Almost everyone at some point in their lives asks whether life is the meaning of a life. What is the meaning of everything? Where am I? Why am I here? — and many other related questions sometimes it is not a passing thought, you want the answer. People are constantly looking for personal satisfaction or purpose, often seeking answers that, as they have been described in the Battle of the Books, it seems impossible to find. Taking up these whole beings, and there is no place in life until the answer is found. In his autobiography, "My Autobiography," Hume describes his state of mind when he felt that what he was standing on gave way, that he had no foundation to stand on, that there was nothing to live by..." The questions posed above have remained eternal. They have not been answered from the beginning of time, and they still unanswerable plague human minds. In fact, the whole history of mankind has been...
Almost everyone at some point in their lives asks 'What is the meaning of my life?' 'What is the meaning of everything I see around me?' 'Why am I here?' — and many other related questions. Sometimes it is just a passing thought and sometimes a recurring question which maybe pondered on for a little while, for personal satisfaction or intellectual discussion, but is soon drowned in the bustle of life. Sometimes it grips some people so hard, taking up their whole being, that there is no peace in life until they answer these questions. In his autobiography, "My Confessions", Leo Tolstoy describes his state of mind when faced with such questions: "I felt that what I was standing on had given way, that I had no foundation to stand on, that that which I lived by no longer existed and that I had nothing to live by....". The questions posed above have remained eternal. They have set man searching from the beginning of his time and they still relentlessly plague him today. In fact the whole history of mankind and his
endeavors could be viewed as resulting from this quest. Religion and also science could be considered as tools made to help man understand the world and himself.

Many psychologists, sociologists, and philosophers have observed that in the modern, sophisticated, technologically advanced world, man is more desperate in his search for meaning in life than he was less than a century ago. Terms like 'existential vacuum', 'alienation', 'anomie', and related words have become popular in everyday usage. Before analyzing the reasons for this plight of man, one may need to understand in detail the nature of the questions relating to meaning or purpose in life, as well as the various answers and viewpoints regarding these questions that are currently available.

1.1. THE QUEST FOR MEANING IN LIFE

Concern regarding the meaning of life can be traced to stem from two kinds of questions of a basic nature. They are: (1) 'Why does the universe exist?', 'Why are things in the world as they are?', 'Why does something exist rather than nothing?'; and (2) 'Who and what am I?', 'Why do I exist?', 'Is there some purpose for my life?', 'If so, how do I find it?'.

Though the first set of questions are empirical in nature and can be answered or explored in an objective way by the different branches of science, it too acquires a personal and subjective tone when it is thrown along with
the second set of deeply personal questions relating to one's own existence.

Armed with knowledge and information from science, religion, culture and tradition, and above all, one's own inner self, every man consciously or unconsciously develops his own framework to view life and he finds some meaning to life based on it. Frankl (1967) points out that the striving to find meaning in life 'is a primary motivational force in man'.

The meaning of a man's life can be seen to be reflected in the purposes or goals chalked out for his life. Since it is not within the framework and scope of psychology to deal with questions of the ultimate meaning of life, the term 'meaning in life' will be replaced or substituted with the term 'purpose in life' which is more amenable to psychology, especially when it comes to empirical findings.

It may be noted here that the term 'Purpose' can be used with two different connotations. In its first sense, to have a purpose is to choose some goal toward which one's efforts and activities are directed. In the second sense, to have a purpose is to be made or used as a means towards the achievement of some objective, as in the expression 'the purpose of a hammer is to drive nails'. If the meaningfulness of life is conceived in terms of having a purpose, then distinguishing these two different senses of 'purpose' leads to two different ways of understanding the
meaningfulness of life. First there could be meaning in one's life whenever one elects and pursues some purpose. Second, there could be a meaning of one's life if it were to be used for some purpose beyond that life itself. If it is conceived that all life were created or used for a common purpose, then this would be the meaning of all life, not only one's own life.

The quest for meaning and the attempt to explain oneself and the world, usually culminates in the seekers adoption of one of the three types of view points: (a) metaphysical or religious views which find meaning beyond the scope of human life; (b) pessimistic or nihilistic views, which claim that life is without meaning; and (c) secular or humanistic views which insist that meaning is created solely through human activities and goals. Each of these are explained below in some more detail.

1.1.1. The Metaphysical Perspective

The metaphysical viewpoint, also called the religious viewpoint is a long-standing one and is one of the traditional answers given regarding the question of meaning of life. It is what all the established religions of the world teach and endorse. It assures the individual that his life "is not something isolated and ineffectual but is part of one great enterprise ... part of a wider teleological whole" (Patton, 1960). Religion considers man as a part of God, inseparably linked to Him. God has a purpose for
creating every single man and it is up to man to realize it and surrender his will and action to the love of God. Thus, every action of man can be meaningful when linked to the relationship he has with God and the world He has created. The metaphysical perspective subscribes to the belief of life after death, the nature of which is believed to depend on the kind of life led by the person. This belief has a great impact on the lifestyle of the person.

1.1.2. The Nihilistic Perspective

Nihilism does not subscribe to a life after death and so death looms large in the nihilistic viewpoint. Whatever one achieves is wiped away with death. Wealth, beauty, fame, power, and good health seem of no use as death with one stroke can render it all pointless. Besides the absurdity that colors all activity by death, life itself seems to be filled with meaningless and endless cycles of events. Human life is perceived as containing more pain and suffering than pleasure, and pain is felt more intense than pleasure. To the nihilist, the presence of a benevolent supernatural power or God seems to be only a fiction in the world filled with suffering and chaos. The bleak prospects of life in the world makes suicide an option the nihilist would consider.

1.1.3. The Humanistic Perspective

Humanistic views on life's meaning begins as the
nihilistic view by rejecting the ideas of a supernatural presence in the universe, an all encompassing purpose, and immortality. However, for the humanist, these do not lead to a lack of meaning in life, since we establish meaning in our lives through the goals we choose to pursue and the values we live by. We can create meaning in our lives by endeavoring to fulfill purposes of our own designs even if they are purposes that do not transcend and embrace all existence. Humanist thinkers reject the religious and nihilistic claim that an all encompassing purpose is the only sort of purpose which could give life a meaning. Instead they insist that meaning and value can come to our lives as a result of projects of our own choosing.

The humanist view currently endorsed by the major thinkers in philosophy argues that there is no necessary connection between religion and the metaphysical claims about meaning in life. Their arguments include: (1) Since there can be purposes in life, life can have meaning even if there is no purpose of life, i.e., no purpose for life as such, as theism requires; (2) Life can have meaning even if death is complete annihilation and inevitable; and (3) reasons available within life itself are sufficient to make it reasonable to do anything. A larger context or controlling life scheme justifying everything and making everything really worthwhile is not a logical necessity.

The advances in science and technology which gradually led to the breakdown of religion and tradition has resulted
in the decrease in the number of people who take recourse in the metaphysical and religious perspective. The youngsters especially, have turned either to the nihilistic or humanistic perspective. Left to find meaning on their own without the support of religion and tradition, many people find themselves at psychologist's clinics to help them sort out their lives. Frankl in a conference on Existential Psychiatry, as early as in 1962, reports that "psychoanalysts... are confronted with a new type of neurosis that is characterized mainly by loss of interest and by lack of initiative. They complain that in such cases conventional psychoanalysis is not effective.... (The) patients doubt that life has any meaning". This condition is labeled by Frankl as "Existential Vacuum".

1.2. EXISTENTIAL NEUROSIS

Man needs meaning in his life. Frankl (1967) proposed that this need is more important than the will to pleasure which Freud put forward as the basic motivational force in life. When this need is not satisfied adequately, man falls into a particular state of being, called existential vacuum. Existential vacuum is characterized by meaninglessness, boredom, apathy, and feelings of emptiness and loneliness. It is also called the illness or sickness of our time because increasing number of people seem to suffer from it. This is amply testified by the large number of people seeking psychotherapy with the complaint that they
are dissatisfied with the nature and basis of their living; the increasing number of articles on the topic in scientific journals and popular magazines; the emergence of various cults and spiritual groups catering to this need; and the loneliness and emptiness most individuals feel in life.

When the condition of 'existential vacuum' deteriorates and deepens, it becomes a pathological state termed as 'existential neurosis' or 'noogenic neurosis' (Frankl, 1967).

Maddi (1967) explains existential neurosis on the basis of a model that is applicable for all neuroses. Accordingly, neurosis is believed to be a joint function of premorbidity and stress. It is described in terms of a set of symptoms, which may be distinguished from the premorbid personality, out of which it emerges on breakdown. Maddi has also elaborated on the stresses that can lead to the breakdown or disruption of the premorbid personality which results in existential neurosis.

1.2.1. Symptoms of Existential Neurosis

The symptoms of existential neurosis could be divided into three components: the cognitive, the affective, and the actional. The cognitive component of existential neurosis is meaninglessness, or chronic inability to believe in the truth, importance, usefulness, or value of any of the things one is engaged in or can imagine doing. The most
characteristic affective states of the individual are blandness and boredom. As to the realm of action, activity level may be low or moderate, but more important is the fact that activities are not chosen. The person is not very selective as to the activities he pursues. If there is any selectivity, it is in the direction of ensuring minimal expenditure of effort and decision making.

1.2.2. The Premorbid Personality

In the premorbid personality corresponding to the existential neurosis, only some, and that too the least unique, of the qualities that express the true nature of man, is present in the identity. The person considers himself to be nothing more than "the player of social roles and an embodiment of biological needs". The biological needs like food, water and sex constitute the real forces of living and most actions of the person are aimed to obtain these ends and to thwart anything that comes in the way of these goals. A second driving force for the person is the expectations, which he greatly internalizes and tries to conform to, rigidly. This makes the personality of the person extremely concrete, since he believes he is subject to these two forces of his life and has no power to manipulate them.

These two themes in his identity are not integrated and most often they demand conflicting actions. He has to protect one at the risk of the other, or satisfy them
intermittently without them clashing overtly and covertly. This fragmentation of the personality results in anxiety and fear. In the cognitive realm, the person would be consistently pragmatic due to the need for social role playing. A materialistic outlook is also common, which results from the need to satisfy the biological demands which are considered all important. All these tend to make his relationship with other people on a contractual basis, intended to serve some need, and robs it of all intimacy and spontaneity. This makes the person feel as if he were quite alone and as if something was missing from his life.

1.2.3. Precipitating Stress

The stresses that can jolt the person out of his superficial, empty, and vaguely dissatisfying life and produce the neurosis "are the ones that disconfirm the premorbid identity by forcing recognition of its overly concrete, fragmentary, and nonhumanistic nature". Maddi identifies three such stresses. They are: (1) Concrete threat of imminent death. When faced with death, the person is rudely awakened to the shallowness and colorlessness of his life style based on his social role and biological need. If he survives death, he will suffer from existential neurosis as his former identity would have been broken down. (2) Gross disruption of the social order, leading to disintegration of social roles and even of the biological needs. Events like wars, famine, economic depression, and natural calamities shake the foundation and ravages the life
style of the person thus revealing the relativity of the social order and destroying its impression of supreme importance and absolute reality. (3) The least dramatic, but the most common precipitating stress comes about due to the cumulative effect of repeated confrontations with the person's own inability to experience authentically and deeply due to the premorbid personality pattern. These confrontations are usually forced by significant others in the person's life because the person will tend to avoid self-confrontation.

Thus, it can be seen that the precipitating stresses strike at the vulnerabilities inherent in the personality and disrupt the premorbid balance thereby precipitating the existential neurosis.

1.2.4. Difference between Existential Neurosis and Some Related Concepts.

Existential neurosis has distinguishable symptoms that differentiate it quite clearly from other psychopathologies, especially psychotic states such as schizophrenia and senile psychosis, character disorders such as psychopathy, and neurotic states such as anxiety neurosis, obsessive-compulsiveness, hysteria, etc. Of the traditional states of psychopathology, existential neurosis most resembles depression and neurasthenia. However, careful examination reveals distinguishing characteristics of existential neurosis with these states also.
(a) **Depression:** Often existential neurosis can be confused with depression due to the occasional bouts of depression, and the low activity level present in existential neurosis. Studies by Crumbaugh (1967) have yielded empirical evidence to make a distinction between the two. He correlated the Purpose in Life Test (PIL), which measures the amount of purpose in a person's life with the MMPI and found that of all the scales, only the D (Depression) scores showed any substantial relationship with the PIL scores. Crumbaugh explains that the limited, though significant, correlation with the D scale suggests that the test is not primarily an indirect measure of depression and that it could be due to the tendency of highly depressed patients to show a loss of purpose and meaning. It is likely that the lack of meaning can be both a cause and an effect of depression and both lack of purpose and depression can result from other causes. But it is noticed that as existential neurosis prolongs, depression becomes less frequent, and apathy - an actual absence of strong emotion – is the ruling state of mind. And apathy is not typical of depression.

(b) **Neurasthenia:** Though neurasthenia as a category does not exist in the new terminology of mental illness, it is possible that existential neurosis could also be confused as a modified version of it. In neurasthenia, the person suffers from lack of energy and somatic creptitude, and as a
result feels constantly tired and performs little activity. In existential neurosis, though activity level is preferably kept to the minimum due to lack of interest in anything, the person feels no somatic disability. It is also to be noted that the cognitive state of meaninglessness which is characteristic of existential neurosis is virtually absent in neurasthenia. Empirical support for the distinction is forthcoming from the studies of Reker (1972) who found no significant correlation between PIL and the scales of the EPI which further supports Frankl's contention that existential neurosis is a new type of neurosis.

(c) Anomia: Anomia is a psychological state in which the individual's sense of social cohesion is severely diminished or destroyed. It is the manifestation, on an individual level, of the societal condition known as anomie. This psychological state is related to the discrepancy between the success goals set by society for its members and the lack of approved means to attain these goals, which results in differential modes of adaptation. Garfield (1973), in an attempt to explore whether anomie and existential vacuum were conceptually similar, studied two measures of anomie along with the PIL test. On the basis of statistical analysis it appeared that no significant relationship existed between the tests measuring the two concepts, leading to the conclusion that they are different.

(d) Alienation: Alienation is a term that is so very widely used these day's that it has different shades of meanings
in different situations. It has been used to describe such diverse conditions as the separation of spirit from nature (Hegel, 1931), man's loss of relationship to his work (Marx, 1844), the individual's estrangement from some deep and productive part of himself (Horney, 1945; Fromm, 1955), loss of one's own sanity (Kaplan, 1964), disillusionment with politics and politicians (Levin, 1960), the violational behavioral norms (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960), and a variety of other conditions. Thus alienation relates to a state of being, when an individual, a social class, or a whole generation, is estranged from the self, an individual, a group of other people, society, nature, or finally, the universe itself.

When used to refer to the psychological state of an individual, the term alienation describes the estrangement or separation between parts or the whole of the personality and significant aspects of the world of experience. It can be described in its references to: (1) objective states, (2) states of feeling accompanying alienation, and (3) motivational states tending towards estrangement. Separation may occur between self and the objective world, self and factors within the self, and finally between self and the total self. Though some writers have used the term alienation in describing the condition of existential vacuum, because of its wide range of meanings and usage in different fields of knowledge, it cannot be considered equivalent to existential vacuum. It may be noted here that
factor analysis of a test measuring alienation has shown that 'existential vacuum' was only one of the five dimensions of the concept of alienation, the others being 'despair', 'disillusionment', 'unstructured universe', and 'narcissism' (Kureshi & Dutt, 1979). Existential vacuum could be considered as alienation of the individual from his own self. The social factor that is usually implied in alienation is not present in existential vacuum.

1.3. Viewpoints relating to meaning in life

Interest in the topic of meaning in life, can be traced way back into man's history. Detailed discussion on the topic can be found mainly in two branches of science, namely, philosophy and psychology. The viewpoints of some of the major thinkers in these two branches of study in the area of meaning of life are briefly outlined below:

1.3.1. Viewpoints in Philosophy

(a) Aristotle

Purpose of life is one of the main themes in Aristotle's "Ethics". Aristotle raised the question why one 'would choose to be born rather than not'. He held that purpose was to be found in the essential nature of man. Human beings, he argued, have a special 'function' that has to do with rationality, and fulfillment was to be found by living in accordance with that function.
(b) Leo Tolstoy

At a time when, according to ordinary criteria, everything was going well for him, Tolstoy was suddenly assailed by the question "Well, what then?"—to which he could find no answer. In "My Confessions" he describes how he turned to science, in vain, to seek a solution, and finally came to the conclusion that "in faith alone could we find the meaning and possibility of life". Tolstoy notes that although his problem was, in essence, very simple and could be grasped 'even by the simplest of men', it did not usually trouble people of that kind; they 'continue living and never think of doubting the reasonableness of life'.

Tolstoy's life depicts a typical example of 'existential vacuum'. He broke out of it to find meaning in life in the Christian faith. Seeking a religious justification for his life, Tolstoy evolved a new Christianity based upon his own interpretation of the Gospels.

(c) Kurt Baier

Baier is one of the major thinkers of the humanistic viewpoint. According to Baier, death is simply irrelevant. If life can be worthwhile at all, then it can be so even if it is short. If it is not worthwhile at all, then an eternity of it is simply a nightmare. It may be sad that one has to leave this beautiful world, but it is so only if and because it is beautiful. And it is no less beautiful for coming to an end. He is of the opinion that an eternity of life might make one less appreciative of it, and in the end
Baier feels that life as such has no purpose in the sense in which man made things have a purpose. What matters is not that life should have a guaranteed purpose and meaning, whatever happens here or here-after, but that, by luck (Grace) or the right temperament and attitude (Faith) or a judicious life (Works), a person should make the most of his life. Baier is of the opinion that, in so far as it makes sense to speak of a meaning or purpose of life, it is Christianity rather than modern science that robs man of purpose.

(d) Richard Taylor

Taylor compares the human situation with that of Sisyphus of the ancient Greek myth who was condemned to an eternal life of meaningless activity - pushing a stone to the top of a hill, from which it would immediately roll down again. In the natural world also, according to Taylor, we have a spectacle of meaningless activity in the endless sequence of generations. 'Each of these cycles, so filled with toil, is to be followed only by more of the same'. Similarly in the case of human activity, we 'toil after goals' which are of 'transitory significance'. Having gained one of them, we immediately set forth for the next, the latter being essentially more of the same. Taylor also draws attention to a problem which may be summed up in the saying 'to travel is better than to arrive' implying that to
have a goal to work for is satisfying, but the achievement of the goal entails that we no longer have it. In spite of his negative analysis of life, Taylor claims optimistically that "the point of living is simply to be living" and that "the meaning of life is within us".

(e) Thomas Nagel

There are a number of familiar arguments about the insignificance of man (or individual man) when viewed in the wider context of space and time, etc. However, Nagel rejects these standard arguments for absurdity and claims instead that life is not absurd for these reasons but that it is so because we still take our lives seriously in spite of being aware of this point of view. The two inescapable viewpoints collide in us, and that is what makes life absurd. It is absurd because we continue to live with nearly undiminished seriousness in spite of "that other viewpoint". It follows from this position that the life of being without such awareness will not be absurd. Thus a mouse's life according to Nagel, will not be absurd, "because it lacks the .... self consciousness and self-transcendence that would enable it to see that it is only a mouse". It may be interesting to note that Taylor, in contrast, puts forward examples from animal life as paradigms of meaningless existence.

1.3.2. Viewpoints in Psychology.

(a) Victor Frankl

Victor Frankl, the founder of "logotherapy"- or therapy
through meaning, is an existential psychiatrist who bases his whole philosophy and therapy on man's need to have meaning in his life (Frankl, 1967). It was his persecution and suffering as a Jew during the Nazi regime that led Frankl to formulate his philosophy that humanized psychiatry. Frankl believed that man's primary concern was finding meaning in his life. He called it 'the will to meaning' and believed that in modern society this remained unfulfilled. Traditions which imparted values are decaying and disappearing. But still, man is left with the option of finding some unique meaning through personal discovery. Every situation, however bleak, is never without meaning. There is a possibility to do something about any situation confronting us, to change a reality, if need be.

According to Frankl, life can be made meaningful in a threefold way: first, through what we give to life (in terms of our creative works); second, by what we take from the world (in terms of our experiencing values); and third, through the stand we take toward a fate we no longer can change (e.g., an incurable disease, an inoperable cancer or the like).

(b) Abraham Maslow

Maslow believed that man has an essential nature of his own and he has needs capacities and tendencies which were good rather than evil. It was in actualizing this nature, in fulfilling the potentialities, in developing into maturity and growing from within, that there is true value
and full, healthy, and desirable development. In every human being there is an active impulse towards growth and self-actualization. Frustration of man's essential nature results in psychopathology. Meaning in life may be linked to the extent to which one is able to achieve self-actualization.

(c) Karen Horney

Horney did not deal directly with the topic of the meaning or purpose in/of life. But she has made significant contributions to the understanding of the state of alienation from the self which leads to the feeling of meaninglessness (Horney, 1945).

To Horney the ego which is the real self "is the spring of emotional forces, of constructive energies, of directive and judiciary powers". But in some cases the person may feel alienated from this real self of his. In this condition of self-alienation the person's experiences does not penetrate his feelings and his awareness. There is "a loss of the feeling of being an active determining force in his own life...the loss of feeling himself as an organic whole". Horney believes that this alienation occurs as a consequence of three reasons: (1) 'All that is compulsive in neurosis'. The compulsive nature of various drives in relation to self and others, by themselves and in conflict with each other strips the person of his spontaneity, and impairs his integration, and self governing; (2) 'Active
moves away from the real self', where the person does not want to be himself but strives to mould himself into something he should be. In his pursuit of the 'should' drives, the person loses touch with the real self and thereby abandons all his spontaneous energy; and (3) 'Active moves against the real self', as expressed in self-hates. As contact with the real self decreases it becomes so alien as to evoke terror and loathing. Consciously and unconsciously the person tries to protect himself from coming face to face with his real self, thereby blunting his sensitiveness to external and internal truths. All the above conditions lead to alienation of the self and also precipitate existential neurosis.

(d) Carl Rogers

Rogers believed that there is a basic tendency in man towards growth and every person contains within himself or herself the potentialities for healthy and creative growth (Rogers, 1965). He believed that this self-actualizing drive is the most powerful motivating force in man and that there is a single goal in life - to actualize the self or to become a 'whole person'. The failure to realize one's potentialities due to the harmful effects of the constricting and distorting influences of parental training, education, and other social pressures, can be overcome, if the individual is willing to accept responsibility for his or her own life. A person becomes fully functioning, adjusted, and mature when the symbolized experience that
constitute the self faithfully mirrors the experiences of the organism, or in other words, when there is not a large discrepancy between the real self and the ideal self. Such a person accepts the entire range of organismic experiences without threat or anxiety.

1.4. THE EXPERIENCE OF MEANING IN LIFE

Although the term 'meaningful life' is widely used, it lacks a clear definition. Some authors believe that life can be described as meaningful when one experiences a feeling of integration and relatedness (Weisskopf-Joelson, 1968) or a feeling of fulfillment and significance (Maslow, 1964). Camus (1946), points out that a sense of meaningless is reflected in feelings of alienation and nothingness. Battista (1973) suggested that meaning in life depends on the concept of life and the sense of fulfillment related to it. Crumbaugh (1964) defines 'purpose in life' as the ontological significance of life from the point of view of the experiencing individual.

Gestalt and cognitive psychologists postulate that anything and everything that we sense or perceive is not an isolated event but is assimilated into a host of background information which colors the picture and helps to interpret it. Each person perceives events, places, people, etc. in such a way that it helps to make sense of his world. In general, people do not go through life events passively, but rather actively try to interpret and understand them. It is
in this process of contemplation that 'explanations' and 'meanings' are created. The proposition that people create order and meaning in their daily life is based on the simple idea that they are trying to avoid situations of doubt and insecurity. Through their experiences a pattern of belief is built that help them cope with life. But people differ in the complexity, degree of integration, depth and scope of such belief patterns or philosophy of life and the meaning experienced.

Though the philosophy of life one develops or adopts definitely has a role to play in perceiving life as meaningful, the important ingredient that differentiates those with a meaningful life from those who suffer from meaninglessness could be traced to their commitment to their outlook and the goals in their life. When a goal is perceived in life, it becomes personal only when there is a commitment to it. The deeper the commitment and involvement, the more there is a purpose and meaning to life. The emotional aspect of fulfillment in life is also important in the feeling of meaningfulness. Battista (1973) summarizes the development of a meaningful life as dependent upon the following:

(1) Commitment to some valued personal understanding of life.
(2) The generation of an internal 'scale' from this understanding of life which the individual can use as a measure of the fulfillment of his life.
(3) A positive self-evaluation of one's life in terms of this scale.

Though commitment to something is indisputably agreed upon as a necessary factor for meaning in life, there are two perspectives regarding the nature or object of such commitment. They are: (1) Philosophical and (2) Relativistic.

The Philosophical approach postulates that meaningful life develops only from the commitment to and fulfillment of the intrinsic meaning of life. It assumes that there is only one true meaning of life, since the problem of meaning is approached through a single conceptual framework. Depending on the framework, the intrinsic meaning of life is identified differently by various models. Thus the religious model has meaning stemming from God, and the existential model from Being. The humanistic model of Fromm, for example, has meaning from Man himself. According to Frankl (1967) meaning develops only when the individual is committed to beliefs which transcends himself and which are anchored in the external world rather than within himself.

The relativity perspective, on the other hand, states that commitment to any system of beliefs can serve as a basis for the development of meaningful life. Here the emphasis is more on the act or process of commitment to the belief system rather than the nature or content of it.
Battista (1973) has given a few reasons for preferring the relativity perspective over the philosophical model for further study on the topic of meaningful life. They include: (1) There are a wide variety of belief systems under which individuals have developed meaning in life, which do not appear reducible to any one fundamental system; (2) The relativity model promotes tolerance towards all systems of belief and is thus inclusive of all the philosophical models; and (3) It encourages the study of how individuals develop belief systems, how these interact with social systems, and how they can be satisfied.

1.5. APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF MEANING IN LIFE

Three approaches which can be used to study the development of meaning in life and which emphasize the different conditions under which an individual may perceive his life as fulfilling are discussed below:

1.5.1. Psychological Approach:

The psychological perspective which makes use of the abundant number of psychological theories of different schools of thought, is a rich and varied method for explaining both the nature and development of an individual's commitment to some meaning in life, and also the process through which meaning may or may not be fulfilled. Different kinds of theories can be used to explore the various aspects of the development of meaning in
life. Theories of Freudian, social and existential psychological viewpoints regarding the development of beliefs and morals, can be used to study the development of the concept or philosophy or life. Theories centering on developing 'mental health' such as Jungian concept of individuation and Bugental's existential concept of authenticity, Roger's fully functioning individual, and Maslow's concept of self-actualization, most of which are based on clinical experience, are very relevant to the study of development of meaning of life. A third set of psychological theories which emphasizes the individual's development through the resolution of stages of development through the interaction of the individual with his social environment are also applicable to the study, examples may be found in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and in Erickson's psychosocial stages.

1.5.2. Transactional Approach

The transactional approach to the study of meaning in life is based on the contention that the society that envelopes one has a crucial role to play in almost every aspect of man's life and so in the development of meaning in a person's life it is important that the individual fits into his environment. The transactional theory, as developed by Cantril (1965) tries to understand the individual in terms of a set of needs or goals that he attempts to fulfill through socially determined roles. When
it is applied to the study of meaning in life, the following aspects are explored.

1. The existence and availability of a role, or the individual's ability to create a role that will satisfy his purpose in life.

2. The fit between the role demands and the capacities of the individual.

3. The fit between the values, goals, needs, and roles of the individual and the values, goals, needs, and roles of the social structure within which he lives.

1.5.3. Phenomenological Approach

The phenomenological approach deals with the topic of meaning in life in terms of the rate at which a person perceives himself as progressing towards his goal or purpose in life. Phenomenology, the study of the nature and structure of consciousness, can be utilized to study an individual's self-evaluation process as a function of the rate at which he judges himself as progressing. The following factors are used to evaluate the rate of progress.

1. Current goal position relative to the life-goal position.

2. Current rate of progress toward life-goal.

3. Comparison of present goal position and rate of progress with previous and anticipated goal position and rate of the change.

The closer the individual's present goal position is to
his ultimate goal position, or greater the rate of present progress, relative to the past rate or to the predicted rate of progress, the greater will be the perceived meaning of life.

The three approaches to the study of meaning in life described so far may not be taken as mutually exclusive or contradictory. Rather they may be considered as complimentary and any or all of the approaches may be used to make an exhaustive study of the various determinants of meaning of life.

1.6. THE NEED FOR THE INVESTIGATION

Much of the information and discussion regarding meaning of life, existential vacuum, and the conditions for the development of meaning in life have been based on the situations and theories that have originated in the occidental culture. Though the drive towards a meaningful life may be universal, the nature of the experience and even more, the combination of factors that contribute to the development of meaningful life may be different for different individuals. It is up to each man, depending on the circumstances of his life, to create meaning in his life. It goes without saying that the culture and society in which one lives and interacts with, has a very significant role to play in shaping the purpose and meaning in one's life.
Many surveys and studies conducted in the West, especially in America, have revealed a growing trend of youth suffering from existential vacuum and meaninglessness in life. Studies of a similar nature in the Indian setting are virtually nil. Cross-cultural studies to compare the difference between the Indian culture and the western culture regarding the topic of meaning in life are also yet to be conducted.

India, the birthplace of many of the major religions of the world, boasts of a culture based on and saturated with spirituality. A pilgrim's center, people from all over the world find themselves drawn to India in their desperate search for the meaning in life. It may be the spiritual background which enables the Indians to live with poverty, high death rate, and all kinds of diseases and infections without succumbing to feelings of meaninglessness.

However, with the progress of science and technology there has been concomitant changes in the cultural and value patterns of the Indian society. Tradition and culture has less of an influence upon the present generation than on the previous ones. Caught between the strongly infiltrating Western values and the fading traditional values, the younger generation finds themselves more estranged than ever before.

But in spite of all these, there are some major differences between the Western and the Indian cultures
which caution against generalizing the result of the studies done in the west to the Indian population. Some of the differences between the two cultures are highlighted below.

(a) **Industrialization:**

Industrialization is believed to be one of the major causes of alienation and feelings of existential vacuum. In the technologically advanced countries it has been noted that only 15% of the population is needed to do work to support the survival needs of the rest of the population. This makes the rest of the population dispensable. Added to this, the routineness and the mechanical nature of work to be done in most industries makes life boring. Migration from villages to cities results in overcrowding and its associated psycho-social stresses on the individual. All these factors foster alienation.

Compared to the western countries, industrialization in India has not progressed very much. The majority of people still live in villages and a good deal of them are agriculturists who rely on traditional techniques of farming due to lack of money, space, and abundance of manpower. Generally people are traditional and conservative in attitude.

(b) **Individual and societal orientation:**

Independence and autonomy are encouraged even from early childhood in the western countries. They are valued
very much and usually form the ideal or primary criterion for maturity and mental health. It is possible that the heavy emphasis on individualism may result in isolation of each man from the other which, in turn, may contribute to the feeling of alienation.

The Indian culture, on the other hand, values 'reciprocal individualism', which refers to an individual's self-reliance or independence which is interrelated or harmonious with others. Family ties and bonds are still strong in India. Parents and elders of the family are still revered and looked after. The ties with the root family is not severed even after marriage. Contact with relatives are maintained and so the society which contain a good deal of relatives turns out to be one big family. Even Indians who go abroad tend to seek others and in spite of differences in language, religion and caste, club together. This cohesive force of the society may be expected to help counter the feeling of alienation in an individual.

(c) Religion:

Significant differences between Indian and Western cultures may be attributed to differences in the religion also. The main religion of India, Hinduism, is unlike Christianity which is out there for those people who need it. In India, religion permeated every aspect of one's life irrespective of whether one actually practices it or not. There are rituals and ceremonies associated with almost all
important events in life. The society is to some extent segregated into different castes which was originally devised to unite and steer the whole of society on the path of realisation of God. The life span of an individual was divided into different 'ashrams' to facilitate his spiritual enlightenment, which was the ultimate goal. Even the arts and craft in India can be seen to stem from a religious source. Even though the religious atmosphere in India has eroded a great deal, its impact and presence, all the same, is a force to reckon with while dealing with the situation and people of India.

All the above considerations, viz., differences in industrialization, stress on independence Vs. interdependence, and religious and spiritualistic orientation, point out that the social milieu in India is not comparable to that of the western countries, and hence findings relating to the prevalence of existential vacuum and meaninglessness referred to earlier in the discussion may not be applicable in the present culture. However, this does not mean that the problem is non-existent in India. Rather, it implies that any study on the topic should take into consideration the differences in the relevant cultural factors. The present study is conceived in this context.

A brief survey conducted by the investigator as part of the preliminary information gathering for the present study, revealed that people approaching clinical psychologists with
typical problems of existential nature (e.g. meaninglessness and existential neurosis, etc.) were very rare. The complaints that were sometimes made was mostly by depressives as part of their other symptoms.

The low prevalence of existential neurosis and related problems may not be due to an absence of such problems in the present population. Instead, it may be attributed to the unwillingness of people to seek help from psychiatrists and psychologists even when they do need such help. Unless a problem or situation gets disturbingly out of hand or significantly interferes with their social and personal life, few people would consider a visit to a mental health specialist. This may be partly due to the stigma still associated with visits to psychiatrists as well as the availability of other sources, like religious leaders or other elders who can help to sort out their problems. Besides, the majority of Indians are so poor that they cannot afford to visit a psychologist or psychiatrist for sorting out the problem of meaninglessness of life.

In the context of all that has been mentioned, the present investigator intends to study the incidence of existential vacuum and also the conditions that can contribute to a meaningful life, using a sample drawn from Kerala, a state of India.
1.7. THE PROBLEM FOR INVESTIGATION

The question 'what is the meaning/purpose of life' tends to be a very philosophical one and appears to be beyond the present scope of psychology and especially hard for empirical studies. However, the topic may be made amenable to psychological investigation when it is limited to an exploration of the following areas:

1. The nature of the experience of 'meaningful life';

2. The importance of 'meaning' or 'purpose in life' for the proper functioning of the individual;

3. The factors that contribute to, or, are present in a meaningful life, such as family atmosphere, personality characteristics, social factors, etc.

Regarding the first area, viz., the nature of the experience of meaningful life, very few psychologists have dealt with it in depth. At the same time, topics related to it like self-actualization, fully functioning individual, etc. have received greater attention from various psychologists, especially those of the humanistic tradition. Their works have helped in establishing that instead of focusing on the dark, pathological, and abnormal side of human nature, psychologists should rather explore the healthy, well functioning, positive side of man to comprehend his full potential and to help him grow. Among
the major contributors in this field are Maslow, Carl Rogers, Erich Fromm, Rollo May, and Victor Frankl.

The second area, relating to the importance of 'meaning' or 'purpose' in one's life, can best be explored by studying those disturbed individuals who visit psychologists or psychiatrists either for gross behavioural problems or for therapies ranging from anxiety neurosis to encounter group therapy and logotherapy. It could be studied if these people lacked meaning or a strong purpose in their lives and whether their disorder could be traced to this deficiency. In such cases, therapy may be oriented to helping them find some meaning in life.

With regard to the third area, a lot of research works have been conducted which could identify various indices related to both the psychological health of the individual and the experience of meaningfulness in life. For example, studies have brought out the following characteristics to be commonly found in psychologically healthy individuals (Rogers, 1959; Maslow, 1970; Hightower, 1988):

(a) Efficient and nondistorted perception of reality.
(b) Acceptance of oneself and others.
(c) Concern for issues and problems around them.
(d) Deep appreciation of life to the extent of mystic or transcendent experience.
(e) Avoids the twin pitfalls of overconformity and blind rebellion to societal expectations.
(f) Presence of a strong value structure and constant evaluation of it.

1.7.1. Variables selected for the study

The basic theme of the present study is an empirical exploration into the correlates of meaningful life. Since it is practically impossible to take most, if not all, of the variables comprising the field, only a few are attempted here. Among the various personality characteristics of an individual the ones that are selected for the present study are:

(a) Self-Esteem,
(b) Locus of Control,
(c) Values (Theoretical, Religious, Aesthetic, Social, Political, Economic), and
(d) Maladjustment.

A description of the variables mentioned above along with a brief review of the relevant empirical literature is given below.

(a) Self-esteem

Self esteem can be defined as an individual's self-evaluation and feelings of adequacy and worth as a person, his feeling of being a 'good' or a 'bad' person, his views of his state of health, physical appearance, skills and sexuality, and his sense of adequacy in social interaction' (Tuinen, 1979). One's self-esteem is bound to
affect the way one relates to other people, the level of
achievement aspired for and attained, the states of tension
one experiences, and how one feels about oneself and
thereby life in general. Thus the self-esteem of a person
is an important aspect of his whole being. According to
Maslow (1967), all people have a need or desire for a
stable, firmly based, sense of self-regard or self-respect,
and they need the esteem from themselves and from others.

The self-esteem of a person depends on his self-
acceptance, which can be considered to be the extent to
which a person's self-concept is congruent with his
description of his 'ideal' self. The self-accepting persons
are likely to have smaller self-ideal discrepancies than
less self-accepting persons.

Among the variables that are found to be related to the
development and maintenance of self-esteem in an individual
include Parental attitudes, Life events, Sex-role
orientation, and socio-economic status.

(1) Parental Attitudes: Three important parental
treatments observed by Coopersmith (1967), which act as
antecedents to children's self-esteem are: (i) total or
nearly total acceptance of the children by their parents,
(ii) clearly defined and consistently enforced limits on
behaviour, and (iii) respect and expectation that the
children would live up to the standard established. High
parental self-esteem is also conducive to high self-esteem.
in children.

(2) Life-events: Positive or encouraging events in one's life at home, in the academic field, peer group, or work place, can facilitate one's self-esteem (Hamechek, 1978). Our feelings about ourselves are learned responses, which also gives us the opportunity to unlearn bad feelings and acquire good feelings.

(3) Sex-role Orientation: Sex role identification promotes self-esteem. Many studies support the hypothesis that masculinity has significant positive correlation with the self-esteem of males (Thomas & Sanandaraj, 1983) and femininity with that of females (Knox, 1978).

(4) Socioeconomic status: A significant positive relationship is found to exist between self-esteem and socioeconomic conditions like higher social class (Stern, 1977), occupational status (Bachman and O'Malley, 1977), and race (Taylor, 1979).

Research shows that self-acceptance and personal happiness are related to accepting others and enjoying what one is and what one has, maintaining a balance between expectations and achievement (Shaver & Freedman, 1976).

Though studies on self-esteem are quite large in number, relatively few studies have focussed on the relation between self-esteem and the perceived meaning in a person's life. Among them are two studies conducted on clinical samples in
India. In the first, Gonsalvez and Gon (1983) compared normals and psychopathological groups and found them to differ significantly in the experience of having purpose in life. It was also found that these two groups differed in the feeling of self worth. A self-depreciating image was more characteristic of schizophrenics and psychoneurotics who were also lower in purpose in life. In another study it was noticed that schizophrenics had significantly lower self-esteem and purpose in life compared to manics (Varkey & Sathyavathi, 1984).

It may be noted that both of the above studies have found a positive relationship between the two variables. But other than these studies, done on clinical samples, very few others have looked into the relationship between the two variables.

Since the role of self-esteem which colours every event in a person's life was considered a crucial element in the development and experience of a meaningful life, it was taken as one of the correlates to be studied.

(b) Locus of Control (LOC)

Locus of control is defined as a personality characteristic that represents the extent to which an individual believes that events in his life are under his personal control. The internally controlled individual is the one who believes that life's outcomes are
predominantly the consequences of his own actions and the externally controlled individual is the one who believes that his life's outcomes are mainly determined by external forces such as fate, chance, luck, or more powerful others. Beliefs about locus of control are not either/or, but can fall anywhere along a dimension marked by external beliefs at the one extreme and internal ones at the other.

The concept of locus of control was put forward by Rotter (1960) based on the social learning theory which regards behaviour as mostly learned in social situations and fused with needs that are largely satisfied through people. Locus of control forms one of the elements of a behavioural prediction formula, the other elements being situational determinants, reinforcement value and behaviour potentials. Studies have shown that an individual's reinforcement history influences the extent to which he believes in internal or external locus of control (McArthur, 1970). Locus of control is a generalized expectancy or belief as to the optimum way in which the relationship between one's behaviour and the subsequent occurrence of reward and punishment should be viewed.

A large amount of research has been done to find out how locus of control is related to various other personality trait and behavioral patterns of a person. A few of the findings given below reveal how externals differ from the internals. Internal locus of control has been found to facilitate greater academic achievement (Messer, 1972;
Otten, 1977), and more persuasiveness and greater participation in social action (Lefcourt, 1972). Research by Phares, Wilson and Klyver (1971) and Hochreich (1975) revealed that internals are less likely to blame outside factors for failure than are externals and they also take more pride in the work they have accomplished. Internals generally sought more information about events around them and tried to understand their environment better as revealed from studies on prison inmates (Seeman, 1963) and hospital patients (Seeman & Evans, 1962). They also preferred activities involving skill and strategy whereas externals chose those involving luck and chance (Shneider, 1972). Thus the extent of control a person believes he has, determines the way he behaves. The internals will be more assertive in their attempts to control, master, manipulate, or otherwise cope with their environment.

Mathew (1985) theorizes that locus of control is influenced by climatic factors and cultural traditions. The people of the West, who have mainly originated in the colder regions of the earth, due to the necessity to hoard food, collect firewood, and make warm clothes for the winter, tend to save, invest and plan ahead and thereby are more individualistic, work oriented and enterprising. All this is reflected in their philosophy which regards the world as real, which holds man responsible for his actions and stresses man's freedom of will. On the other hand, in the tropics, where food is available all through the year and
the heat discourages hard work, passive acceptance of the environment, collectivism and conformity are prized more than individual entrepreneurship. Their philosophy of life regards the only worthwhile goal as 'nirvana' and stresses the philosophy of determinism or fate. Thus, according to Mathew, there is a built in tendency for the Western mind to idealize internal LOC while the Eastern mind finds solace in external LOC. One's unknown past life activities which determines and affect the present life, the position of the stars at one's birth which brings luck or misfortune, are examples of external controls over life which are an inextricable part of an Indian mind are often a source of comfort at times of disaster as well as a check on undue pride, and complaisance during good times.

Due to the absence of cross-cultural studies on locus of control, empirical support for the above contentions are not available. The few studies available on the concept relate to the correlates of locus of control. For example, Helode and Barlinge (1984) found that in India external locus of control was positively related to religiosity. Rao and Murthy (1984) studied the psychosocial correlates of locus of control among Indian college students and found that significant sex differences exists, with girls being more external. Externals tended to be lower than internals in academic achievement, were more anxious, were studying in the faculties of Arts and Commerce, coming from the lower socio-economic classes and with mothers who were not
gainfully employed outside the home. Neuroticism was found to be related to external LOC (Sathyavati & Thomas, 1984, Rao & Murthy, 1984).

Studies relating locus of control with meaning in life are relatively few in number. The available studies generally point in the direction of an internal locus of control to favour greater meaning in life.

Philip (1980) studied purpose in life (PIL), depression and locus of control, using multiple discriminant analysis and found that there was a compounding effect between depression and external locus of control with PIL scores in general and with two items in particular, which reflect the crucial self-transcendent quality of current goals embedded in or meaningfully related to the world. This study supports the idea that people experiencing a meaningful life can be expected to be relatively free of neurotic depressive symptoms, feel to be in realistic control of their own destiny, and have a generalized expectancy of reinforcement for meaningful behaviour.

Yarnell (1971) correlated PIL test scores with Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control scale and found a correlation of -.32 for normals and -.49 for schizophrenics. Reker's (1977) study on prison inmates showed a correlation of -.71 between PIL scores and LOC scale.
Hopelessness or negative expectation of the future, and alienation, which are concepts related to existential neurosis, were found to be positively related to external locus of control (Prociuk, Lawrence and Lussier, 1976, Sathayavati & Thomas, 1984). Because the externals feel that they are incapable of manipulating and controlling their environment they are more prone to suffer from hopelessness and alienation.

Though all the studies cited so far favour an internal locus of control, the results are in no way unequivocal. For example, external LOC has been found to be related to acceptance of the present and coping with stress due to a passive, detached, professional attitude (Phares, 1976). At the same time, extreme internal LOC is found to lead to stress (Shejwal & Palsane, 1986), and psychosomatic illnesses like ulcer, heart disease, and headache, as well as feelings of failure and inferiority.

Though the few studies done in the West relating LOC and meaning in life generally indicated that internal LOC is related to the experience of a purposeful life, it was taken up in the study to find the relation between the two variables in the Indian setting.

(c) Values

The values a person holds determines the nature of his life to a great deal. The nature or content and strength of the values upheld is bound to affect the of purpose or
meaning in a person's life. Frankl believes that existential vacuum results from a failure to find meaning in life by way of commitment to certain values. The feeling of vacuum is rooted in collisions between different values, or in the unrewarded longing and groping of man for that hierarchically highest value - an ultimate meaning to his life.

The personal valuing of an individual may be assessed in three domains: (1) the content of the value system; (2) the fulfillment of the values in the system; and (3) the competence of the person to make value judgments and choices. Given below are some of the studies finding out the relation between values and meaning in life.

As to the content of values, various studies have found that the value 'Salvation' of the Value Survey (Rokeach, 1973) is significantly associated with high PIL scores and the value 'Pleasure' is associated with a low meaning in life (Crandell and Rasmussen, 1975; Simmons, 1980; Paloutzian, 1981). The search for salvation is also associated with a concern for responsibility and self control while the failure to find meaning is associated with a search for monetary pleasure and a feeling of cheerfulness. These findings indicate that a materialistic and hedonistic philosophy of life is not conducive to a high meaning in life. Strangely, Paloutzian's study (1981) also indicated that the values of happiness, freedom, and mature love was given more importance by subjects who
experienced low meaning in life. It was not that those who experienced a more meaningful life found happiness, freedom and mature love of less value, but to them those were not the principles that guided their life. Rather, they were guided by spiritual values and hence meaning, happiness and the other values became the by-product of their life style. At the same time, those who actively strived to attain happiness, freedom and mature love, seemed to miss these end states by the very fact of trying hard to find them.

Simmons (1980) correlated the PIL test with measures of valuing competence (Hartman Value Profile) and fulfillment in valuing (Self-Anchorong Striving Scale). Findings indicated that the experience of having meaning in life is associated with a differential ability to make value judgments about the self, i.e., what is important about being a person, but not about the external world.

Jacobson, Ritters and Murphy (1977) studied the effect of therapy on the strength of values and purpose in life of alcoholics on a rehabilitation programme by measuring them twice, once shortly after admission and the other just before discharge. There were significant correlations between their PIL scores and the aesthetic and religious scale of 'the study of values' on the second administration only. Their purpose in life increased after the program which imparted religious and social values as part of their
approach. This study stresses the importance of values in a person's life in providing meaning to his existence.

(d) Maladjustment:

The term adjustment refers to the psychological processes by means of which the individual manages to cope with the various demands and pressures on him (Lazarus, 1976). When the individual cannot cope with them and as a result develops undesirable or poorly regarded patterns of behaviour or characteristics which are defensive in function, he is said to be maladjusted. In the psychosocial approach maladjusted behaviours are learned the same way as adjusted or adaptive behaviours and there is no discontinuity between healthy and desirable adjustment and sick, or undesirable modes of adjustment (Ullman & Krasner, 1965).

Maladjustments in Roger's view are caused by one's failure to integrate all the experiences, desires and feelings into the phenomenological image of self. It represents an ever-widening gulf between phenomenological self-image and reality. Maladjusted people tend to regard any experience that is not consistent with their self-image as a threat. In well adjusted people the phenomenological self is flexible and changes with what they really think, feel, do and experience. It may be expected that people with high meaning in life will be relatively free from neurotic and psychotic problems. Maladjustment, which
colours the perception of reality, may inhibit the development of meaning in a person's life.

There have been several attempts at finding empirical evidence for the relationship between purpose in life and the different psychopathological states.

Pearson and Sheffield (1974) in a study of 144 outpatient neurotics, found a negative relation between the PIL scores and the Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI - form A) which indicated that patients with a high purpose in life are less neurotic and are more sociable.

Many studies have been conducted relating the PIL test and the MMPI to explore the relation between meaning in life and mental health or adjustment. Crumbaugh and Maholick found significant relation between the PIL scores and only two scales of the MMPI Viz., the K (validity) scale (.39) and the D (depression) scale (-.30). At the same time, a study by Elmore and Chambers (1967) have revealed a significant negative correlation between PIL scores and the social introversion scale of the MMPI.

Results of a study by Black and Gregson (1973) on New Zealand prisoners indicate that recidivists who evidenced little purpose in life had a high level of emotionality or 'neuroticism'. There was no difference between normals, recidivists, and first sentence prisoners on the extroversion scale of the EPI.
In a comparative study in India (Gonsalvez & Gon, 1983) done on the degree and pattern of purpose in life in psychopathological and normal groups, it was found that the psychopathological group experienced a significantly lower degree of purpose in life than the normals. This led the researchers to conclude that 'the lack of purpose is indeed the cause that is instrumental in the development and/or precipitation of conventional psychopathological syndromes'. The feeling of purposelessness was characterized not by a want of goals or future aspirations but by a greater sense of boredom and routineness, a sense of dissatisfaction and worthlessness with regard to past achievements and progress, a self depreciating image and a more pervasive existential anxiety.

All the studies mentioned above, with the exception of that by Crumbaugh, have concentrated more on pathological groups. The relationship between the two variables among normal people have not been subjected to sufficient scrutiny. The decision to include the variable 'maladjustment' in the present study was mainly based on this consideration.

1.7.2. Statement of the Problem and Clarification of Terms

The problem for the investigation is titled as:

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH PURPOSE IN LIFE.

The different terms used in the above title are explained below:
(a) **Psychological Factors:** In the present study, the term refers to the different personality and socio-demographic characteristics of the individual. All the variables mentioned in the previous section was included in the study, in addition to the socio-demographic factors like educational level, income, rural/urban residence, marital status, etc.

(b) **Associated:** Since it is difficult to determine statistically whether the personality factors that are studied are antecedents or consequences of purpose in life, the term 'associated' is used to indicate that the psychological variables that are studied are considered as correlates.

(c) **Purpose in life—** Purpose in life is what the test 'Purposeful Life Index' (PLI) measures. The test is constructed to measure the extent to which a person experiences life as meaningful or purposeful. This is tapped by detecting the presence of a feeling of fulfillment, satisfaction and contentment regarding life together with a philosophy of life or a worthwhile goal in life. In addition to an overall measure of purpose in life, there are also three independent dimensions of it (as revealed by factor analysis of the text, detailed in Chapter III) viz., (i) Absence of existential vacuum; (ii) Presence of a strong goal, purpose, or philosophy in life; and (iii) Feeling of contentment and satisfaction with regard to life.
1.8. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following general hypotheses have been formulated for the study.

1. The Concept of purposeful life as measured by the 'Purposeful Life Index' is multidimensional, which can be factor analysed to produce meaningful underlying dimensions.

2. The Purposeful Life Index and its dimensions will be significantly related to the various psychological and other variables used in the study.

3. There will be significant differences among the four subgroups on the different dimensions of purposeful life and its correlates.

It may be noted that hypotheses two and three could be split-up to make several specific sub-hypotheses by specifying each of the variables used in the study.

Chapter three examines the tenability of the first hypothesis by factor analysing the Purposeful Life Index. Tenability of the second hypothesis is examined in Chapter four by examining the correlation of the variables with each of the factors of PLI. Differences among the subgroups selected for the study, which relates to the third hypothesis are examined in detail in the fifth Chapter.