

Concept of Psycho-Social well-being: Western and Indian Perspectives

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Abstract

The concept of Psychosocial well-being and the related ones of adjustment, health, homeostasis, competence, and quality of life are elucidated. The conceptualizations as contained in ancient Indian treatise on medicine and philosophy are discussed, and the basic quality of sama is emphasized. While in the West, exercising control over the environment and exploiting it for one's need fulfilment are considered the key to well-being, according to Indian tradition, it is more a matter of maintaining harmonious relationship. It is contended that in developing measures for assessing human well being, basic cultural differences in conceptualization is to be borne in mind.

Key words -

Psycho-social well-being

An invocation that is popular even today among people aptly reflects the universal and perennial concern for the well-being of the entire mankind. It runs as: Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah Sarve Santu Niramayah, Sarve Bhadrani Pashyantu Makashchitduhkhahbhavet. Rendered into English, it means "let everyone be prosperous, and let no one think of unhappiness of anyone." The sloka embodies the essence of what could be regarded as the characteristics of the state of human well-being. The Hindu scriptures especially Charaka Samhita are replete with passages reflecting similar concern for the man and steps to ensure his health and welfare. Though the importance of the well-being is accepted by everyone, it is very rarely that effort has been made to analyse systematically and scientifically its various constituents, and outline the indicators that would give an accurate idea of the state of his well-being. Except for a very small circle of people, mostly scholars and a few administrators and policy makers, very little serious effort has been made to define well-being, and indicate how to assess reliably that a person is enjoying such a state. Popularly, whenever we talk of well-being, the factors of health and material condition of the individual and the community inevitably come to the fore. It is thought that a person is happy if he is free from ailments and is in good health and when his family possesses enough means to meet his physical needs and other demands. But equating well-being with health and economic condition alone is taking a very partial and narrow view of man that ignores mental, psychological and social aspects of his existence. Though physical and material aspects are important, we cannot meaningfully talk of well-being without taking into account of the individual's entire existential condition. In view of the primary importance of health, nutrition and economic status, the focus has naturally been on the physical and material aspects. But his psychological and social development, the kind of adjustments he learns to make with various aspects of his environment, and the unfolding of his personality as a whole are equally important. Therefore, apart from designing and initiating policies and programmes to ensure his well-being, it is also essential to have a clear idea as to what well-being actually means, and develop a set of indicators.

Since a lot of confusion and ambiguity prevails in this area, it is necessary to define and elucidate the concept of "well-being" and delimit its meaning in the context of other related concepts. In psychological as well as popular parlance the concepts that are used frequently when talking about well-being are welfare, adjustment, adaptation, balance,

equilibrium, homeostasis, competence and health. In recent years, the expression 'quality of life' has also come in. Well-being seems to share certain elements from each of these inter-related concepts.

Well-being is an expression commonly used in popular parlance, and does not usually find a place in technical literature. Therefore, it is all the more essential to define it and delimit its meaning. In its widest sense, and as defined in Oxford Dictionary, 'well-being' is equated with "welfare" which in turn is conceptualised as "satisfactory state, health, prosperity". It denotes a desirable state of affairs of the individual that ensures proper development of his potential so that he is able to meet the various demands of his environment, and satisfy his needs in a socially acceptable manner. The technical concept that comes closest to it is that of 'adjustment'. Ruch [1] in his textbook Psychology and Life defines the 'adjustment process' as "the continuous process of attempting to overcome inner and outer obstacles to the satisfaction of biological and social needs". It implies a continuous process of interaction between the individual and his environment. Some sort of maladjustment of the organism to its particular environment is a basic requirement. The environment is made up not only of physical objects but of other individuals, social institutions and situations which not only provide objects and means of satisfying the various needs of the individual, but often serves as obstacles to their satisfaction. Some of the normal processes of the individual gets thwarted. The disturbing facts may be the agents outside the organism (extra-organic), or in some instances intra-organic. Maladjustment is an organism-environment fact, not just the one or the other. Expressed in Lewinian terms, $B=f(PE)$, i.e., the behaviour is a function of both the person and the environment in dynamic interrelation. Adjustment is equated with those responses which denote harmonious and effective relationship with the environment whereby psychological growth is promoted. In Wolman's dictionary [2], it is defined as "harmonious relationship with environment involving the ability to satisfy most of one's needs and meet most of the demands, both physical and social, that are put upon one".

It is to be noted that in this definition, the aspect of ability for satisfying one's needs has been emphasized. In other words, as a result of interactions with his environment, the individual learns or acquires certain skills and abilities which are instrumental in meeting the demands of his environment and in satisfaction of his needs. According to Thompson [3], psychological adjustment denotes the ways that individuals modify their behaviour patterns to reach goals or incentives that satisfy their psychological and physical needs. It is obvious that well-being implies that the environment provides the necessary inputs for the proper development of those skills and abilities through which he is able to satisfy his basic and psychological needs, and thereby achieve a degree of adjustment. A state of maladjustment would denote absence of such conditions or presence of factors that prevent the satisfaction of his needs and thereby militate against his well-being. As such, the concepts of adjustment and well-being are very similar.

Most individuals are able to adjust to their natural environments within the normal range. It, however, does not imply that normally adjusted individuals are able to fulfil all their needs and reach all of the goals they project for themselves or that they never suffer from various degrees of frustration. Most of the striving behaviour eventuates in the attainment of reasonably adequate goals which are acceptable to society at large, and that denotes a state of psychological well being. But frustrations due to non-fulfilment of one's goals are also matters of common experience.

Thompson [3] has spelled out at some length the psychological processes that are associated with a satisfactory state of well-being. The person who makes majority of his adjustments within normal range has learned to do the following:

- (i) deny or delay immediate need satisfaction for long term gains,
- (ii) perceive difference between socially acceptable and unacceptable goals that promise to satisfy his needs,
- (iii) select goals that are realistic and within his grasp,
- (iv) select goals for satisfying his needs e.g., compensation mechanism whereby he substitutes, if necessary, his goals that cannot be satisfied,
- (v) vary his behaviour,
- (vi) satisfy majority of his psychological needs on "reality level" rather than resort frequently to fantasy,
- (vii) develop tolerance for frustration, and making goal-oriented rather than ego-defensive reactions to frustration,

- (viii) tolerate a reasonable amount of anxiety so that his behaviour is not disrupted,
- (ix) seek variety of goals to satisfy his psychological needs so that development of monomanias and socially unacceptable eccentricities in behaviour patterns is prevented,
- (x) accept natural and social outcomes of his behaviour and plans for future accordingly, i.e., profit from experience, re-evaluate the situation and try another approach,
- (xi) develop warm personal relationships with a reasonable number of associates,
- (xii) face future, re-direct his behaviour in terms of past experience, and not be psychologically paralysed by guilt feelings over past failures, inadequacies and behaviour transgressions, and
- (xiii) self-report that he feels "happy", "adequate" and so on.

It is also to be noted that successful adjustment invariably implies capacity to handle stress or stressful situation. The individual is able to cope with it without much cost. He reacts to it in positive ways. Rather than being overwhelmed by stress, it enriches rather than damages him. In fact, in one of the ancient Indian verses, it is said that an adjusted individual is not too disturbed either by sorrow or by joy. The mechanism of coping is well illustrated in north-east India immortalized by the famous writer Phanishwarnath Renu in his popular story *Teesari Kasam* (Third Vow): *Phate kaleja gavo geet, dukh sahne ka ekahi reet* ("When your heart is broken in sorrow, singing is the only way of bearing it").

Looking from the reverse angle, absence of well-being would mean that the individual makes maladjustive responses to the environment so that his needs are not satisfied, and when faced with problem solving situations, conflicts and frustrations, he reacts in what is often termed as ego-defensive ways which hardly enable him to cope successfully with his problems. He experiences unhappiness, anxiety, frustration, depression and so on which are all indicative of absence of psycho-social well-being. It is to be noted that in course of his life every individual experiences every day many such frustrations, anxieties and stresses. Apart from daily hassles, many of these frustration may have far-reaching consequences. But most people are able to tolerate and cope with them. Instead of being overwhelmed by intensive anxiety which is debilitating and saps the available energy of the individual so that he is unable to solve the problems, a healthy, adjusted and normal person bounces back from those frustrations, disappointments and disabling states, and continues on his path of goal-oriented behaviour. To use an analogy, the individual is like gold which when put into fire comes out shining and more brilliant.

These dynamic qualities of normal psychological adjustment illustrate the complexity of the problem. Well-being is related to all aspects of psychological growth of the individual-physical, perception, language skills, intelligence, sociability and social sensitivity, emotional maturity, learning, enduring aspects of personality and cultural values. Normal adjustment and psycho-social well-being is very much related to cultural and social values of a particular society. Further, a person may be considered well adjusted in one situation (e.g., in his home) but poorly adjusted in another (e.g., at his work). This relativity of psychological adjustment is to be borne in mind when diagnosing on the basis of limited sample of his behaviour whether the individual is adjusted or maladjusted. Thus, well-being or what could be termed as normal psychological adjustment is a relative state of affairs- relative to the situation as well as to the values of a particular culture or subculture. Well-being would often differ in connotation from one culture to another. Basic theoretical and cross-cultural issues in defining well-being are encountered. While there are quite a few "universals" in identifying and assessing a person's well-being, one has to view him in a particular socio-cultural and economic context, and spell out the factors of well-being in specific socio-cultural setting.

Psycho-social well-being or "good" health in that both are a desirable state of affairs, are well recognized, but difficult to define. The latter is often negatively defined as absence of ill health or as the relative absence of physiological malfunctioning in an organism. It has been taken to consist in freedom from any subjective feelings of discomfort or disability and from any objective disturbances of functions. According to this approach which has till lately been popular in psychology in conceptualizing "normality", "mental health" and so on, one can understand health by studying conditions of its absence, i.e., when things had gone wrong with the adjustive organism. Thus, one of the ways to understand well-being would be to locate and identify the maladjustive patterns of behaviour like aggressive responses (when he breaks, destroys, objects, injures himself or others, and resorts to verbal aggression), withdrawal responses (he goes frequently into fantasy becomes uncommunicative), rationalisation (frequently shifting blame for his inadequacies to

another person, displays "sour grapes" mechanism), regression (goes back to infantile level of behaviour like temper tantrums, loss of motor or language skill) and psychosomatic disturbances (development of anorexia, loss of appetite, headaches, diarrhoea, and other physiological malfunctionings). These may be first indicators of absence of psycho-social well-being in a person.

Health in recent times has been conceptualized in more positive terms. According to the constitution of the WHO, health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. This is very close to the definition of health in various treatise of Indian medical science. Sushrut, the ancient proponent of the traditional system of medicine, defined health as prasannamendriyamanah swastha. That is, health is a state of delight or a feeling of spiritual, physical and mental well-being [4]. In the sloka (chapter 16, verse 41), aspect of sama (in right or natural quantity) has been emphasized. Essential features of a healthy person is that he possesses in right quantity (neither too little nor too much) the defects or weakness (samadhatu) digestive quality (samagni), semen (samadhatu) and whose bodily functions are normal (malakriyah). In Charaka Samhita [4] the ancient work on the Indian system of medicine, which is rightly designated as the Ayurveda (the treatise on life), the characteristics of happy and unhappy life (sukhswarup and dukh swarup) have been elaborated. "Life is said to be happy if the person is not afflicted with any somatic and psychic disorder, is particularly youthful, capable with strength, energy, reputation, manliness and prowess, possessing knowledge, specific knowledge and strong sense organs and sense objects, having immense wealth and various favourable enjoyments, has achieved desired results of all actions and moves about where he likes; contrary to it is unhappy life" (chapter 30, sloka 22).

Further, life is said to be beneficial (hitayu) if the person is a well wisher of all creatures, abstains from taking other's possession, is truthful, calm, take steps after examining the situation, free from carelessness, observing the three categories (virtue, wealth, and enjoyment) without their mutual conflict, worshipping the worthy person, is devoted to knowledge, understanding and serenity of mind, keeping company of elderly persons, has controlled all the impulses of attachment, aversion and envy, intoxication and conceit, is engaged in various types of gifts, constantly devoted to penance, knowledge, and peace, has knowledge and devotion to metaphysics, keeping eye to both the worlds and is endowed with memory and intelligence. Opposite of it is non-beneficial life (ahitayu). (chapter 30, sloka 24).

It is worth observing that health was conceived in very wide sense which comprised the total well-being and happiness. It was not only equated with the possession of health and absence of ailments, but cultivation of certain psychological qualities, personality characteristics and intellectual and moral values like memory, intelligence, freedom from inner conflicts, absence of carelessness, devotion to knowledge, control of impulses, envy, and conceit, serenity, truthfulness and the like were considered as its essential constituents. Since the foundations of these behaviour characteristics and dispositions are laid early in childhood, many of these require to be emphasized in the socialization and education of the child if he is to develop into a healthy and well-adjusted human being.

In traditional Indian conceptualization of the state of well-being, mental health appears to be regarded as an essential aspect of health. In any case, the concept of mental health is nearer to that of psycho-social well-being. The former is often defined in terms of adaptation to the environment and internal equipoise or equilibrium. Wolman [2] defines it as "a state of relatively good adjustment, feelings of well-being and actualisation of one's potentialities and capacities". It is an essential element of sukhaswarup or happy life. It is to be noted that any attempt at defining it inevitably has reference to socio-cultural environment. In some environments, stresses and demands upon the individual wrap him and induce mental illness no matter how healthy he would have been under happier environment. Thus, in understanding well being one has to take account of the nature of the environment in which the individual functions.

There are a few other related concepts which require some elucidation. The physiological concept of adaptation (often restricted to sensory sphere) or its biological meaning of structural or behavioural changes in the organism or of its part, so that it fits more perfectly to the altered conditions in environment and having survival value, have been used in a more general sense and in certain ways defines well-being. In this sense, adaptation means any beneficial modification in the organism or the system that is necessary to meet the environmental demands. The emphasis is on the capacity to modify oneself to cope with changed circumstances, which is an integral aspect of well-being.

Homeostasis is another relevant concept. In its original form, it connotes internal form of self-regulation for maintaining an internal bodily balance or adjustment. As Cannon [5] in his famous treatise *The Wisdom of the Body* points out,

"Organism, composed of material which is characterized by the utmost inconstancy and unsteadiness, have somehow learned the method of maintaining constancy and keeping steady in the presence of conditions which might reasonably be expected to prove profoundly disturbing ...somehow the unstable stuff of which we are composed had learned the trick of maintaining stability." From internal self-regulatory mechanism, the connotation of homeostasis has been expanded to comprise the process of psychological and even social adjustment. As Freeman [6] has observed, when the tendency of the organism or the individual to maintain its normality against internal and external disrupting agencies, the alterations made by him in his relations to physical and social surroundings, the phenomena are called psychological. Psychological adjustments are homeostatic phenomena writ large. Thus, from physiological homeostasis as exemplified by maintenance of body temperature or oxygen-carbondioxide balance and so on which are largely automatic, the concept has acquired a psychological connotation to include perceptual, intellectual functioning of the individual and even social relationships. It is a compensatory adjustment to meet any threat to personality [7] or a state of balance the individual maintains during the process of living. The balance is continually upset and recreated through complex interactions. Therefore, homeostasis is a dynamic equilibrium, because the individual is constantly taking corrective/adjustive action to restore the equilibrium.

The organism has learned to achieve a state of balance even on psychological and social planes, which is to be taken as an important component of individual's psycho-social well-being. In fact, individual's constant effort for such an equilibrium, which of course is dynamic and ever changing, is a useful way of describing many of the varieties of interactions between the individual and his world.

As it has already been observed, in traditional Indian treatise on medicine similar idea of maintaining balance has been constantly emphasized in the context of health and ill-health. Having various qualities in right or natural quantities (sama) is considered essential for health. Asantulan (imbalance) is the cause of illness: Vikaro dhatuvaisamyam, samyam prakritiruchayte, Sukhsamgrakaogyam, vikaro duhkameva cha. (chapter 9, sloka 4). Rendered into English, "any disturbance in the equilibrium of dhatur (vata, pitta, and kapha) is known as disease, and on the other hand, the state of their equilibrium is health" [8]. This aspect of avoidance of extremes and thereby maintaining an equilibrium is considered vital to man's health: Ati sarvatra varjayet or excess is to be avoided everywhere. This is true not only with regard to bodily functions, pleasures of senses, but with the total life and conduct. In Buddhist philosophy also, avoidance of extremes and adoption of middle (madhyama) path has been emphasized all through, which implies maintaining a kind of equilibrium.

In Sankhya philosophy, however, the idea of equilibrium has been greatly elaborated. The world is constituted by the three gunas or qualities called the sattva or the element of pleasure and illumination, rajas or principle of activity which on the affective side is the cause of all the painful experiences and is of the nature of pain (dukha); and tamas or principle of passivity that clouds our intellect thereby producing ignorance, confusion and bewilderment (moha). Tamas by obstructing activity induces sleep, drowsiness and laziness, and produces the state of apathy or indifference (vishada). The relation among the three gunas constituting the world is one of the constant conflict as well as cooperation. These three always go together, and the nature of things as well as the state that the individual experiences is determined by the predominant guna. It is on the basis of the preponderance of one or the other guna that one becomes intelligent, active or indolent, and experiences various degrees of well-being or otherwise. It is the state of samyavastha or equilibrium of the three that holds the secret to an individual's well-being.

According to Sankhya, our life on this earth is a mixture of joys and sorrows, pleasures and pains. There are many pleasures of life, and though many creatures have a good share of them, many more are the pains and sufferings of life, and all living beings are subject to them. There are three kinds of pain that go against our well-being, viz., the adhyatmika, adhibhautika and adhidaivika. The first is due to intra-organic causes like bodily disorders and mental affections which include bodily pains, pangs of fear, anger, greed and so on. The second is produced by extra-organic natural causes like snake-bite, pain on being hit by objects, murder and so on. The third kind of suffering is caused by extra-organic supernatural causes like pain inflicted by ghosts, demons and so on.

All men desire to avoid every kind of pain, and attain a state of enjoyment and well-being for all times of putting an end to all sufferings. But on this earth we cannot have pleasure only and exclude pain altogether. Therefore, during one's earthy existence the best a person can do is to maintain a kind of balance or equilibrium which is itself a state of well-being. However, for complete freedom from all pain and suffering and experiencing a state of absolute well being, attainment of liberation is essential. It is only after the removal of our ignorance and gaining knowledge into the nature of

reality that liberation (mukti) can be attained. The Sankhya philosophy like other Indian systems of knowledge has laid down the necessary steps for removal of ignorance and ending all sufferings.

The idea of avoidance of extremes and maintaining a kind of balance or equilibrium in all human functioning is repeatedly considered in Bhagavadgita to be the characteristic of a person who is wise and can enjoy a state of psychological well-being. Of the numerous verses stating the idea, a selection of them is given here. Along with the emphasis on equipoise, a number of psychological qualities have been indicated which are regarded as essential for well-being. The characteristics that have been emphasized are that a calm man is the same in pain and pleasure (chapter 11 verse 15: samadukha-sukhamdhiram); he is equipoised in success and failure: sidhyasidhyoh samo (chapter 11, verse 48); he is content with what comes to him without effort, is unaffected by conflict, and is free from envy; he is even-minded in success and failure and is not bound even while acting: Yadrichchhalavasantusho dvandvatito vimatsarah, samah sidhavasiddhou cha kritvanapi na nibadhyate (chapter IV, verse 22). Further he hates no creatures and is friendly and compassionate towards all (advesta sarvabhutanam mitram karuna eva cha), and who is free from the feelings of 'I' and 'mine', even-minded in pleasure and pain (nirmamo nirahankarah samdukhasukha kshami), forbearing, ever content, steady in meditation, self-controlled and possessed of firm conviction (chapter XII, verses 13 and 14: santustam satatan yogi yatatma dhriranischaya); he is such as cannot be agitated by the world (lokannodvijate) or is free from joy, envy, fear and anxiety (chapter XII; verse 15: harsamarsabhayodvegaimukto); he is free from dependence (anapekshah), pure and prompt (shuchirdakha), unconcerned and untroubled (udasinogatavyathah), renouncing every undertaking (sarvam-bhaparityagi) (chapter XII, verse 16). In the next three verses, a few more characteristics have been enumerated: he neither rejoices nor hates (na hrisyati na dvesthi), neither grieves at the parting of beloved object nor shows longing for it (na shochati na kanksati), he renounces both good and evil (shubhashubha parityagi) and is full of devotion (bhaktiman); he who is same for friend and foe and in honour and dishonour (samah shatrau cha mitre cha tatha manapamanayah), he is same in cold and heat and is free from all attachment (shitosnasukhadukhesu samah sangavivarjitah); for him censure and praise are equal, is silent, content with anything, homeless, steady minded and full of devotion (tulyanindastutirmauni santusto yenakenachit aniketah sthirmatirbhaktimanme).

The qualities and the psychological characteristics outlined above are of course ideal. However, they give an idea of the psychological, moral, and spiritual characteristics of an individual that would ensure his total well-being. It would be too much to expect the presence of such qualities in the average person. But when considering what constitutes well-being, these cannot be ignored, and should be regarded as normative and indicative of those features in man which are valued in the society.

Another concept which is relevant and integral to well-being is that of competence. It refers to individual's capacity to control and master his environment. It is the skill to deal with the environment in such a way as to satisfy his needs as well as maintain a state of balance or equilibrium within himself and with the environment. Which one of these two aspects of competence is emphasized varies from culture to culture. In the West generally, competence in the sense of exercising control over environment is stressed so that one has the capacity to utilise the available resources for his own well-being. In India and in some other eastern cultures, this aspect of control and exploitation of environment for one's own good is underplayed, and competence is regarded more as a capacity to develop and maintain a harmonious relationship with environment which is vital to individual well-being. It is more a question of being in tune with one's environment. Analogy of jungle fighting could be advanced to bring out the difference in emphasis. In one case it would mean remove the jungle to fight (as the U.S. army seems to have tried in Vietnam), and the other approach would be to fight in the jungle (as the Vietnamese guerrilla fighters had done), In fact, it is related to the whole question of model of man that is prevalent in the culture concerned. As has been pointed out [9], the model of man in the West is one of the "man and the environment". A kind of dichotomy between the two is implied. As far as the Indian tradition goes, the model is "man-environment" or "man-society" i.e., a kind of symbolic relationship between man and his society or the environment where you cannot separate one from the other. Unlike in the West where well-being implies to a great extent mastery and control over environment and exercising control over others, in the Indian ethos it consists to a great extent in establishing harmony with the environment and unfolding of one's own potential therein. Unfolding of potentialities of the self is emphasized more and mastery over external environment is considered only external environment is considered only secondary to one's well-being. For well-being, one is expected to develop a relationship with environment that is not distracting or disturbing. It is implied in the expression nirlipt or non-involvement, and in the definition of a well-developed wise man given in Bhagavadgita: that he is not unduly perturbed in sorrow, and in happiness he is not

overwhelmed.

In recent years, a related concept that has entered both scientific discussions and popular conversations is that of quality of life. It is considered to be a composite measure of physical, mental and social well-being as perceived by each individual or group of individuals, and of happiness, satisfaction and gratification involving mainly such non-esoteric life concerns as health, marriage, family, work, housing, financial situation, educational opportunities, self-esteem, creativity, competence, belongingness, and trust in others [10], [11]. It generally covers overall satisfaction as well as satisfaction in the component areas. Being somewhat polymorphous, it tends to cover a variety of areas such as physical and psychological complaints, feeling of well-being, personal functioning and general limitations [12]. Thus, the quality of the life can be evaluated by taking a number of aspects of a person's life and assessing or unhappiness about the various life concerns.

Like all other indicators of well-being, it has both objective and subjective components. The former relates to things like education, employment status, financial resources and comforts of modern living, i.e., what is generally known as standard of living. In an United Nations publication, a parallel expression is used, 'level of living' [13] which is said to consist of nine components: health, food consumption, education, occupation and work conditions, housing, social security, clothing, recreation and leisure, and human rights. All these characteristics are supposed to influence human well-being. Further, it is felt that mere availability of goods and services to the individual or the community does not in itself determine his satisfaction and well-being but also his expectations and perceptions of reality which is often referred to as the subjective component of quality of life or subjective well-being, or well-being as experienced by each individual. It is believed to be a function of the degree of congruence between the individual's wishes and needs on the one hand and environmental demands and opportunities on the other.

It is, however, to be noted that the relationship between economic resources and objective components of well-being and his subjective well-being is not linear, but curvilinear and complex. It is generally observed that up to a certain level of living the major determinant of well-being is the 'fit' or matching between objective or situational characteristic and the individual's expectations, abilities, and needs as perceived by the individual. At a lower level, every increase in amenities is likely to result in a direct increase in subjective well-being. But beyond a certain point, the relationship is not so direct, and any prediction becomes difficult. Beyond that threshold even an increase in economic resources, housing or leisure time need not necessarily be accompanied by high level or an increase in individual satisfaction or well-being.

Quite frequently the problem of well-being is viewed within the framework of Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs. Man's most vital needs are concerned with his survival. His social needs relate to his security and the community comes in later, while the higher order ego-related needs concern his self-fulfilment and are designated as self-actualization. It has been contended that there is a general tendency to ignore higher order needs until those relating to his survival have been satisfied. But once this is done, higher order needs become more salient. Thus, as a policy the first essential step towards man's well-being is to guarantee the satisfaction of the basic needs that ensure his survival, health and physical welfare. Once that is achieved, it is not enough merely to be concerned with reducing morbidity and mortality and protecting his health. At that stage, the entire spectrum of his well-being and quality of life undergoes a transformation, and there is increasing emphasis on psychosocial aspects of living. Therefore, any social policy on human well-being has to take into cognizance sooner rather than later the satisfaction of his social and community needs and ensuring a sense of self-fulfilment.

Thus, there is certain amount of difference not only about the concept itself but also in what is regarded as well-being among various cultural and subcultural groups. By and large in the conceptualizations made in the West, the ability to satisfy one's needs, avoidance of frustrations and stress, and exercising certain amount of control on the environment are emphasized. Even with regard to the concept of homeostasis, it is the disturbance caused in the bodily state, and thwarting or blocking of one's needs that lead to a state of disequilibrium which the organism/individual tends to avoid. Since it is the environment that provides the inputs that lead to need satisfaction, the strategy that inevitably suggests itself is one of conquering or exploiting it to enhance the satisfaction of personal and social needs. Even social environment is sought to be influenced and shaped so that it satisfies various psychological and social needs of the individual. In the Indian tradition, the approach is entirely different. Firstly, control over the senses is considered essential. While total denial of needs is not implied, what is emphasized through and through is the maintenance of balance between extremes of satisfaction and denial, as also the adoption of a path of moderation. Secondly, realizing the

inevitability of frustration, failure as well as success, sorrows and joys, it is repeatedly emphasized that not being overwhelmed by either is the essence of one's well-being.

Lastly, adjustment does not so much consist of controlling and exploiting the environment as in maintaining a harmonious relationship with it. Here, the key concept is being in tune rather than conquering the environment. Thus, the values in child rearing that are likely to be emphasized, and the behavioural qualities inculcated in the child through socialization and education for the sake of his well-being are likely to differ from culture to culture depending upon the world view and the nature of man-environment relationship that is conceptualised. Therefore, in spelling out indicators for psycho-social well-being, cross national and inter community differences in conceptualization of well-being have to be kept in mind.

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