CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Since recorded history, scholars, philosophers and religious leaders have considered happiness to be the highest good and an ultimate motivation for human functioning. Today, as the world grapples with a global recession and financial markets are turning volatile by the day, happiness and well being take a central position, as crucial factors in ensuring positive psychological health of individuals. Thus, the study of what makes people happy and contended calls for urgent global attention in the wake of latest economic debacles and meltdowns.

Psychology on its onset had the concept of happiness central to it. A close examination of the history of psychology reveals that before World War -II, psychology had three distinct missions: curing mental illness, making the lives of people more productive and fulfilling, and identifying and nurturing high talent (Seligman, 1994). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) quote that the early focus on positive aspects of psychology is exemplified by such work as Terman’s studies of giftedness (Terman, 1939) and marital happiness (Terman, Buttenwieser, Ferguson, Johnson & Wilson, 1938), Watson’s writings on effective parenting (Watson, 1928), and Jung’s work concerning the search and discovery of meaning in life (Jung, 1933).
However, due to certain political and economic circumstances right after the war, the ‘Disease Model’ pervaded as ‘the’ model of psychology and most of the psychologists began to intensify their efforts at treating psychopathology. No doubt, this arrangement brought many benefits. There were strides in the understanding of etiology and therapy of mental illness: at least fourteen disorders, previously intractable, have yielded their secrets to science and now can either be cured or considerably relieved (Seligman, 1994). But, in its preoccupation with disorders and their cure, psychology nearly lost track of its other two missions of making lives of people lastingly happier and nurturing genius. The consequence of this neglect became evident. It was not very long ago that it was realized that despite wealth, physical comfort, knowledge of energy, space and communication, man is dissatisfied, disturbed and unhappy (Lawton, 1983). The famous ‘American Paradox’ is glaring evidence to it.

Nearly six years back, the millennial issue of the ‘American Psychologist’ on Positive Psychology rediscovered psychology’s long abandoned interest in happiness and well-being. Martin Seligman who was heading the American Psychological Association at that time articulated a fresh vision and became largely responsible for the catalyzing the change in the focus of psychology. He defined positive psychology as the ‘umbrella term for the study of positive emotions, positive character traits and enabling institutions’ (Seligman, 2000). He asserted that new century challenges psychology to shift more of its intellectual energy to the study of the positive aspects of human experience.
This marked the starting point of psychology's newly found concern for positive features that make life worth living like hope, wisdom, courage, creativity, forgiveness, spirituality etc. Since then, excellent reviews of happiness and well-being have begun to appear in psychological literature. In less than a decade, positive psychology has caught the attention not only of the academic community but also the general public. The new and rapidly burgeoning field of Positive Psychology is shedding light on what makes us happy, the pursuit of happiness, and how we can lead more fulfilling, satisfying lives. Rigorous experimentation is specifically being undertaken to assess the efficacy of positive interventions and exercises aimed at making people lastingly happier. However, the results are mixed. A 2005 review of the studies published about positive psychology interventions found that most of the interventions yielded positive results but they were briefer and transient effects. This leads us to infer that there still is a need for exhaustive exploration followed by empirical validation of diverse approaches and practices for communicating a conclusive picture regarding the ways that enhance wellbeing and happiness for long term.

One promising approach would be to turn to the spiritual wisdom of the east that has at its core ways to be eternally and unconditionally happy and satisfied (Ananda (pure happiness) and Nitya Tripti (eternal fulfillment and satisfaction)) irrespective of internal or circumstantial limitations. Close investigation of classic eastern literature mainly represented by Srimad Bhagavad-Gita reveals that Asakti (attachment) and Anasakti (non-attachment) are
significant concepts related to well-being and happiness. Present investigation would aim at finding out whether the eastern yogic concepts of Asakti and Anasakti relate meaningfully to the western parameters of Well-being and Happiness.

One obvious apprehension of the upholders of science would be the fact that Asakti and Anasakti being constructs taken from the philosophical texts are likely to be too subjective, dependent on faith, or assumptions; lacking the clear-eyed skepticism and difficult to be subjected to scientific enquiry. However, it may be clarified here that the selection of the constructs has been done keeping in mind that these constructs have already been subjected to operationalization and quantification by few indigenous researchers. This study would take the effort a step ahead.

1.1 Asakti-Anasakti

Asakti and Anasakti are indigenous psychological constructs of the East. Roughly, English equivalents of Asakti and Anasakti are attachment and non-attachment, although the Eastern meanings of attachment and non-attachment are far deeper than the conventional English literal interpretation of these words.

References to the terms Asakti and Anasakti can be found in ancient Hindu scriptures and systems of philosophy specifically Vedas, Upanishads and Yoga Sutras. But there is only one text that contains in condensed form, all the philosophical and psychological
wisdom of all the scriptures and describes Asakti-Anasakti in great thoroughness and works out the various conceivable ramifications of the concepts in all their details. That text is that of Bahgavad Gita which is rightly accepted as the fountain head of Eastern psychology. In this scripture the quintessence of eastern literature is presented in the form of 18 chapters and 700 verses, each describing a different aspect of the process of self transformation. It is a part of the longest epic of Mahabharata which has hundred thousand verses. *Bhagavad Gita* is set in the background of battlefield and is presented in the form unique dialogue between Sri Krishna, the supreme God head and Arjuna, the sincere aspirer of knowledge who is in a state of conflict between his attachments and duties. Through the teachings of *Bhagavad Gita* Sri Krishna imparts all the wisdom of the Vedic and Upanishidic literature. He modified and simplified Vedic and Upanishidic knowledge and speaks to humanity through his dialogue with Arjuna.

Of all the teachings of Lord Krishna, one that is of special importance is his emphasis on liberation and attaining equanimity of mind as the ultimate goal of humanity and Anasakti or the dispassionate attitude as the key to liberation. Specifically speaking, there are about 150 verses related to Asakti and Anasakti in *Bhagavad Gita*- 85 verses that deal with Anasakti and about 65 verses dealing with Asakti.

Although it is a task that requires great acumen, the researchers here have made an attempt to categorize and delineate various verses in *Bhagavad Gita* that pertain specifically to certain
aspects of Asakti and Anasakti. It may be thus noted that the list
given below is just indicative and is far from being exhaustive and
conclusive.

References to how and why does Asakti arise can be found in
chapter 3, verse 34; chapter 7, verses 27 and 28 and chapter 15,
verses 7 and 12. That Asakti leads to bondage and suffering finds
mention in chapter 2, verses 62,63 and 70; chapter 3, verses
25,27,37,38,39 and 40 and chapter 5, verse 22. The characteristics
of an Anasakta individual are highlighted in chapter 3, verses 7,27;
chapter 4, verses 22-24; chapter 5, verses 11 and 12,
22,23,25,26,27 and 28; chapter 6, verse 32; chapter 10, verses 4
and 5; chapter 12, verse 3, 4 and 13-20. And, the fact that Anasakti
leads to or is linked to peace, satisfaction, happiness and success is
mentioned in chapter 2, verses 45,47,48,49,65,70 and 71; chapter
3, verses 7 and 9; chapter 4, verses 20, 21 and 39; and chapter
5, verse 21, 23 and 26.

Attachment and Non-attachment are equivalents for the terms
Asakti and Anasakti in Buddhism. Buddhism represents another
noteworthy flag bearer of Eastern philosophy and psychology which
arose more than 2,500 years ago in Asian cultures. Hoffman
(2007) concedes that Sanskrit word Anasakti is perhaps a better
term to stand for the essence of non-attachment. But, because
there is general prevalence of the term "nonattachment" in both the
psychological research and mainstream Buddhist literature, he
decided to use it for his research.
Overall philosophical ideology and structure of Buddhist thought is condensed in the form of Four Noble Truths which describe attachment and non-attachment in great detail. The First and Second Noble Truths describe facets of Asakti or attachment and Third and Fourth Noble Truths focus on Anasakti or Non-attachment. Buddha’s teachings, through the Four Noble Truths, provide guidance for becoming free from suffering. The first Noble Truth is that life is full of suffering. The second Noble Truth is that attachments and craving cause suffering. The possibility of ending suffering, achieved through nonattachment, is the Third Noble Truth. The Fourth Noble Truth is that following the Eightfold Path (practicing Right Understanding, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration) is the way to develop nonattachment and thereby eliminate suffering.

Relatively recently, efforts were made by indigenous researchers (Pande and Naidu, 1992; Tewari and Srivastava, 1998; Jha, 2002; and Bhushan, 2005) to conceptualize and measure the concepts of Asakti and Anasakti in order to make them amenable to scientific enquiry. And, Shaw’s (1995) research represents one of the rare instances where in Anasakti per se was the overriding construct under investigation in the West. Very recently, Hoffman (2007) proposed a four factor model of non-attachment and constructed a measure (Non Attachment Scale - NAS).
1.1.1 Asakti

Asakti, in Sanskrit is sometimes translated as grasping or craving. Asakti consists of an emotional investment and an identity with a cognitive model or expectation of a real condition or outcome. It is subjectively manifest in mental images and internal dialogues of remembered pasts or expected futures that an individual has incorporated as part of his self concept. Cognitive models when thus incorporated in the self concept may be static in face of changing realities. This creates the essence and dilemma of attachment. An individual's attachments are threatened when objective reality changes in ways that are unanticipated by one's models of that reality. Change or relinquishment of such models then entails a change in the concept of self. Therefore, attachment, may lead the individual to either defend or compulsively review cognitive models which are incorporated as a part of the self-concept as if they were necessary to his psychological or physical survival.

As per Swami Sivananda (1997), there are two kinds of Vrittis or mental tendencies. One is Brahmavritti that dwells on transcendental knowledge. It is the purest form of mental functioning. Brahmavritti leads to Anasakti. The other is Vishayakara Vritti that dwells on Aham and Samsarik i.e. false sense of self (ego) and sense objects of the world that give us pleasure respectively. Vishayakara Vritti leads to ‘Kartrittwa Bhavana’ (thinking that I am the doer) and ‘Bhoktrittwa Bhavna’ (thinking that I am the enjoyer). This kind of thought processes
gives rise to *Aham* and *Mamtva* (I-ness and Mine-ness) and *Asakti* or attachment to objects, people, rewards and ideas.

**Chinmayananda (1975)** in his famous commentary on *Bhagavad-Gita* details the ill-effects of *Asakti* as:

![Diagram of Asakti effects](image)

*Figure 1: Presentation of Asakti by Chinmayananda (1975)*

The above mentioned idea has been very accurately captured in Shloka 62 and 63 of chapter 2 of *Bhagavad-Gita*:
“As a person contemplates on the objects of the senses, there arises in him attachment to them; from attachment arises desire; from desire anger is produced. From anger comes delusion; from delusion, the confusion of memory and loss of mindfulness; from the disappearance of memory and mindfulness, the loss of faculty of discrimination; by loss of the faculty of discrimination, one’s sense of well-being perishes.”

Bhushan (1994) in his research has defined Asakti as attraction towards individual or object with expectation and ego involvement. According to him, Asakti (attachment) and vairagya (detachment) are the two extreme points on the same scale or continuum with Anasakti being in between the two. Literally, Asakti means 'narrowing the area of consciousness'. This leads to raga (lust), dwesha (hatred) and ahamkara (pride) which manifest as insecurity, possessiveness, aggression as well as mental and psychosomatic problems. He asserts that Asakti arouses the idea of possession, the sense of ownership. It gives rise to dependence on attachment to objects for deriving some excitement and pleasure.
Naturally a person high in attachment becomes a victim of his expectations and their fulfillment, circumstances and events. He cannot escape the torments of victory and defeat. Like a pendulum he swings from elation to sorrow. Thus, he suggests that dominance of Asakti very often results in egoism, possessiveness, anxiety, obsession, hatred, negativity and different forms of insecurities. The literature is also supported by empirical studies which are limited but lend support to the theoretical assertion (Bhushan and Jha, 2005).

As mentioned above the construct of Asakti is very close to the Buddhist concept of attachment. It is a common experience of Buddhist practitioners that sensory pleasure, wealth, and power are all temporary. Satisfying a need may cause a temporary relief but ultimately attachments cause mental worries, life frustrations, stress, and suffering. It would be worthwhile here in this section to discuss the second Noble truth that pertains specifically to attachment. The Second Noble Truth is that desire and attachment are the causes of suffering (Nhatnamoli & Bodhi, 2001). Attachments account for all manifestations of desires, from craving sensory pleasures to "the will to be, to exist, to re-exist, to become more and more, to grow more and more, to accumulate more and more" (Rahula, 1974, p. 31). Mistakenly grasping objective things and events as true sources of happiness produces a wide range of psychological problems (Ricard, 2006).
Tart (1997) holds that attachment is about various processes that give more value, attention and psychological energy to feelings or concepts than to perception of actual reality of things.

In a paper titled “Optimal Functioning: the Eastern Ideal in Psychotherapy”, Keefe et al. (1978) write that attachment hinders the individual’s capacity to be attentive and flexible; it is often the root of hampered acceptance and authenticity in interaction. Hence, the analogy of attachment as being like a veil between objective reality and our experience of that reality or between our self and others is common. The lifting of the veil of self is to reveal the beauty of non-attachment.

Attachments are objects or outcomes that people believe they must have to be happy (McIntosh, 1997). These include fleeting positive experiences and avoidance of negative emotions (Dalai Lama & Cutler, 1998; Hanh, 1998). The acceptance of present-moment experience associated with mindfulness may diminish this quality of resisting experience and imposing external situational requirements on one’s happiness (Brown et al., in press).

1.1.2 Anasakti

As per Bhagavad-Gita, an individual high on Anasakti has Brahma Vritti i.e. his thoughts dwell on attaining transcendental knowledge (knowing his highest self). Besides such individual
possesses *Samatvabuddhi* that is established in wisdom. He accepts situations without reacting negatively to them.

Vedic literature describes Anasakti as a state of mind that is continuously observing the nature of events and remains unaffected. The term ‘Sakshi Bhava’ is used for such state of mind. It involves being able to keep our minds above any turmoil and trials of the environment. Anasakti can be cultivated through *Samyam* (patience), *Viveka* (discrimination) and *Abhyaas* (practice). Practicing non-attachment has many benefits. Non-attachment produces equanimity. It has long been referred to by the Vedantists as the attitude of ‘being in the world but not being of it.’ In eastern psychology, Anasakti is *dharma*, and recognized as process of transformation.

*Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter 5, Verse 21 highlights that Anasakti is the source of happiness:

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“Bahya-sparesuvasktatma Vindtyatmani yatsukham
Sa Brahma-yoga-yukt-atma Sukham-akshayam-asnute”
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**TRANSLATION**

“When an individual is unattached to external contacts, he/she finds happiness within his/her self”.

In other words ‘Anasakti’ is the key to ‘authentic happiness’ in the real sense of the word. Such happiness is not dependent on the animate and the inanimate in the world outside.
Anasakti according to Naidu and Pande (1992) refers to ‘intense though disinterested action, performed with a spirit of passion, without nurturing concerns regarding success or failure, loss or gain, likes or dislikes’. The ultimate goal of Anasakti is self realization.

Naidu and Pande (1992 p.6) further describe the philosophy of Anasakti as follows “if the goal is fixed inwards, the emotional impact of external failure and success are minimized and the consequences, good or bad, will be organized as milestones on the path to self realization rather than reflections of personal capabilities.
Anasakti (the end state) has been explained in terms of anasakta action or 'nishkama karma' (which implies to achieve that end state). Anasakta action does not refer to physical abstention from activity. It is an intense, though disinterested action, performed with a spirit of dispassion, without nurturing concerns about success or failure, loss or gain, likes or dislikes. This results in a complete unification of the actor with the act and a consequent task excellence. According to the Bhagvad Gita, task excellence comes about only when the actor has understood that his concerns lie only in actions and not in their results, that actions should not serve any personal motives and that these cognitions should not imply inaction. Being wedded to the piece of work at hand only implies that while an individual is at work, he is not allowing his abilities to run to waste in mental preoccupations and fears pertaining to the results and consequences. Such an attitude towards work significantly affects the emotional response to success and failure.

Following the relinquishment of desires, mental serenity is acquired and the individual maintains greater emotional equipoise in the face of consequence, be it good or bad, desirable or undesirable. In other words, by way of commitment and total absorption in the task, the doctrine of Anasakta action offers an excellent way by which our worldly endeavors can become more effective.

Although Anasakti is extolled as an ideal by the Indian philosophical and mystical literature, yet it is manifested through
common cultural expressions such as popular songs, idioms, phrase and folklores. Depending upon the variety and breadth of their exposure to this ideal, people manifest Anasakti in their day-to-day lives without perhaps being aware of its underlying metaphysical meaning.

Since personality dispositions are partly conditioned by the dominant inputs contained in a given culture, Anasakti is conceptualized as a multifaceted personality construct consisting of a set of beliefs, attitudes and cognitions consistent with the essence of the ideal [Pande and Naidu, 1992]. According to the researchers, the distinctive characteristics of Anasakti are: effort orientation, emotional equipoise in the face of success and failure, a relatively weak concern for obtaining extrinsic rewards and an intense effort to achieve excellence.

Bhushan and Jha (2005) describe Anasakti is negation of Asakti and as a tendency of maintaining neutrality by accepting everything as it is without any attraction or repulsion. According to them, Yoga psychology prescribes Anasakti as the path to enjoy lasting happiness and peace without being involved and disturbed by Asakti. Anasakti develops internal freedom. It frees you from the fetters which bind you to the ordinary plane of awareness. A man who is Anasakta may enjoy the pleasures of life, acquire wealth and status, raise a family that he loves, control a vast business or even an empire. However, he is never dependent on them. He enjoys everything but as the master and not the slave. He develops an inner freedom or independence and remains unaffected by success.
and failure. Anasakti, therefore, is an ability to remain unaffected in the face of the trials and tribulations of life (Saraswati, 1984). Researchers clarify that Anasakti does not mean a negation of love. On the other hand, it is actually an extension of the limited relationship of love without an expectation. A person who is really detached loves all without discrimination, without considering who is his near relation, friend or enemy. He loves all without involvement and expectation. The love of a detached person creates supremacy of benevolence in his character. In Indian psychology, the term *moha* which literally means ‘narrowing the area of consciousness’ is used as a synonym for Asakti. So, the higher one is in attachment, the narrower the area of intimacies, relationships and so-called love. On the other hand, the higher one is in detachment, the greater the area of oneness and love. Dominance of Anasakti is reflected in transcendence of love, as well as benevolence, broadmindedness, contentment and quietness of mind (Bhushan and Jha, 2005).

A person possessing anasakta tendencies is not influenced by the results of his actions rather he performs his actions in the form of duty without ego involvement (Swami Chinmayananda, 1975).

Naidu et al. (1986) characterize a person high on Anasakti as unselfish, benevolent and friendly to all. Such person is not guided by impulses rather he uses his moral and ethical sense to discriminate between right and wrong.

The construct of Anasakti is very close the Buddhist concept of non attachment. Nonattachment is a fundamental concept of the
Buddhist philosophy which arose more than 2,500 years ago in Asian cultures. Nonattachment is one of the core teachings of Buddhism. The end of suffering is through nonattachment is the Third Noble Truth of Buddhism. Non-attachment in Buddhist sense means having a balanced attitude without unrealistic expectations of others and fears of being miserable when objects of attachment are not there. It is a calm, realistic, open and accepting attitude. According to Buddhist philosophy, nonattachment is derived from the development of wisdom, morality and mindfulness which lead to the reduction of attachments. Nonattachment is letting go of desires, cravings, and attachments. "It is the fading away and ceasing, the giving up, relinquishing, letting go, and rejecting of craving" (Nhatnamoli & Bodhi, 2001). Buddhist practitioners spend lifetimes cultivating nonattachment.

Hoffman (2007) asserts that relationships between nonattachment and well-being, and, conversely, between attachment and suffering, are described in the Buddhist literature in such detail that it was possible to develop a scale of nonattachment and, with that scale, predict relationships between nonattachment and well-being. He proposed a four factor model of non attachment and constructed a measure (Non Attachment Scale - NAS) for assessing the four factors viz. Crave Avoidance, Wisdom, Morality and Mindfulness as well as an overall score for non attachment. Results of this study suggested that the NAS has the potential to be a valuable measure; however the NAS still requires further refinement. The most promising aspect of this study was
that it supported the possibility of a mutual enrichment between Buddhist teachings and Western psychology.

Figure 3: Buddhist Model Of Non-Attachment (Hoffman, 2007)
In the paper titled “Optimal Functioning: the Eastern Ideal in Psychotherapy”, Keefe et al. (1978) give description of non-attachment as an open, flexible, accepting attitude toward the self, experience, and expectations. Non-attachment requires cognitive flexibility. It is an easy harmonizing of the self with changing realities and moment-to-moment events. Far from reducing motivation or hindering involvement, however, it permits our full attention, or absorption of our attention, in the activities at hand. Frederick Perls coined the phrase response-ability, to illustrate an ever present capacity to respond to the conditions that confront us in the present moment. An undistracted present time attentiveness implied in Pearl's phrase is similar to the non-attached attitude. Non-attachment fosters a unified and direct experience of the self-in-the-world. A non-attached orientation might be characterized as doing something without judging the performance while it is still underway. An individual's conception of who he is and how he is doing does not distract from his functioning until brought consciously into the activity at hand. His attention is not split. A useful analogy would be that the non-attached individual behaves with intent—like an artist who stands back from the canvas for a momentary change of perspective and critique of his self-absorbing activity.

Non-attachment is a systematic practice of not automatically giving psychological energy to whatever thoughts, feelings and perceptions those come along. Rather, it involves having commitment to more realistic perception, thinking and feeling. As the person becomes less the victim of these automatized
attachments, psychological energy is freed up that can be used for more accurate insights into the nature of self and world (Tart, 1997).

Non-attachment contributes to the development of integration and meaning in life. It is living with an attitude of commitment to the path without attachment to the outcome (Holmes, 1997).

The action tendency of Sama which is attained through practicing non-attachment is good not only for one’s own spiritual advancement, but for the health of the cosmos as well (Shweder and Haidt, 2000).

It may be important here to clarify that the terms ‘non-attachment’ and ‘detachment’ have often been seen in a different light in the West. Unlike the common Western notion of non-attachment, Anasakti is not about surrender of objects of the world. It is about the surrender of egocentric desires and compulsive fascination for the animate and inanimate that creates limitations and conditioning of mind. When such limitations end, the individual comes to understand the meaning of true love, happiness and contentment and enjoys his being in the universe.

1.2 Wellbeing

One psychological framework that shows promise for understanding happiness and development of one’s full potential is that of Well-Being (Vaillant, 2002).
The concept of well-being refers to optimal psychological functioning and experience. Well-being research seems especially prominent in the current empirical psychology.

Ryan and Deci (2001) reviewed the literature of well being and suggested that there are two primary approaches to the study of well-being. One is that of Subjective Well-Being and the other of Psychological Well-Being. The measures of Subjective Well-Being and Psychological Well-Being are distinct and they yield different sets of scores.

1.2.1 Subjective Wellbeing (SWB)

Subjective well-being (SWB) is a field of psychology that attempts to understand people's evaluations of their lives. These evaluations may be primarily cognitive (e.g., life satisfaction or marital satisfaction) or may consist of the frequency with which people experience pleasant emotions (e.g., joy, as measured by the experience sampling technique) and unpleasant emotions (e.g., depression).

Subjective well-being (SWB) refers to how people evaluate their lives, and includes variables such as life satisfaction and marital satisfaction, lack of depression and anxiety, and positive moods and emotions (Diener, 2000). The idea of SWB or happiness has intrigued thinkers for millennia, although it is only in recent years that it has been measured and studied in a systematic way. A
person's evaluation of his or her life may be in the form of
cognitions (e.g., when a person gives conscious evaluative
judgments about his or her satisfaction with life as a whole, or
evaluative judgments about specific aspects of his or life such as
recreation). However, an evaluation of one's life also may be in the
form of affect (people experiencing unpleasant or pleasant moods
and emotions in reaction to their lives). Thus, a person is said to
have high SWB if she or he experiences life satisfaction and
frequent joy, and only infrequently experience unpleasant emotions
such as sadness and anger. Contrariwise, a person is said to have
low SWB if he or she is dissatisfied with life, experiences little joy
and affection, and frequently feels negative emotions such as anger
or anxiety. The cognitive and affective components of SWB are
highly interrelated, and only recently are we beginning to
understand the relations between various types of SWB.

Most people evaluate what is happening to them as either
good or bad, so they are normally able to offer judgments about
their lives. Furthermore, people virtually always experience moods
and emotions, which have a hedonic component that is pleasant,
signaling a positive reaction, or unpleasant, signaling a negative
reaction. Thus, people have a level of SWB even if they do not often
consciously think about it, and the psychological system offers
virtually a constant evaluation of what is happening to the person
(Diener, 2000).

Thus, Subjective Well-Being refers to what people think and
how they feel about their lives – to the cognitive and affective
conclusions they reach when they evaluate their existence (Diener, 2000). The happiness and satisfaction subjectively experienced by an individual is termed as Subjective Well-Being (Okun and Stock, 1987).

**Hallmarks of Subjective Well-Being:**

In comprehensive reviews of the literature on Subjective Well-Being, Diener (2000) has repeatedly found that Subjective Well-being has three hallmarks: Life Satisfaction, Positive Affect and Negative Affect.

Myers and Diener (1995), in their paper entitled 'who is happy,' define high Subjective Well-Being as frequent Positive Affect, infrequent Negative Affect and a global sense of Satisfaction with Life.

Each of the three major facets of SWB can in turn be broken into subdivisions. Global satisfaction can be divided into satisfaction with the various domains of life such as recreation, love, marriage, friendship, and so forth, and these domains can in turn be divided into facets. Pleasant affect can be divided into specific emotions such as joy, affection, and pride. Finally, unpleasant or unpleasant affect can be separated into specific emotions and moods such as shame, guilt, sadness, anger, and anxiety. Each of the subdivisions of affect can also be subdivided even further. Subjective well-being can be assessed at the most global level, or at progressively narrower levels, depending on one's
purposes. For example, one researcher might study life satisfaction, whereas another might study the narrower topic of marital satisfaction. The justification for studying more global levels (rather than just focusing on the most molecular concepts) is that the narrower levels tend to co-occur. In other words, there is a tendency for people to experience similar levels of well-being across different aspects of their lives, and the study of molar levels can help us understand the general influences on SWB that cause these co variations. A justification for studying narrower definitions of SWB is that we can gain a greater understanding of specific conditions that might influence well-being in particular domains. Furthermore, narrower types of measures are often more sensitive to causal variables.

SWB emerged in the late 1950s in the search for useful indicators of quality of life to monitor social change and improve social policy (Land, 1975). As milestones in this literature, books by Andrews and Withey (1976) clarified that although people live in objectively defined environments, it is their subjectively defined worlds that they respond to, thus giving prominence to SWB as a relevant index of people’s life quality. Life satisfaction, according to Campbell et al. (1976), reflects individuals’ perceived distance from their aspirations. Happiness, in turn, according to Bradburn (1969), results from a balance between positive affect and negative affect.

The determinants of SWB have been linked to heredity (Lykken & Tellegen, 1996), personality (McCrae & Costa, 1994),
mutable living conditions (Veenhoven, 1991), and currently accessible information (Schwarz & Strack, 1999). The possible combinations of such determinants have engendered interest in top-down versus bottom-up causal formulations (e.g., Feist, Bodner, Jacobs, Miles, & Tan, 1995) and related questions about the dynamic processes involved in the long-term and short-term variability of SWB. These include the notion of adaptation that weakens external influences and restores the individual’s normal baseline of SWB (Headey & Wearing, 1989), comparison mechanisms that regulate SWB on the basis of perceived gaps between one’s own experience and self-standards (Michalos, 1985), and goal systems that prioritize personal aims according to core motivations and values of the self (Emmons, 1996).

The study of SWB currently permeates a variety of social and health disciplines interested in quality of life (Raphael, Renwick, Brown, & Rootman, 1996). In addition, there is increasing interest in SWB within major areas of mainstream psychology (Diener et al., 1999). Thus, SWB is being studied as a cognitive process of judgment and attribution (Schwarz & Clore, 1983; Tversky & Griffin, 1991), constituents of emotional experience (Diener, Sandvik, & Pavot, 1991; Lazarus, 1991), goal-related behavior (Emmons, 1996; Omodei & Wearing, 1990; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999), time perspective (Shmotkin, 1991; Strack, Schwarz, & Gschneidinger, 1985), short-term and long-term effects of life events (Shmotkin & Lomranz, 1998), and cross-cultural variability (Suh, Diener, Oishi, & Triandis, 1998).
1.2.2 Psychological Wellbeing (PWB)

The second approach to the study of well-being is that of psychological well-being. Psychological well-being is more than just subjective experience of pleasure. It is tied to personal growth and cultivation of one’s full potential (Fava and Ruini, 2003; Keyes, 2003).

In other words, psychological well-being broadly refers to the degree of personal fulfillment experienced by an individual.

Whereas the SWB tradition formulates well-being in terms of overall life satisfaction and happiness, the PWB tradition draws heavily on formulations of human development and existential challenges of life. An extensive literature generated in the 1950s and 1960s addressed variations in optimal resolution of basic life challenges (Ryff, 1985). Early life-span theorists such as Erik Erikson (1959) and Bernice Neugarten (1973) articulated age-graded tasks and the ways they are successfully negotiated. Psychologists interested in the full growth and development of the individual have articulated constructs such as self actualization (Abraham Maslow, 1968), full functioning (Carl Rogers, 1961), maturity (Gordon Allport, 1961), and individuation (Carl Jung, 1933). Jahoda’s (1958) criteria of positive mental health draw on many of these conceptualizations to offer a description of what it means to be psychologically healthy.

The components of psychological well-being come from Ryan and Deci’s (2000) Self-Determination Theory. Ryan and Deci claim
that psychological well-being is optimized if an individual's need for competence, belongingness and autonomy is satisfied. Persons in this condition have been seen to be intrinsically motivated, able to fulfill their potentialities and able to seek out progressively greater challenges.

Ryff and Keyes (1995) spoke of psychological well being as distinct from subjective well-being and presented multidimensional approach to the measurement of PSW that taps six distinct aspects of human realization: autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance, life purpose, mastery, and positive relatedness. The description of each of the components is given below:

a. Self-acceptance

The most recurrent criterion of well-being evident in the previous perspectives is the individual's sense of self-acceptance. This is defined as a central feature of mental health as well as a characteristic of self-actualization, optimal functioning, and maturity. Life span theories also emphasize acceptance of self and of one's past life. Thus, holding positive attitudes toward oneself emerges as a central characteristic of positive psychological functioning.
b. Positive relations with others

Many of the preceding theories emphasize the importance of warm, trusting interpersonal relations. The ability to love is viewed as a central component of mental health. Self-actualizers are described as having strong feelings of empathy and affection for all human beings and as being capable of greater love, deeper friendship, and more complete identification with others. Warm relating to others is posed as a criterion of maturity. Adult developmental stage theories also emphasize the achievement of close unions with others (intimacy) and the guidance and direction of others (generativity). Thus, the importance of positive relations with others is repeatedly stressed in these conceptions of psychological wellbeing.

c. Autonomy

There is considerable emphasis in the prior literature on such qualities as self-determination, independence, and the regulation of behavior from within. Self-actualizers, for example, are described as showing autonomous functioning and resistance to enculturation. The fully functioning person is also described as having an internal locus of evaluation, whereby one does not look to others for approval, but evaluates oneself by personal standards. Individuation is seen to involve a deliverance from convention, in which the person no longer clings to the collective fears, beliefs, and laws of the masses. The process of turning inward in the later years...
is also seen by life span developmentalists to give the person a sense of freedom from the norms governing everyday life.

d. Environmental mastery

The individual's ability to choose or create environments suitable to his or her psychic conditions is defined as a characteristic of mental health. Maturity is seen to require participation in a significant sphere of activity outside of self. Life span development is also described as requiring the ability to manipulate and control complex environments. These theories emphasize one's ability to advance in the world and change it creatively through physical or mental activities. Successful aging also emphasizes the extent to which the individual takes advantage of environmental opportunities. These combined perspectives suggest that active participation in and mastery of the environment is an important ingredient of an integrated framework of positive psychological functioning.

e. Purpose in life

Mental health is defined to include beliefs that give one the feeling there is purpose in and meaning to life. The definition of maturity also emphasizes a clear comprehension of life's purpose, a sense of directedness, and intentionality. The life span developmental theories refer to a variety of changing purposes or goals in life, as
being productive and creative or achieving emotional integration in later life. Thus, one who functions positively has goals, intentions, and a sense of direction, all of which contribute to the feeling that life is meaningful.

**f. Personal growth**

Optimal psychological functioning requires not only that one achieve the prior characteristics, but also that one continue to develop one's potential, to grow and expand as a person. The need to actualize oneself and realize one's potentialities is central to the clinical perspectives on personal growth. Openness to experience, for example, is a key characteristic of the fully functioning person. Such an individual is continually developing and becoming, rather than achieving a fixed state wherein all problems are solved. Life span theories also give explicit emphasis to continued growth and the confronting of new challenges or tasks at different periods of life. Thus, continued personal growth and self-realization is a prominent theme in the aforementioned theories. It may also be the dimension of well-being that comes closest to Aristotle's notion of eudaimonia as described earlier.

That is, Psychological wellbeing is manifested when people attempt to feel good about themselves even while aware of their own limitations (self-acceptance). When they seek to develop and maintain warm and trusting interpersonal relationships (positive
relations with others) and to shape their environment so as to meet personal needs and desires (environmental mastery). In sustaining individuality within a larger social context, people also seek a sense of self-determination and personal authority (autonomy). And finally when they engage in vital endeavor is to find meaning in one’s efforts and challenges (purpose in life).

Ryff developed the psychological well being scale to measure these six dimensions. Her research with this scale and others has supported the dimensions of psychological well being as a valid measure of positive mental health in a variety of populations (Ryff and Keyes, 1995). She has also found that different dimensions of psychological well being may be more important than others at different points throughout life. High psychological well being in younger people tends to be based less on environmental mastery but more on personal growth, while high well being for middle aged persons tends to require more autonomy and environmental mastery (Ryff and Keyes, 1995). She has also found that the ways in which people find a sense of psychological well being may be different at different points in the life span. Younger persons associate well being with pleasant activities, middle aged persons associate it with positive relationships with family and friends, while older persons associate well being with positive work experiences in the past and current opportunities for educational experiences (Ryff and Keyes, 1995).
1.3 Orientations to Happiness

The recognition that there are various perspectives on well-being has triggered the question about whether there are different paths to happiness. Proponents of positive psychology have endeavored to integrate a number of disparate theoretical and empirical perspectives on the happy life. One way this has been accomplished is through the development of the Orientations to Happiness approach (Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2005).

Three pathways to happiness have been identified as (1) pleasure; maximising positive emotion and minimising negative emotion (2) engagement; being immersed and absorbed in the task at hand and (3) meaning; having a higher purpose than yourself and using your strengths to serve this higher purpose.

1.3.1 Orientation to Pleasurable Life - The Hedonic Perspective

About thousand years ago Aristippus (435-366 BCE) articulated the doctrine of hedonism- the tendency to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. Epicurus (342-270 BCE) elaborated the edict of ethical hedonism which holds that our fundamental moral obligation is to maximize sensory gratification.

Later, British philosophers like Hume (1711-1776) and Bentham (1748-1832) used the doctrine of hedonism to lay the foundation for utilitarianism. Hedonism is alive and well today in
the name of a new field: Hedonic Psychology (Kahneman, Diener and Schwarz, 1999).

The hedonic perspective espouses the importance of pleasurable activities for achieving the good life. From this perspective the aim is to maximize pleasure and decrease pain. Many works have demonstrated the benefits of pleasure, positive emotions, and positive affect on a range of desirable outcomes such as health, social engagement, and success (Pressman and Cohen 2005). Indeed the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, which has received empirical support, asserts that positive emotions are fundamental to human flourishing by broadening individual’s thought-action repertoires and building up useful resources which help to maintain well-being (Fredrickson 2001). Consequently interventions aimed at increasing pleasure experiences, such as savoring and reminiscing (Bryant and Veroff, 2007), counting one’s blessings and considering one’s best possible self (Sheldon and Lyubomirsky 2006), have been developed and tested. For example Seligman et al. (2005) examined the efficacy of five positive psychology interventions and found that the intervention which involved writing down three good things that happened each day (a form of savoring), was effective in producing happiness for at least 6 months (which was the final testing period). While it is acknowledged that pleasure and positive affect are not always advantageous (e.g., they can lead to addictions), there is general support for positive emotions being conducive to well-being and a range of positive outcomes.
1.3.2 Orientation to Meaningful Life – The Eudemonic Perspective

Standing in contrast to hedonism is another venerable tradition that can be traced Aristotle’s (384-322 BCE) notion of eudaimonia — being true to one’s inner self (demon). According to this view, true happiness entails identifying one’s virtues, cultivating them and living in accordance with them (Aristotle, 2000). Aristotle considered sensual pleasure as touted by the hedonists to be vulgar.

Uniting eudaimonic emphasis is the premise that people should develop what is best within them and then use these skills and talents in the service of greater goods-including in particular the welfare of other people or humankind at large. Again, in the modern world, the pursuit of a meaningful life is widely endorsed as a way to achieve satisfaction.

Thus orientation toward meaningful life is another factor which has been receiving attention in relation to well-being. While the value of life meaning for well-being has been espoused for some time (e.g., Frankl 1963), scholars have only recently focused on its potential as a predictor of subjective well-being (e.g., Fry 2000) with some claiming it is a critical component of psychological well-being (Ryff and Singer 1998a). Life meaning is positively correlated with good mental health (Adams et al. 2000; Zika and Chamberlain 1992) and negatively correlated with psychopathology (Debats et al. 1993). These findings support
Frankl’s assertion that individuals need to find meaning in their lives and that a failure to attain meaning results in psychological problems. Indeed research indicates that lack of meaning is not only associated with ill-health but that greater meaning in life is associated with positive health.

Some of the recent researches suggest that eudaimonic can trump pleasure as a predictor of life satisfaction (Peterson, 2006).

**1.3.3 Orientation to Engaged Life**

The third orientation to happiness refers to pursuit of engagement (Seligman, 2002). It is influenced by Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) writings on flow. It is the psychological state that accompanies highly engaging and interesting activities.

The idea is that humans are constructed, because of their large brains and reliance on knowledge for survival, so that interest (versus boredom) is a very compelling motivation. Interesting activities are those in which there is a balance between challenge and skill (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Such activities are pleasant because they provide an optimal level of new information that is novel, yet not overwhelming. Thus, an activity is boring if it requires too little skill and is stressful if it requires advanced skills that the person does not possess. On the other hand, the activity can produce the highly pleasurable experience of "flow" if the challenge
of the activity is equivalent to the amount of skill the person possesses.

In particular, the work of Csikszentmihalyi (1990) has shown the importance of experiencing “flow” states for achieving the good life. Flow is characterised by being fully immersed in a specific activity. It is typically measured by summing individual ratings of (1) concentration (2) involvement, and (3) enjoyment during a specific activity.

Research has supported the benefits of flow including commitment, achievement and persistence in a diverse range of pursuits including academic and sporting (Csikszentmihalyi et al. 2005).

The additional insight provided by life meaning and flow research has fostered a new approach to the traditional hedonic perspective of maximizing pleasure and life satisfaction, and minimizing pain. A parallel view stating that well-being involves eudaimonic qualities such as personal growth, meaning and serving a higher purpose is gaining recognition (Keyes et al. 2002). Moreover a comprehensive and inclusive approach which examines the contributions of both the hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of well-being is emerging. Indeed there is a viewpoint that by engaging in eudaimonic pursuits, subjective well-being (happiness) will occur as an end or by product (Ryan and Deci 2001). Based on this latter perspective, life purpose and higher order meaning are believed to produce happiness.
Although the pursuit of a meaningful life can at times produce flow for some individuals, not all flow producing activities are meaningful. In the sense of connecting an individual to greater good and not all meaningful activities entail the total absorption that defines flow (Peterson et al., 2005). The three orientations of happiness are distinguishable and are individually associated with life satisfaction (Peterson et al., 2005).

1.4 Conceptual Overlap: East meets West

From a close examination of Eastern psychological constructs of Asakti and Anasakti on one hand and the recent Positive Psychology components of Orientations to happiness and Well-being on the other, a convincing overlap seems to emerge in the form of attitude towards self and others, experience and expectations.

It is clearly spelt out in the Indian yogic literature that Asakti arising out of Vishayakara Vritti (dwelling on self and sense objects of the external world) leads to dependence on sense objects for deriving excitement and pleasure. Interestingly, the Orientation to Pleasurable Life too, endorses sensory gratification and maximizing pleasure as a route to happiness. Chinmayananda (1975) holds that Anasakti or non-attachment is a state of self-forgetfulness where a jiva (living organism) gets intoxicated with activities undertaken in the present to live vitally, fully and entirely with all the best is in him. This description distinctly reminds one
of Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of ‘flow’ that is represented by Orientation towards Engaged life. In the writings of Csikszentmihalyi (1990), flow has been defined as the psychological state that accompanies highly engaging activities. Time passes quickly. Attention is focused on the activity. The sense of self is lost. The aftermath of flow experience is invigorating. Orientation towards meaningful life is based upon the premise that people should develop what is best within them and then use these skills and talents in the service of greater goods—including in particular the welfare of other people or humankind at large. Dominance of Anasakti is also reflected in transcendence of love as well as benevolence and unselfishness (Naidu et. al., 1986).

In a paper titled ‘Attachment, autonomy and intimacy’ in the British Journal of Medical Psychology, Holmes (1997) acknowledges that non-attachment contributes to the development of integration and meaning in life.

Philosophical wisdom from the East has emphasized on acceptance of life as it is, non-attachment to relationships as well as possessions, appreciation of life and nature, living in the moment, taking charge of one’s own life, exercising compassion and selflessness as a routes to life satisfaction and positive affectivity subjectively experienced by the individuals (Dockett et. al. 2003). Life satisfaction is the key component of Subjective Wellbeing. Life satisfaction has been defined as contentment with or acceptance of one’s life circumstances, or the fulfillment of one’s wants and needs for one’s life as a whole (Sousa and Lyubomirsky, 2001).
Philosophical wisdom from the East has emphasized on acceptance of life as it is, non-attachment to relationships as well as possessions, appreciation of life and nature, living in the moment, taking charge of one’s own life, exercising compassion and selflessness as a routes to life satisfaction and positive affectivity subjectively experienced by the individuals (Dockett et. al. 2003).

**Psychological Well-being** is a multidimensional concept. Results of factor analysis done by researches confirm this and cheerfulness, optimism, playfulness, self-control, a *sense of detachment* and freedom from frustration; anxiety and loneliness have been accepted as indications of Psychological Well-being by certain researchers (Tellegen, 1979; Sinha and Verma, 1992).

Thus, the researchers in the above attempt have attempted to clearly bring out the convergence using descriptions of both eastern and western concepts to endorse the main objective of this study which is to find an empirical link between the concepts of East and the West in order to validate the contribution of established western Positive Psychology concepts in understanding Eastern psychology.

Logically, this would help West to look deeper into the yogic literature and utilize it for higher and developed understanding and ways of achieving happiness and wellbeing.
## 1.5 Operational definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asakti</strong></td>
<td>Asakti is attraction towards individual or object with expectation and ego involvement <em>(Bhushan, 1994).</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Anasakti</strong></td>
<td>Anasakti is negation of Asakti. It is a tendency of maintaining neutrality by accepting everything as it is without any attraction or repulsion <em>(Bhushan, 1994).</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wellbeing</strong></td>
<td>The concept of well-being refers to optimal psychological functioning and experience. There are two primary approaches to the study of well-being. One is that of Subjective Well-Being and the other of Psychological Well-Being. The measures of Subjective Well-Being and Psychological Well-Being are distinct and they yield different sets of scores.</td>
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Subjective Wellbeing

Subjective Well-Being refers to what people think and how they feel about their lives – to the cognitive and affective conclusions they reach when they evaluate their existence (Diener, 2000). Subjective Well-being has three components: Life Satisfaction, Positive Affect and Negative Affect.

Psychological Wellbeing


Orientation towards Meaningful Life

When people are oriented towards developing what is best within them and then using these skills and talents in the service of greater goods— including in particular the welfare of other people.
or humankind at large, they are said to have orientation towards meaningful life.

| **Orientation towards Engaged Life** | Orientation towards engaged life is characterized by “Flow” which is the psychological state that accompanies highly engaging and interesting activities. Flow is marked by being fully immersed in a specific activity. It is typically measured by summing individual ratings of:

1. Concentration
2. Involvement, and
3. Enjoyment during a specific activity. |

| **Orientation towards Pleasurable Life** | Orientation towards pleasurable life espouses the importance of pleasurable activities for achieving the good life. From this perspective the aim is to maximize pleasure and decrease pain. |