives; and that "*We are turning quite individualistic. Earlier, if I was part of a big family and I was in some sort of problem or trouble, financially or otherwise, there were people to look after my needs. Now there is a thought always at the back of your mind that you have to fend for yourself*."

A major section of the respondents admitted that, with the increase in so-called 'needs' of the 'modern', which include expensive gadgets, a big house, a big car and aspirations for their children to study abroad, there is more scope and incentive for indulging in corruption. A Sikh bureaucrat mentioned how Sikhs ignore the tenets of their religion, which preach simplicity. He mentioned lavish modern-day marriages with multiple ceremonies and functions, "*one more wasteful than the other – it's a perversion of values. Nobody is ready to hear that we should lead a simple life. Consumerism is the major culprit in the decline of the value system.*" The bureaucrats in both Punjab and Andhra Pradesh also felt that officers are pressurized by their family members to accept bribes or be corrupt.

A woman development worker was of the view that 'modern' is interpreted wrongly, even by women. In her view, it is taken to mean "*show off, [wear] less clothes, parties and drinking*," whereas it should mean securing a good education, participation in sports, freedom to take up a job and moving away from ancient traditions like *sati* and child marriage. Instead, she asserted, it has come to mean "*A comfortable life in an air-conditioned apartment and a lethargic lifestyle. In the past, women were never so idle; now they sit and bitch in the gurdwara*.' A woman engineer from Hyderabad supported this view:

> *Definitely consumerism is the reason for the change in the way we dress, or cook, the family system and living style – previously the family used to eat together – now everybody eats in front of the television and youngsters go for outings at odd times in the night. Even our ways of performing pooja [prayer] has been changed by consumerism*.

In Hyderabad, a development worker described how she had observed college girls, who had come from the villages to gain an education, were so taken in by accessories and other consumer items on sale in the cities that they flirt around and use other means to make money to acquire the things they covet. A senior bureaucrat was also of the opinion that modernization has promoted materialistic values: "*People have stopped saving and go on a spending spree. Too much of grandeur, pomp and show has come into our daily lives*." He felt that this is leading to unhealthy competition and rivalry, with the result that people end up buying things that are not really of use to them for reasons such as "*competition, jealousy, rivalry, hatred and to show somebody as inferior. This is 100 per cent contributing to corruption because we are trying to spend more than we should and we are trying to swallow more than we can chew*."

The corporate executive we interviewed in Punjab had this to say about tradition vs. modernity:

> *My friends associate me with things that are older and ethnic; the older things used to appeal to your mind and soul, the new things only appeal to your body; modern things are very hollow; outside there may be a tetra-pack containing fruit juice, but nothing like a fresh fruit. Traditional things have some content, they have some substance.*

A development worker employed in a corporate NGO also lamented the fact that modern culture is compelling people to acquire new gadgets which are sold as necessities but are in fact luxuries. He gave the following example:

> *Like vehicles have become very common nowadays. A school boy, who has completed his 8th grade or 9th grade, is demanding a vehicle nowadays. His father's salary is not that much that he can provide him the vehicle. Because of his son's fighting daily, his father is forced to provide him a vehicle. And college going students are going for four wheelers. That too BMWs! If he is a son of an IAS officer or a minister, they are going for BMWs and Ferraris. That is what is forcing their parents to indulge in corruption*.

The young men and women with whom we interacted in the universities and professional colleges took it upon themselves to condemn the 'consumerist' and 'materialistic' facet of modernization as - according to them - it promotes corruption and has led to a visible decline in the moral fabric of the society. They expressed the view that:

> *Consumerism has definitely had an effect on the moral values of the individuals and the society at large. Now when we do business, we are not particular about the means, only*

> *concerned about ends – maximum profit by hook or by crook. So consumerism in a way is not just encouraging corruption, but is leading directly to corruption People are indulging in corruption because of consumerism – I want my iPod, my dress, my accessories – it has become a mode of self-aggrandizement*.

Others agreed that consumerism breeds corruption and added that modernization is leading to demand for expensive western, branded objects. In addition, technological advancement is seen as having provided people with additional various channels to be corrupt: "*Why do people need two or three cell phones? I don't see the point of picking up three, when one phone is all you need. This is a technology-driven corruption*." Some young men were conscious that:

> *Modernization has brought materialistic values to the front seat and ethical and moral values have been relegated to the back seat. I have to buy a bike; I have to buy a car. My needs are increasing everyday because of newer products in the market. My greed is never ending but the salary is staying stagnant. Only if you have not imbibed the bad things about being modern, you will resist the temptation of buying all this, otherwise you will give in to corruption.*

A young corporate executive from Hyderabad was also concerned about the erosion of ethical values in modern times, mentioning what he termed 'developmental corruption'. He explained that whenever a development initiative is launched, all the participants demand their respective pound of flesh before the project takes off, "*So, corruption increases with the help of development.*"

Recalling a time when flaunting wealth was considered bad behaviour and Indian culture was all about "*simple living and high thinking*," the Director of the Anti-Corruption Bureau in Hyderabad recounted that, when he goes to make a presentation and is arriving at a place, people are, "*watching the size of my mobile phone and the size of my car. And they judge me accordingly – the impression is the smaller your mobile phone and the bigger the car, the bigger person you are*." He then quoted Shakespeare about not being ostentatious, "*Have more than thou showest and speak less than thou knoweth*", although he also recognized that today the culture is that 'if you have it, flaunt it'.

The following observation by the Director sums up this section about the acquisitive culture that has in the eyes of most respondents led to the perceived decline of core values and promoted what the Director termed as the 'having more' syndrome that typifies the consumerist society:

> *I definitely feel that this propensity to acquire more and more wealth, without bothering about the means of acquisition, is resulting in tremendous amount of corruption in the society. The competitive spirit, the demands made by the young people from their parents or made by them on themselves to acquire wealth, the general acceptance in the society of people with money, without looking into their professional accomplishments. That is contributing to lot of corruption and permissiveness in society.*

4.3 The role of religious organizations in promoting ethical conduct

We asked our respondents in Punjab and Hyderabad what they thought about the role religious organizations could play in promoting ethical conduct in public life. We were also interested in knowing whether they considered that inputs of a spiritual/religious kind, which emphasize moral and ethical conduct, would be useful as part of professional training. The responses were mixed, with only a few having a positive view of the impact such training might have on people's professional or personal conduct. Some members of religious organizations did mention the potential role of such inputs, but think that not enough is being done in that direction.

A senior bureaucrat from Hyderabad, who is the Managing Director of a public sector company, provided details about the training provided during his foundation course, when participants had yoga classes, meditation sessions and training on ethics, public values and public life. The importance of values, virtues and the need for ethics in public life was emphasized, in terms of how to provide a clean and honest administration. In his view:

> *A public servant is an exemplary person in society and is a role model. So if he's at fault, people will always give a wrong example. So we should maintain an ethical and clean public life, give a clean administration, free from corruption. This is emphasized in many courses, in various talks and every foundation course has few classes with this content. What it means to be a good officer and a good administrator and that it is important to lead a life of honesty, be an example of good conduct, and encourage people around you to follow virtues. I found them to be very useful and valuable*.

However, his views do not reflect those of the majority of respondents in this category. Most of the bureaucrats interviewed thought such lectures during initial training or later in professional life "*cannot just change people overnight*." In their opinion, a 'spine of honesty' has to be there already, otherwise such training is akin to paid holiday for most – most people, they asserted, do not want to swim against the current, so they go with the prevailing system and fit in with the personality of their boss:

"*Why should I get a transfer? Why should my confidential report get spoilt [for standing up for integrity]? It is very easy to say that*." Other bureaucrats also rejected any role for religion in "*rescu[ing] us from corruption in the current situation*." Even training, they said, has no potential – "*in the IAS [Indian Administrative Service] academy, everyone from top-to-bottom are corrupt; IAS means you have to be totally inhuman and corrupt.*"

Many others, including a development worker who heads legal affairs in his organisation, thought that spiritual training has potential if religious values are followed by people. However, while personal principles ought to be reflected in public life, in reality that does not happen because people are unable to practise the principles and ethics they are taught:

> *As a professional advocate, when you file a case you need to get Rs 30-35 stamps, but the clerk at the counter takes 100 rupees for that. As a junior lawyer, entering into the profession, without paying this much money you won't get work done and your senior will scold you that you cannot even file a small petition. To get out of this situation, I am forced to pay*.

Our interviewees, including the young professionals, consider that societal factors determine personal behaviour: "*Most of the Indians are tolerant of corruption because they themselves are not above such things*." They are generally of the opinion that "*training cannot make a difference – these things should be inculcated right from childhood. When you are twenty three or twenty four, all your perceptions are made. If somebody tries to teach you morals and ethics, you're not going to get it. Teach at a young age. That is the age where it should be included into the curriculum*." Others agreed that the problem is not that people do not have values but that they do not live them: "*Why do you need to give training? They also know that they are doing wrong… So you think someone should come and tell me that this is something wrong which you are doing? We know it*."

A rather small proportion of our respondents from the secular sector believe that the message of honesty makes a difference, "*But better to start from childhood. Ethical values, such as the value of hard work, must be inculcated in children.*" Others put it in more general terms: "*You change yourself and society will change*." The importance of talking about spirituality and reinforcing ethics and morality during training was, however, emphasized by one public servant: "*I think that reinforcement, reassertion, reconfirmation and re-instatement of good values at all stages of life are very important*."

Responses from members of religious organizations were, as expected, different from those of respondents in the secular sector. For example, a fairly senior member of the Gurdwara management committee in Amritsar assured us:

> *Gurdwara can preach morality and ethics in Gurbani through its speakers to the public. It can preach the good things which must be done and preach against the bad ones which mustn't be. It can use the print media to preach its gospels. And when the public comes to the Gurdwara they would listen to the propaganda against untouchability. There would be propaganda of equality. This is the role a gurdwara can play*.

Two academics, a professor of Guru Nanak Studies at Amritsar and the Director of the National Institute of Punjab Studies, New Delhi, were also of the opinion that *gurdwaras* have to perform the important role of giving the Gurus' message to people. They were aware that when religion becomes institutionalized, vested interests come in, but felt that this should not undermine the most powerful message of Sikhism, which they explained as:

> *To keep a balance in your life in every possible way – that is the message of the Guru. The role of gurdwara is to tell people about the importance of balance, because in Sikhism, there is focus on balance. You know they [the Gurus] did not discard life. They say life is worth living. The Gurus never gave up society, they married, they raised families, but they gave up lust. And Guru Nanak says it's possible to live pure among impurities of life. You get your needs fulfilled and, as Bhagat Kabir emphasized, you can't do bhakti [worship] on an empty stomach. The stomach has to be full. But when he wants the stomach to be full, he doesn't want your house to be stored with luxuries. Balance is very important.*

A female executive member of the management committee of the Gurdwara was not so positive about the potential role of religious organizations in controlling or fighting corruption. She felt strongly that this is the job of governments, which should implement the laws that have been made in an appropriate manner: "*Human nature is such that it stops itself only because of fear – if I murder someone, and I'd be hanged*." In other words, there have to be to be checks and sanctions, and the law must be executed properly, "*So the government has a major role. But the problem is that the government is totally corrupt.*" In her view,

> *The fact of the matter is in any of our religious places there is a preacher. If he gets an alternative highly paying job, then he'd never be a priest. The preaching of that priest has no effect on you. So it's not an individual who can do it, it has to be a social revolution in which everybody has to participate. You have to draw the line somewhere. You have to stand up somewhere. Our problem is that nobody is willing to stick their neck out*.

4.4 The accountability of religious organizations

To assess whether religious places, organizations and leaders do or could wield moral influences on people, it was important to ascertain the image that our respondents have about those who manage prominent places of worship. Besides attempting to discern people's general impressions of the running of religious organizations, we asked those in charge of their administration and maintenance how their organizations are accountable to people and how they address ethical concerns in the management of their own affairs. Are those working for a religious organization expected to stay away from unethical and corrupt practices? We were also keen to find out how religious organizations deal with the possibility that a considerable portion of their donations and contributions may be from devotees who have earned their money unethically or through corrupt practices.

Although there was, as expected, a certain level of 'idealism' amongst and about those working for a religious establishment, most of our respondents believe that in practice, religious spaces are as susceptible to 'human failings, flaws and greed' as any other place or institution. Heads of religious organizations interviewed explained that rigorous procedures, such as internal and external audits, for example, are in place to ensure transparency and accountability in professionally managed temples and *gurdwaras*. Nevertheless, they admitted that "*human nature strays time and again*." Another point emphasized was that employees of many of these organizations are not appointed to their jobs because they are religious: "*It is a job for them to earn and look after themselves and their children. There are rules for employment in the Gurdwara Act instituted by the Sikh Judicial Commission, but they [employees] do not necessarily do it [work] with religiosity*."

It was claimed that *gurdwaras* are probably the most democratically run religious bodies, with regular elections and participatory decision-making practices. However, some felt that:

> *The root cause of corruption in gurdwaras is elections, as the voters are the same who are voting for normal elections. So they are so used to getting something in return for the vote. Their mentality is the same. So some rich people use this to gain legitimacy. So, the whole election system negates the purpose of gurdwara management.*

A female executive member of the Golden Temple was convinced that the process in place for dealing with the money that is received from donations is foolproof: "*The money is counted and deposited in the bank on the same day. There is a regular process for disbursement also. All the expenditure*

related to langar [community kitchen] and other things is all allocated and accounted for. Then there is an audit after a year. A Chartered Accountant audits the accounts." On the issue of the source of the money that comes in as donations, she said:

> *Whoever has earned it and however s/he may have earned it, if s/he has donated to the Temple, then it's his devotion. And the money that's come in, we have to be concerned where it's being spent. We must ensure that it does not go into a private pocket – it must be used for the community.*

One media person felt that, in practice, "*nobody can keep track of all the donations coming in*", although he also felt that religious bodies have to be much more vigilant – "*Would they accept a 10 per cent cut from a brothel?*" However, most respondents felt that, if religious organizations are using money properly, where the donations come from is not as important as '*where it goes*."

On the whole, our interviewees were of the opinion that it is not the management's or the organizer's job to find out the source of money that is donated, saying that "*a man can deceive other men, but cannot deceive God. You donate to please God and get His blessings, and He is supposed to know where the money has come from.*" They felt that if someone is donating to please the management, then he or she is not religious. An Additional Secretary of SGPC asserted:

> *The money in the Gurdwara comes from the voluntary donations of the devotees – maybe Sikh or Hindu or Muslim – irrespective of colour, caste, creed and religion. It's not a forced donation. If anyone wants to offer Rs. 5 to God, nobody will stop him. If he wants to bow before God without offering money, even then no one will stop. If someone offers a lakh of rupees, then he won't get special treatment either. These earnings are our funds. From this we build motels for the Gurdwara visitors, and spend money on langar, karah parshaad*[9] *and facilities for the travellers. And besides that, funds are used towards the welfare of the society.*

One of the senior executives of a Gurdwara Management Committee maintained that: "*Fortunately so far, nobody has come out with any concrete evidence that there is any misallocation or wrong utilization of the funds.*" However, some people, such as one of the senior bureaucrats interviewed, allege that nowadays, "*people in the gurdwaras are among the most corrupt – at least eighty per cent of them are like that. [although he noted that] most contributions, especially anonymous ones, come from more genuine people*."

Respondents in Hyderabad did not include informants from religious organizations. Of those interviewed, most were not too supportive of the claim that money donated to temples is used appropriately. They were also distrustful of the intentions behind donations: "*What people do is that they earn money using wrong means, and later on think that if you use that money for good purposes or give it to a temple then it is cleansed*." Money, they felt, could be better used for the poor and for social work, not, as is often the case, for providing ornaments for God. A development worker suggested that the large sums of money that are spent on the reconstruction and development of temples would be put to better use in the construction of a school, lamenting that "*most of the people are interested to give money for the development of a temple rather than a school*."

It was not that all respondents felt that all donations to temples are made by corrupt people - they acknowledged that a lot of the donations received by temples come from people with small earnings or the salaried middle class, for whom it may be hard-earned money. However, even they were not sure if temples "*spend it the right way*." One of the women engineering officers spoke out:

> *What are you talking about? You cannot get a work executed in Tirupati, as an engineering job or a contract without giving bribes there. So, all those religious persons we talk about sitting on the top of the hill, being good human beings to everybody, they are not. For them, 'I pray to God' and 'I am corrupt' are two separate issues*.

In discussing his views concerning the attitudes of religious organizations to the sources of the funds they receive, one bureaucrat argued, "*they don't care, they do not even want to know what the source is. It could be a criminal who is giving all this money.*" He felt that although most of the organizations will say that they use donations for good work, they do not care where the money comes from, "*As long as Lakshmi [the goddess of wealth] is coming in, it is all fine*."

5 Conclusions

The objective of this study is to analyse religiosity as a factor that may potentially affect the attitudes of people towards corruption. For this purpose, a multi-sector analysis was carried out in Punjab and Andhra Pradesh, based on in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with 120 respondents. The research team interacted with representatives from a variety of social groups, including the media, the government, academia, the corporate world, development organizations, youth and religious associations. The fieldwork and analysis were guided by reflexivity and a collaborative spirit. The data were used to examine several analytical categories, including notions about religiosity, interpretations of corruption, personal and public morality, the perceived influence of religion on attitudes towards corrupt practices, conceptions of tradition and modernity, and trust in religious institutions.

Corruption is believed by most to be taken for granted; an institutionalized reality in India. It is an abundantly-researched social issue, but there continues to be a lack of consensus on its meanings, causes and consequences, and inconclusiveness as to potential remedies. Furthermore, academic attention to the topic has tended to produce empirical understandings based on the assumptions and concerns of economics, politics, governance and development. This structural perceptive, however valuable and crucial to policy formulation, does not adequately capture the complexity of the field as a 'lived reality.' It was, therefore, felt that an in-depth qualitative study should be conducted of the cultural factors embodied in religion, morality, ethics and notions of modernity and tradition and their implications for perceptions of corruption. The research examines the cognitive dimension of the problem, i.e. people's ideas, beliefs and claims about corruption, religion and the linkages between them. The study intends to provide a better understanding of the relationships between religions, ethics and corruption, some of which may be of relevance to anti-corruption practitioners and development agencies, providing appropriate guidance to policymakers seeking to comprehend and fight corruption.

The following findings constitute some of the major observations and conclusions from the research:

- Religion is an important part of the lives of people in India, even if its importance and the role it plays vary significantly from person to person. Diversity surfaces in both interpretations of 'religiosity' and what is considered as 'being religious'. Although notions of religiosity vary greatly in the society as a whole and religion means different things to different people, there is no denying that it is looked on as a potent tool for promoting moral and ethical conduct and inculcating social discipline if it is understood in 'its true

essence' (although what that means is ambiguous). None of our respondents unequivocally claimed to be an 'atheist', but many identified themselves as agnostic with respect to religion.

- Religion forms an indispensable part of the cultural ethos and social fabric of India, but co-exists with what may be described as a liberalized, cosmopolitan and global outlook among many Indians. Because many of the professionals interviewed, including bureaucrats, corporate executives, media persons and academics, were not particularly ritualistic in their outlook, they prefer to be called 'liberal' Sikhs or Hindus, which they do not think in any way means that they are 'less' religious.
- However, others in these categories emphasize the spirituality and values dimension of the religion and do not agree that only its ritualistic side matters. In their view, rituals may be essential but need not be mandatory. Many believe that adherents should only claim to be 'religious' if they are practising the tenets of a religion in their everyday lives. Those working in the development sector insisted that religion can be an inspiration and motivator for doing social good. However others, including traditional business persons, were emphatic in highlighting the importance of both the ritualistic and the symbolic characteristics of religion and made no bones about the defining role that religion plays in their lives.
- Values systems are considered to be an amalgamation of several factors and influences that cannot be tidily isolated, and that may be rooted in a multiplicity of culture-specific factors, like family ideals, upbringing, religion, education, social status and socialization. Human behaviour is also deemed to be governed by circumstances and the personal, professional or socio-political environment in which a person finds him or herself.
- A majority of the professionals interviewed seem to derive their commitment to following service rules from values emphasized at home and through their upbringing. Family values emerged as exercising a big influence, even on the ethics that people adhere to in their professions. Friends and peer group members also have some influence, but this is thought to be more transitory.
- Sikh as well as Hindu bureaucrats and a number of other professionals, like media persons, development workers and academics, did not completely dismiss religion as playing a certain role in prompting ethical conduct in different areas of life, including the personal, social and professional domains. Many believe that if the core spirit of a religion is recognized and followed, then there is no disconnect between professional and personal codes. However, most of the corporate executives and business persons made a clear distinction between personal morality and their business decisions and activities. While religion was considered to come in handy within the home it is, in their view, less relevant outside it, where people tend to be 'flexible' about their personal values because of the professional demands to which they are subject.

- The common understanding was that those who profess to be 'religious' are not necessarily morally and ethically strong. Religiosity is not a guarantee of virtuosity.
- The attempt by members of various social groups from Punjab and Andhra Pradesh to define 'corruption' did not point towards a community of shared meanings. There was a perceptible multiplicity of ideas and a certain amount of ambiguity in notions of what acts are corrupt and non-corrupt. There was little agreement about what constitutes corruption, except perhaps 'outright bribery'. The concept of corruption is not only a site for multiple and even contested meanings, it also changes over time. The idea that it is concerns the misuse of public office for private gain is widespread among the respondents, although some simply defined it as deviation from a code of conduct laid down in any walk of life.
- Those who were inclined towards narrow/legalistic definitions listed a limited number of acts under the category of corruption, such as bribery, misuse of office, and misappropriation of public funds and donations. Their definitions were a simple reflection of the spirit and ideas (as against specific provisions) of the law. A significant majority identified acts that involve 'monetary exchange' as deserving of the corrupt label, but excluded gift-giving, adultery or nepotism. Most of the bureaucrats and corporate executives offered one or another narrow legalistic definition, while the other groups were divided in their opinions, with an equal number defining corruption in a broad, moralistic idiom.
- Respondents advocating broad/moralistic definitions of corruption listed a large number of acts under this category. In their view, gift-giving, nepotism, womanizing, tipping and dowry all amount to corruption. Some of the odd types mentioned by respondents included 'psychic corruption' and 'moral corruption'.
- In general, the researchers sensed the prevalence of a belief that a 'culture of corruption' has become widespread and is 'corrupting the culture' in India. The common feeling is that there has been a gradual erosion of cultural values, resulting in personal agendas supplanting the public good in all spheres of life. People today proudly admit how much they receive as bribes, it was noted with considerable dismay. Non-implementation of strict rules and laws was generally held responsible for encouraging corrupt acts.
- The need was expressed for religious messages to be clear and adequately articulated, shared and advocated. Examples of the moral codes contained in religious texts and their relevance to contemporary times were accompanied by arguments that a more vigorous reinforcement of religious teachings through formal education and the media could be effective in keeping traditional values alive in the popular memory. A proactive dissemination of religion-specific values against dishonesty, illegality and so on is favoured, regardless of the hurdles arising from their incompatibility with contemporary lifestyles.

- Just as there is no single, clear-cut or precise definition of corruption, different factors are held to be responsible for the existence and perceptible intensification of corruption in India. Corruption is itself seen as a putative condition that continues to thrive, unchallenged by religion or faith.
- The loopholes in the administrative system, income disparities, changes in societal values and the lack of good role-models were identified as some of the causes of corruption, alongside a 'we can get away with it' attitude. Greed, the temptation to make easy money, short cuts to save administrative processing time, a dearth of strict punishments or penalties to discourage corruption, and the urge to become 'big' and lead a luxurious lifestyle were also cited as causes of corruption.
- Over-dependence on human integrity and the ineffectiveness of accountability measures are seen as problematic. Technology, on the other hand, is perceived as a solution, by reducing the time needed for administrative processes and removing the tendency for human 'error' in the delivery of services.
- Religion is considered by many to be a discredited entity, largely due to a sense of popular disillusionment with its 'caretakers'. It is perceived, especially by the youth, as being in the wrong hands, misused by 'powerful' people, and over-emphasizing ritual and fanaticism, rather than the 'true spirit' of religion. It is difficult to obtain useful answers to a question such as 'how does religion influence the thoughts and actions of people' in India, where much religious practice is a matter of rituals and public events. This creates a problem in determining whether religion is an aesthetic, performative practice, or the basis for internalized moral and ethical values that are seen as relevant and fundamentally important in daily life.
- Simultaneously, however, there is a deep-seated faith in the potential of religion to enrich the value system and a popular sentiment that, if harnessed, religion could be a powerful force to fight corruption – although only if its 'true meaning' is understood. A majority of respondents were of the opinion that if religion occupies the place it deserves in people's lives and the moral values and ethics embedded in it are not just preached, but also followed, there would not be any corruption. It was argued that no religion advocates corruption, and that people who call themselves religious, but still consciously indulge in what may be deemed as corruption, are obviously not religious.
- In the professional arena, the urge to succeed or deliver results is probably far stronger than religion. When people want to be successful at any cost, religion appears to take a back seat. It takes a very strong conviction to resist indulging in corruption when there are outside pressures at work – being aware of right or wrong is acknowledged to be very different from doing right and wrong in real lifsituations.

- It was also argued that certain attributes of religion, especially Hinduism, like fatalism and *karma* (deeds/ actions) in previous lives, may aid and abet tolerance of corruption. Instances were cited of people engaging in corruption 'in the name of God' or 'making God a stakeholder' in corruption by donating some of their ill-gotten wealth for the construction of temples or charity. However, not everyone believes that elements of 'traditional' culture play a role in creating an atmosphere in which corruption is tolerated or thrives.
- The young, middle aged and seniors prefer to call themselves 'both traditional and modern'. They are not entirely comfortable with the binary distinction between tradition and modernity, believing that the modern can co-exist with the traditional, if modern is defined as progressive thinking and openness to new ideas and ways of life. This interpretation of being 'modern' fits well with the maintenance of traditions that are considered productive, while rejecting others that are considered to promote corrupt or unethical behaviour.
- The blame for rampant corruption was put squarely on the 'consumerist' and 'materialistic' facet of modernization. Claiming that 'simple living and high thinking' is one of the edicts of 'Indian culture', many respondents evoked the times when flaunting wealth was considered bad behaviour and condemned the excessive 'having more' syndrome that is said to characterize contemporary society.
- Religious leaders and the priestly class no longer seem to have moral influence over citizens, especially young men and women, who express cynicism towards those who preach the importance of accountability while themselves remaining unaccountable. Those who manage prominent places of worship are certainly not perceived as walking the 'righteous path', but are believed to follow the beaten track of corruption. This has resulted in a view that those who run temples may themselves be fundamentally corrupt.
- It may not be possible to monitor the sources of all the donations coming into a religious organisation. Furthermore, donations are regarded as an indication of the public-minded-conscientiousness of the person donating. Most respondents were therefore of the view that what is most important are the uses to which such funds are put.
- Spiritual training or value-based messages can, it is believed, make a difference only if these are infused from childhood – 'catch them young'. However, a corroboration, re-assertion and reiteration of moral and ethical ideals can make a difference later in life, if carried out in an innovative manner without coercion. The role of the family is regarded as indispensable in the internalizing of religious values, and the promotion of morality as well as ethical conduct. In addition, it is suggested, religious texts must be made accessible and social acceptance of high moral standards must be propagated.

- Very few respondents in the study thought that religion can be counted on to make a difference in people's general attitudes towards corruption. They indicated that their confidence in the accountability of religious organizations is low, and it is therefore problematic to assume that it is appropriate for religious organizations to play a role in fighting corruption, or that they will be effective if they do so. Many believe that religious organizations and leaders no longer play the historical role they have played in defining public morality and ethics. However, this does not mean that they should be completely discarded – in the eyes of some they could be an 'effective' tool, with the 'potential' to play a significant role in addressing corruption. If religion were to be a practised art, rather than the performative one that it appears to have become in modern India, then it is possible that specific religion-based morals and narratives could contribute in subtle ways to curbing corruption and helping to create an environment in which honesty, integrity and hard work are rewarded and celebrated.

Notes

1 This section is substantially borrowed from Marquette (2010), with her permission.

2 India country team – Senior Country Researcher (Team Leader): Prof Vinod Pavarala, University of Hyderabad; Junior Country Researcher: Dr. Kanchan K. Malik, University of Hyderabad; Research Assistants: Pawan Singh (June 2007 – July 2008); Amulya G. (Sept 2008 – Nov 2009) Fieldworkers: Anterpreet Kaur (Amritsar); S S Sreyas (Hyderabad).

3 The overall project involved three teams: in the UK - Dr Heather Marquette and Dr Insa Nolte (University of Birmingham); in Nigeria – Dr Antonia Simbine (NISER) and Dr Emmanuel Aiyede (University of Ibadan); and in India – the team listed above.

4 For example, the annual income of the Tirupati temple from donations is estimated at Rs. 650 crore.

5 Please see: **http://www.indianchild.com/corruption_in_india.htm**.

6 Please see: **http://www.globalintegrity.org/reports/2006/pdfs/india.pdf**.

7 The World Values Surveys measure the change in human values associated with major areas of human concern, such as religion, politics, social life, and economics. Conducted every five years, the surveys are known as waves. There have been four waves so far. The first, in 1990, was conducted by the European Values Survey Group, later replicated by the World Values Surveys. Successive waves followed in the years 1995, 2000 and 2005. The authors have produced reports on a variety of issues, from happiness to values change. The World Values Surveys “constitute the largest set of investigations ever conducted on the attitudes, beliefs, and values of scores of nations from around the world” (Inglehart and Baker, 2000).

8 The question asked of the respondents, “How important is God in your life?” with answers on a scale of 1 (‘not at all important’) to 10 (‘very important’).

9 Karah parshaad is a type of semolina halva made with equal portions of semolina, butter, and sugar (symbolizing the equality of men and women). It is regarded as food blessed by the Guru and is offered to all visitors to the Darbar Sahib in a gurdwara.

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Appendix I

List of interviews and FGDs

List of interviews and FGDs in Punjab

S.No.	Sector	Name		Designation	Place
		Women	Men		
1	Bureaucrats/ Public Sector		Mr. Pritam Singh	Retd. I.A.S. Officer, Sr. Chief Secretary, Bihar Cadre	Chandigarh
2			Mr. Shamsher Singh Kohri	Pharmacist, Govt Health Centre	Amritsar
3			Mr. Surinder Singh Sandhu	I.A.S. :Secretary Pension and Grievances	Chandigarh
4			Mr. S S Rajput	I.A.S.: Managing Director. Punjab Small Industries & Export Corpn.	Chandigarh
5	Corporate/ Business		G. S. Swani	Proprietor, Swani Motors	Amritsar
6			Sardar Tejinder Singh	Owner, Sardar Pagri House	Amritsar
7			Mr. Sarbjeet Singh	Corporate Worker	Chandigarh
8			Mr. Gurdeep Singh	Businessman	Chandigarh
9			Mr.S. Tejpal Singh Madaan.	Businessman	Amritsar
10	Media		Mr. Varinder Walia	Principal Correspondent, The Tribune	Amritsar
11			Mr. Roopinder Singh	Associate Editor, The Tribune	Chandigarh
12			Mr.Sarbjeet Singh	Corporate Worker	Chandigarh
13	Development		Mr. Kamalpreet Singh	Convenor, Dhan Dhan Baba Deep Singh Ji Educational Society	Amritsar
14		Dr. Inderjeet Kaur		President, All India Pingalwara Charitable Society	Amritsar
15		Ms. Amarjeet Kaur Dhillon		Development Worker	Chandigarh

S.No.	Sector	Name		Designation	Place
		Women	Men		
16	Development		Dr. Gurpreet Singh	Doctor, PGIMER	Chandigarh
17			Mr. Navkiran Singh	Human Right Activist and Advocate (Supreme Court and High Court)	Chandigarh
18	Academics	Mrs. Satinder Kaur		Lecturer in Geography	Amritsar
19			Prof. R.S. Sandhu	Department of Sociology; Guru Nanak Dev University	Amritsar
20			Dr. Sukhbir Singh	Professor of Punjabi at Khalsa College	Amritsar
21		Mrs. Rajbir Kaur Randhawa		Teacher, Punjabi and Divinity at Shri Guru Harkrishan Sr. Sec. School	Amritsar
22		Mrs. Ramindar Kaur		Teacher, Government Primary School	Amritsar
23	Religious		Bhai Rajinder Singh Mehta	Executive Member, Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee (S.G.P.C.)	Amritsar
24			Sh. Rashpal Singh Heir	Ex-coordinator, Osho World	Amritsar
25			Bhai Ashok Singh	President, Institute of Sikh Studies	Chandigarh
26			Dr. Mohinder Singh	Director, National Institute of Punjab Studies	New Delhi;
27			Mr. Sampooran Singh	Member of local Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee	New Delhi
28			Kiran Jot Kaur	Executive Member, S.G.P.C.	Amritsar
29			Mr. Sukhdev Singh Ghir	General Secretary, S.G.P.C.	Amritsar
30			Mr. Joginder Singh	Additional Secretary, S.G.P.C.	Amritsar

S.No.	Sector	Name		Designation	Place
		Women	Men		
31	Religious		Dr. Jasbir Singh Sabar	Prof. and Head (Retired) of Guru Nanak Studies, Guru Nanak Dev University	Amritsar
FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS					
1	Youth	BBK DAV College For Women (TEN)			Amritsar
2		Mixed Group (TEN) – 8 Boys and 2 Girls, from P.G. courses at Panjab University.			Chandigarh
3		Boys (SIX) Punjab Engineering College		Chandigarh	
4			All boys group of SIX from University Business School, Punjab University		Chandigarh
5		All Girl Group of SEVEN girls from various P.G. courses at Punjab University			Chandigarh

List of interviews and FGDs in Andhra Pradesh

S.No.	Sector	Name		Designation	Place
		Women	Men		
1	Bureacrats/ Public Sector		Dr. A Ashok	I.A.S.: Managing Director, A.P. Foods	Hyderabad
2		Dr. Ananda Shankar Jayant		Commercial Officer, Indian Railways	Secunderabad
3		Ms. P Vasanta		Executive Engineer, National Highways Project	Hyderabad
4			Mr. Santosh Mehra	Director, Anti-Corruption Bureau, Hyderabad	Hyderabad
5			Dr. Srinivas H	Personnel Officer, Indian Railways	Secunderabad
6		Ms. Neetu Prasad,		I.A.S.: Additional Commissioner, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC)	Hyderabad
7			Mr. S Subba Rao,	I.R.T.S.: Additional Commissioner, GHMC	Secunderabad
8	Corporate/ Business	Ms. Divya H		Kaalmanns Plastics Pvt. Ltd.	Secunderabad
9		Ms. Shivani		Corporate Executive	Hyderabad
10			Mr.Sriram	COO, Ecomzera,	Hyderabad
11			Mr.Rishi	Proprietor, Ecomzera	Hyderabad
12			Mr.PVB Ramana	Director HR Operations, Xylem Corporation	Hyderabad
13			Mr. Ashok Kumar	Businessman	Hyderabad
14	Media		Sumanaspathi Reddy	Program Executive, All Indian Radio	Hyderabad
15	Development	Dr. P S Vijaya Bhavani		Program Manager, Plan International	Secunderabad

S.No.	Sector	Name		Designation	Place
		Women	Men		
16			Mr. Janarthan Reddy	Head - Legal Affairs, Magna Carta	Hyderabad
17			Mr. Ravikanth G	Project Associate World Education	Hyderabad
18			Mr. Subhash Chandra	Director, Projects, Centre for Action Research and People's Development	Hyderabad
19			Mr. Subrat Kumar Panda	Program Coordinator, Plan International	Secunderabad
20	Academics	Dr. L K Durga,		Reader, Commerce Andhra Mahila Sabha (AMC), Arts & Science College	Hyderabad
21	Religious Organisations	Sister Pratima		Brahmakumaris	Hyderabad
Focus Group Discussions					
1	Youth	P.G. Students University of Hyderabad (SIX)			Hyderabad
2		MBA Students – University of Hyderabad, NINE (7 girls and 2 boys)			Hyderabad
3		Undergrad. Students, AMC EIGHT Girls			Hyderabad
4		Engineering Students at Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Technology (MGIT), SEVEN			Hyderabad
5			Development workers (SIX)		Hyderabad
6			Corporate executives (SIX)		Hyderabad

Appendix 2

Issues for discussion with officials of religious organizations

1. What role do you think religion plays in an individual's life?
2. What are the links, if any, between 'being religious' and 'being moral and ethical'?
3. How does participation in religious rituals influence one's morality?
4. What actions are deemed immoral/unethical according to Sikhism/Hinduism?
5. Is there a religious way of understanding something like corruption? {text}
6. (What are the reasons that people indulge in Corruption)
7. In what ways do a person's religious beliefs influence his/her attitudes towards corruption?
8. Under what conditions can a religious system accept corruption as morally justifiable?
9. In what ways have modernity and consumerism affected people's values, morality, and traditions?
10. Are we witnessing a progressive decline of moral, ethical, religious values?
11. What role can a religious institution like the SGPC/TTD play in promoting more ethical conduct in our public life?
12. How does a large organization like SGPC/TTD, which is in charge of the administration and maintenance of one of the most sacred sites for Sikhs, manage to run its affairs in an ethical manner?
13. Does the responsibility of working for a religious organization and doing 'God's work' necessarily ensure that SGPC/TTD becomes immune to the kind of unethical and corrupt practices one sees in non-religious organizations?
14. How is SGPC/TTD and those holding key positions in the organization accountable to people?
15. How does SGPC deal with the possibility that a considerable portion of its donations/contributions are from devotees who could have earned their money unethically or through corrupt practices?

Appendix 3

FGD/interview guide for perspectives from the secular sector

1. Do you consider yourself religious? If so, in what way? (Visits to places of worship, rites and rituals, observances, abstract belief in God, etc.)
2. In what ways does your 'being religious' affect your personal behaviour, both in your private as well as public roles?
3. What have been the important influences in the shaping of your own value system?
4. Do you have a personal code of conduct that you try to observe in your dealings with others? Where does such a code come from?
5. Are you governed by a professional code of ethics? What do you think are the sources of such a code?
6. How do you think personal and professional codes of conduct or morality coincide? Please give us some example when you/other people you know faced any conflicts between the two at any time?
7. What is your understanding of corruption in India?
8. How do you define corruption? What kinds of acts would you categorize as corruption? (Is there a universal definition of corruption or does it vary across cultures?)
9. What do you think are the causes for corruption in India?
10. What do you consider are the various consequences of corruption?
11. According to you, what role does religion and culture play in shaping people's attitudes towards corruption?
12. To what degree have your own attitudes towards corruption been influenced by your religious beliefs?
13. Does your own religion have any explicit teachings that discourage individuals from engaging in corruption? [e.g. anything in the text that ordains moral conduct over profit motive in case of businessmen]
14. If so, why do you think people who call themselves 'religious', may still be corrupt?
15. What do these terms, 'traditional' or 'modern' mean to you?
16. Would you consider yourself more traditional or more modern?
17. For someone in your position, do you perceive any conflicts between being traditional and modern?

18. Is there anything specific about traditional values that fosters or encourages corrupt behaviour?
19. Is modernity compatible with religious ideas and values or does the influence of religion decline with modernization of society: Has the transition towards consumerism had an effect on cultural values or morality in any way?
20. Do you think there is anything in the cultures or religions of the people in India that makes us less or more tolerant of corruption?
21. In your own training to be a civil servant/business manager/etc., were there any inputs of a spiritual/ religious kind that emphasized moral and ethical conduct?
22. If not, do you think such inputs could be useful?
23. Would groups who are socialized into secular codes of ethics think differently from those who are not bound by such secular codes? [Secular vs. Personal codes]
24. Is religiosity, according to the various groups in the study, more to do with **personal morality** rather than about **public morality**?
25. Is there a distinction between the attitudes of the 'servants of god' and the 'servants of public'? (Do 'public servants' consider themselves as the 'servants of the public'?)

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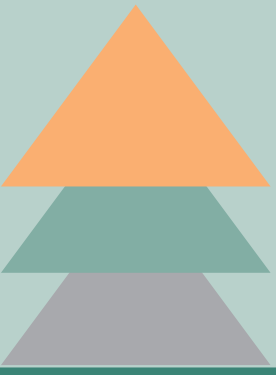

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