

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING CONCEPTS AND HINDU EPICS- RAMAYANA AND MAHABHARATA

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Abstract: *Psychological, philosophical and spiritual traditions emphasized regarding the quality of consciousness to maintain the wellbeing of an individual. An individual also requires prescriptive nutriment supply in the surrounding environment to escalate wellbeing. The traditional theory of well-being says, it is having two broad categories- one is hedonic well-being, which is related to the happiness and the other is eudaimonic well-being, that relates to human potential. Another theory on wellbeing says that an individual who lives according to their own daimon or true self will contribute to wellbeing. Realization of their true nature is considered to be the eudaimonic concept of wellbeing and this contributes to happiness (hedonic well-being). People who tend to exhibit immoral, malicious and surreptitious acts will suffer mentally and physically. All these psychological principles of wellbeing were compared with the stories of the Hindu epics- Ramayana and Mahabharata.*

Keywords: *Well-being, hedonic well-being, eudaimonic well-being, daimon or true self, malice, surreptitious acts.*

INTRODUCTION

Hindus in India believe that the Deity was born like a human and philosophized their life anticipating the successors to follow their path in order to maintain peace, well-being, morality, and dharma. The great Rishis during those days transcribed their life in the form of epics and gifted to the heirs apparent of Hindu tradition for the sake of their wellness. Many psychologists were investigating since few decades to conceptualize the nature of psychological well-being. These concepts were compared with some stories interpreted in Ramayana and Mahabharata.

The Wellbeing was defined by Jahoda (1985) as the absence of illness that means having good physical health and also having positive criteria for psychological health. An individual requires prescriptive nutriment supply in the surroundings to magnify one's psychological health. Quality of consciousness has been given the core value by many psychological, philosophical and spiritual traditions to enhance and maintain the well-being of an individual (Wilber, 2004). Mindfulness represents a state of being attentive and aware of what is being done in present is said to be the attribute of consciousness (Brown & Ryan, 2003). In 90's researchers like Kabat-Zinn focus their research on escalating wellbeing through enhancing mindfulness by giving training.

Kahneman, Diener & Schwarz (1999) & Waterman's (1993), concepts of wellbeing were put together as a single theory- gained popularity as a traditional theory of well-being (Ryan and Deci, 2001). This theory was organized into 2 broad categories, in which one is 'hedonic wellbeing', related to happiness (Kahneman, Diener & Schwarz, 1999) and the other is 'eudaimonic wellbeing', related to human potential (Waterman, 1993). The term 'eudaimonism' is having significant value, it is something more than happiness and that instead lies in the actualization of one's potentials. He explained wellbeing as an individual's realization of one's potential to the maximum extent. For example, completion of each task, immediate attainment of each goal and gaining new social relationships etc., leads to happiness of an individual and which is said to be 'eudaimonic wellbeing'.

Arjuna was the most sedulous student among the students of Dronacharya, a royal preceptor (guru). Arjuna with his persistent hard work and constant practice of every instruction (indoctrination) given by his guru made him master in the skills of archery. Arjuna by self-actualizing himself won the heart of his guru through his determination in learning shooting capabilities with a great precision even higher than his Guru's expectations. (Wikipedia, drona). He was very much praised by his guru and also his guru intended to escalate him to the highest position in archery among all his students so that no others are equally appraised to him in archery. Arjuna was described as the outstanding warrior (Maharathi). Here Arjuna enjoyed the pride of hedonic state (a state of happiness) through actualizing his potentials in the archery (eudaimonism) as he was very much pleased by his Guru Drona and all others.

Eudaimonism (related to self-actualization) may not always produce pleasure to an individual, sometimes the person may struggle from misfortune. Hence, Eudaimonic wellbeing sometimes may not produce hedonic well-being (a state related to happiness) (Waterman, 1993). This concept is compared with the story of Ekalavya in Mahabharata. Ekalavya is the son of Hiranyadhanu, a king of Adivasi (jungle tribes) (Wikipedia). In his earlier life, he aspired to learn archery from Guru Drona. But Guru Drona refused to teach Ekalavya, as he was the son of a hunter. He was forbidden to teach anyone except the young princes of the royal family. Ekalavya did not give up his determination, he then made the statue of the guru Drona with clay and started worshipping with persistent determination over the years and learn archery with exceptional skills. When Arjuna saw the skills of Ekalavya which are surpassingly higher than him, went to the Guru Drona and asked him that you are supposed to teach me exceptionally higher than any one of your students. As you promised me that I would be the best and no one can exceed my skills in archery (Ritu, 2010). He alleged that Drona cheated him by exceptionally teaching the archery skills to another student. After listening to Arjuna, Drona went to Ekalavya and came to know how he learned these skills by committing him as his Guru. Drona asked his right-hand thumb as his Guru Dakshina. Ekalavya without any hesitation took a sword and cut his right-hand thumb, though he knew that this will made him dump in the archery skills. Here in this story of Ekalavya in Mahabharata, hedonism (a state of happiness) that arises from eudaimonism (self-actualization) suffered from misfortune.

According to Aristotle, Eudaimonism is nothing but living with their own daimon or true self. This eudaimonism contributes to happiness, which is otherwise called hedonism. As per his belief, a real happiness is achieved when an individual lead a virtuous life unimpeachably, dealing situations with worthiness (Boniwell, 2008). In the Hindu's epic Ramayana, Rama who is embodied with dharma, dutifulness, brave, and wise, exiled into the forest for fourteen years by the order of his father Dasharatha, due to the evil plot of his stepmother Kikeyi. Dasaratha, destined to give his throne to Rama (an elder son of him) and live his later years in search of moksha. In the earlier life of Dasaratha, he promised Kaikeyi to fulfill any one of her desire. Then Kaikeyi said that she will utilize this promise when she is

in need. Kaikeyi utilized this promise to banish Rama into the forest for 14 years, just a night before his enthronement ceremony. With listening to this devastating news from Kikeyi, the intolerable Dasaratha, who is unable to digest this was gradually debilitated to death. Dasaradha who is unable to live according to his daimon or true-self was debilitated to death according to the great epic Ramayana (Tiernan, 2006). Therefore, people who are unable to leave with their daimon or true self will lack wellbeing and they suffer mentally and physically.

Personal growth and purpose in live:

Steger et al. (2008) studied whether the eudaimonic pursuits and hedonic pursuits contributing to wellness. For this, he used behaviors checklists using the characteristics of these pursuits that are pre-classified by the earlier authors. Eudaimonic pursuits like expressing gratitude, volunteering time and listening carefully to another's point of view. He found hedonic pursuits (like eating to excess, relaxing with their hobbies, having sex for pleasure) represented as lacking self-regulation. He also found that eudaimonic pursuits brought long-lasting effects on well-being prolonged to the next day, indicated by leading a meaningful life, positive affect, and life satisfaction. Motives addressing the underlying orientations of the people are assessed to be varied for different activities (Huta & Ryan, 2010). Some activities were said to be high in hedonic and eudaimonic motivations such as playing sports, doing something artistic, dancing, singing, playing a musical instrument etc (Huta, 2007). These motives are elicited inherently (Kashdan et.al 2008). According to these authors, hedonic and eudaimonic motivations and pursuits promote wellbeing for an individual.

Keyes et.al. in 2002, improvised the Kahneman's 'eudaimonic and hedonic' categories of wellbeing by adding cognitive assessments of life satisfaction and also some other aspects of personal growth and purpose in life. He asserted these factors contribute to happiness along with the concepts of traditional wellbeing. Buhler (1935) proposed the basic life tendency of a person is to work towards the fulfillment of their own life. Money is essential for an individual to satisfy their basic needs that contribute to subjective well-being, as well as psychological wellbeing by increases fame, close relationships, community generativity and also, contribute to the wellbeing of the nation as well as the citizen. It is attributed to many people as a criterion for personal growth and to fulfill and the purpose in life.

Intrinsic goals will contribute to enhancing the well-being of an individual whereas extrinsic goals like financial and materialistic goals result in lowering the individuals' well-being (Sheldon & Kasser, 1998; Ryan et.al., 1999).

Placing immense interest on the goals related to wealth such as image and fame, they themselves can only partially satisfy their psychological needs and at worse, they distract their focus from need fulfillment. One's emphasis on the goals related to wealth, image and fame may contribute to exhibit illegitimate activities that distract from their own sense of authentication from the real self which results in lower wellbeing. In the Hindu epic Mahabharata, the sons of Dritharashtra were familiar with the name called 'Kauravas'. Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravas was embodied with bitterness and hatred towards Pandavas as he was unable to digest the truth that 'Pandavas are the real heirs of the Hastinapur kingdom'. Intolerable Duryodhana continuously wished and seeks the death of Pandava's and therefore, he implemented many dramatic plays to kill them. In fact, Pandavas fate helped them in succeeding their lives against their surreptitious plans. At last in the game of dice, Duryodhana cheated and won against Pandavas and ordered them to exile into the wilderness in a disguised manner for 12 years and they also physically abused Draupati (common wife of Pandavas). When Pandavas completed their term in the wilderness they came to restore back their half of the kingdom, Dhritarashtra did not accept to give them their share. This raised a war called Kurukshetra. Kauravas malice nature marked them to bring their lives to an end in the war of Kurukshetra (Ramesh, 1899). Along with him, all the individuals who exhibited immoral and malicious acts were deceased in the battle. Through this story, it is stated that an individual who exhibits evil deeds will suffer mentally and spiritually.

Pandavas who led their life with dharma and with their daimon or true nature succeeded in battle as well as they would able to overcome the surreptitious acts played by the malicious Duryodhana. Though Pandava's led their lives in the wilderness they utilized their time mostly in actualizing their potential and by improving their life energy with sadhana. They were said to be very happy during those times as they were accompanied by the great rishis and got enlightened by clarifying all of their confusions and ambiguity. This period played a major role in their lives to increase their skills and potentials which instigated them to win Kurukshetra even though they lost their whole kingdom. We can compare the Pandava's wilderness with eudaimonism, as a state of well-being though they lost their name, fame, and kingdom and leading their lives in a disguised manner and in fact, they were happy by living with their true self. We can also compare this with the hedonic and eudaimonic pursuits that promote well-being as depicted by Steger et al. (2008).

Duryodhana having satisfied with all needs and also have wealth, name, fame, great kings as friends still he was not happy and continuously tried to seek the death of Pandava's during his earlier and later ages for the sake of restoring their half portion of the kingdom. He was not at all happy in any of his life period which results in lack of wellbeing. Duryodhana placed his immense interest in the goal related to wealth (extrinsic goals), led to enact him immorally. He illegitimately tried to acquiring the half portion of the Hastinapur kingdom that belongs to Pandava's, at last, he was deceased in the war of Kurukshetra. Placing immense interest on the materialistic goals led Duryodhana to suffer mentally and physically.

Conclusion: In this article, the theoretical concepts of wellbeing proposed by different psychologists and their anticipated outcome is compared with the stories in the Hindu epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. Hindus in Indian culture believe that these epics were intended to follow in order to maintain wellbeing, peace, morality, and ethics. The traditional theory of well-being says that wellbeing is conceptualized into two broad categories i.e., hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. According to this theory, hedonism is a joyful or a happy state in which the wellbeing lies and followed by the Eudaimonic state. (actualization of one's potentials and attainment of each goal). These concepts are compared with the stories of Arjuna and Ekalavya in Mahabharata. Arjuna and Ekalavya with their sturdy determination mastered in the skills of Archery. Arjuna enjoyed wellness by enhancing his potentials in archery (eudaimonic and hedonic pursuits). Ekalavya surpassed Arjuna in the skills of Archery but suffered from misfortune by sacrificing his right-hand thumb to the guru Drona as Guru Dakshin. Aristotle proposed that Eudaimonism lies in living with the true self or true nature. It means doing what worth doing and leading life impeccable virtuous to themselves. People who unable to live with their true nature suffer mentally and physically. This concept of well-being was compared with the life of Dasaratha from the epic Ramayana when he exiled Rama into the wilderness for 14 years, abided by his promised to fulfill the wish of Kikeyi. During this period, he debilitated and degenerated with mental and physical suffering and at last, he perished with this sorrow. Sheldon, Kasser, and Ryan believed that intrinsic goals contribute to enhancing well-being and extrinsic goals such as goals such as financial and materialistic goals lower ones' well-being. This psychological concept was compared with the life of Pandava's in wilderness and malice nature of Duryodhana the eldest of Kauravas from the epic Mahabharata.

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