

**Applied Positive Psychology**  
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**Week 1**

**Lecture 3: Eastern and Western Perspective on Well-being/Positive psychology**

I welcome you all to module 1 of this course, and this is the third lecture of the module. So, today, our lecture is titled "Eastern and Western Perspectives on Wellbeing or Overall Positive Psychology." So, we will try to give an overview of how Eastern and Western cultures differ in their perspectives on how to conceptualize and understand well-being. So, that will be the idea behind today's lecture. So, before we talk about today's lecture, let me give you a brief recap of the last lecture. So, in lecture two, we talked about the concept of positive mental health and well-being.

So, in that lecture, we introduced the concept of well-being, how mental health is conceptualized, and how well-being fits into the structure of mental health. We also discussed the concepts of hedonism and eudaimonism as the two broad perspectives in order to understand the concept of well-being. We also specifically looked at how psychologists view each of these schools of thought from the psychological perspective, based on the literature of positive psychology. So, we discussed the psychology of hedonic well-being, which is also called subjective well-being.

We also looked at how psychology views eudaimonic well-being, how it is conceptualized, and how it is measured. Eudaimonic wellbeing is also technically called psychological well-being. We also then discussed some of the theories from positive psychology which discuss well-being by combining both hedonism and eudaimonism. We discussed two such theories in the last lecture. One is Keyes 13 dimensions of mental health as flourishing. So, that model also combines both hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being, in order to holistically define well-being.

Another model that we discussed in the last lecture is Martin Seligman's model of flourish,

which is also called the PERMA model, which combines both hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being in the overall conceptualization of well-being. So, these are some of the things that we discussed in the last lecture. Since this is the first module, we are giving an introductory concept of positive psychology. So, today we will be talking about how this concept of well-being, which we mostly talked about from the Western perspective in the last lecture, differs from the Eastern perspective. So, that will be the idea for today's lecture.

So, the main ideas that we will be discussing in today's lecture will include Western views on well-being, which we already discussed in the last lecture. We will just give an overview, and then discuss the Eastern views of well-being, how Eastern cultures look at well-being. Then we will talk about some of the broad parameters on which these two cultures differ regarding the concept of well-being. Okay, so let's start today's lecture.

Before we talk about how the Eastern and Western cultures conceptualize well-being, it is important to understand the difference between Eastern and Western cultures. Broadly, what is the meaning of these two words that we use? So when we talk about Eastern culture and Western culture, we are basically talking about some typical geographical regions that differ in the broader perspective of worldviews. So, in Eastern culture, it includes countries mostly in Asia, such as China, India, Japan, and Korea. Western culture includes countries and continents mostly in Europe and North America, influenced mostly by European traditions. So, in terms of geographical locations, Western cultures are located mostly in the European and North American regions and Eastern cultures are located mostly on the Asian continent.

Now, in the context of core values, Eastern cultures are very collectivist in their perspective. They focus more on group harmony and the interdependence of people in society and the group.

So, if you look at the countries we mentioned under Eastern cultures, the Asian countries broadly, they focus on collectivist aspects of living, where more emphasis is placed on the collectivist aspects, such as how people live in society as a group. The importance of group

norms, group harmony, the interdependence of each other in the society is given a lot of importance.

On the other hand, the core values of Western culture are very individualistic. They are mostly focused on innovation and personal freedom. So, Western cultures are broadly considered to have a more individualistic perspective, which is given more importance. So, they focus more on their own achievements and personal lives. The focus on the group aspect is less attention. The social aspect, group aspect, and community aspect are given less importance compared to individual life and individualism. Things like 'personal freedom' are given more importance in the Western cultural context.

Now, these worldviews are typically governed by many religious ideas because Western cultures mostly follow Christianity, and Eastern culture follows religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Taoism, and so on. So, most of these cultural worldviews are also influenced by those religious worldviews. So, this is broadly how Eastern culture differs from Western cultures.

Now, when we talk about these differences, these differences are not absolute. Not everybody in that culture will have these worldviews. These are like a general framework to understand these regions because culturally as a group, most people are influenced by these worldviews. That doesn't mean everybody in those cultures will have this kind of worldview. So, these are like a broader perspective, not the absolute differences, but a more general framework to understand these cultural differences. So, this is something we need to keep in mind in order to understand these things. So, these are like broad group-level perspectives that we look at. Individually there may also be differences in the people.

Now, let us discuss the western conceptualization of mental well-being, or well-being, which was also discussed in the last lecture. So, when we talk about the Western views of well-being, it mostly focuses on two broad views of well-being, which are discussed elaborately in the last lecture: hedonic and eudaimonic well-being.

So, both these aspects are found in the Western concepts, so let us discuss a broad overview

of these two concepts of well-being, which are mostly studied in the Western cultural context. The concept of hedonic well-being basically focuses on the concepts of happiness, pleasures and basically avoiding negative emotions. So, that is the idea of hedonic well-being.

Eudaimonic well-being is mostly focused on the broader aspects of meaning and purpose in life, self-actualization, self-realization, and growth in life. So, the hedonic well-being mostly focuses on maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain in life. So, a life with maximum pleasure and minimum pain is considered more aligned with hedonic well-being. Hedonic well-being is also technically called as subjective well-being in positive psychology; which in layman's terms is conceptualized as happiness. So, subjective well-being and happiness are the terms used in the tradition of hedonic well-being.

On the other hand, eudaimonic well-being focuses on achieving personal growth, fulfillment, and living in accordance with one's true nature. These are mostly emphasis given on meaning, virtues, flourishing of life, and so on. If you see hedonic well-being, more focus is given to short-term perspectives, such as immediate emotional experiences, immediate pleasures of life, and so on. Eudaimonic well-being focuses on long-term perspectives, such as focusing on enduring personal development and purpose, which could be a long-term project in one's life, and so on. Key components by which these concepts are measured include hedonic well-being, which is measured in terms of positive emotion, life satisfaction, enjoyment in life, and so on.

Eudaimonic well-being is measured using concepts such as autonomy in life, mastery in life, personal growth, and contributing to something greater than oneself or one's life. So, things like some bigger projects, meanings, and missions of life, basically contribute to the concept of eudaimonic well-being. Philosophically, they also came from two different schools of thought. The proponents of hedonic well-being include Aristippus, Epicurus, and others.

Eudaimonic well-being was mostly favored by people like Aristotle, Plato, and others.

Examples of hedonic well-being include feelings of joy from eating a favorite meal or enjoying a relaxing vacation, and so on. That will fall under hedonic well-being. Eudaimonic well-being includes things like feeling fulfilled from achieving a lifelong goal, helping others, and so on. So, these two perspectives are theoretically very different; and conceptually, they are different.

Hedonic well-being is mostly focused on the positive emotions and pleasures of life. Eudaimonic well-being says that it is not enough to conceptualize the well-being of life because these are very transitory things; they keep changing. In order to conceptualize well-being, we need to focus on long-term, broader perspectives, which give stability in life and enhance functioning in life. So, things like personal growth, achievement, and meaning in life are given importance under eudaimonic well-being.

Now, Western cultures mostly study well-being using both perspectives. More specifically, they focus on hedonic well-being. So, these things were discussed in detail in the last lecture. So, the key differences we have already discussed are- the contemporary Western theories of happiness and optimal functioning also emphasize individualistic virtues such as self-determination, autonomy, self-esteem, mastery, and control. So, even under eudaimonic well-being, the focus is more on individualistic things like having autonomy or personal freedom in one's life, having higher self-esteem, mastery in life, control in life, and so on.

So, even the conceptualization of eudaimonic well-being is also from a very individualistic perspective, and hedonic well-being is given a lot of emphasis in Western culture in terms of understanding well-being. Now, we have already looked at the western aspect in detail in the last lecture. So, we will not discuss those research findings. Today, our focus will be more on Eastern views of well-being and how they differ from the Western perspective.

So, what are the parameters on which it differs? How does Eastern views or Eastern cultures or Asian cultures look at well-being and how those thoughts are shaped by different religious traditions and so on, will be discussed. Let us look at the Eastern views of mental well-being. So, if you look at the Eastern views on well-being, they are deeply

rooted in spiritual traditions. They are deeply rooted in holistic, spiritual, and collectivist philosophies that emphasize the balance, harmony, and interconnectedness of people. In much of these cultures, the focus is given more on holistic understanding of well-being, not just transitory, temporary emotions, but holistically how to look at life and what contributes to well-being, including the spiritual aspects of life, the collectivist aspects of life, are included in Eastern perspectives.

In many Eastern traditions, such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Taoism, well-being is not simply the pursuit of pleasures or individual happiness, but the cultivation of inner peace, mindfulness, and acceptance of life's impermanence. So, a lot of this spiritual and religious tradition contributed to that understanding. If you look at many of these Eastern religious or spiritual traditions, they focus on happiness as more than just individual pleasures or individual happiness, but more on how to cultivate inner peace. How to cultivate the disciplines of mindfulness, accepting life's impermanence or transitory nature, and looking beyond that. So, those ideas are given a lot of importance in Eastern perspectives.

Now, in terms of realizing those aspects, the focus is on meditation, yoga, and mindfulness as parts to achieve those states of equilibrium or tranquility. Now, the goal is to reach inner peace and acceptance of life. How you achieve those goals is through things like meditation, yoga, prayer, and mindfulness. Those things are given a lot of importance in Eastern cultures. In Eastern culture, well-being is often derived from fulfilling one's role within the family and society.

So, that collectivist aspect is given a lot of importance. Now, your well-being in life or happiness in your life is not just your individual pursuit, but how you pursue your role in the family, in society, and in the larger community while maintaining harmonious relationships and contributing to the greater good. So, collectivist aspect defines your sense of well-being. So, that is a very sharp difference between Eastern and Western perspectives. So, the emphasis in the Eastern tradition is on interdependence and interconnectedness, where one's well-being is intricately linked to the well-being of others.

So, people are not just focusing on pursuing their own well-being; the focus is also on pursuing the well-being of the people around us. So, there is a sense of interconnectedness among all people. So, as a group and as a community, one has to grow. So, in the Eastern philosophies, the focus is not much on individual achievement in terms of autonomy, rather the promoting humility, compassion, and the dissolution of the ego are viewed as essential for a fulfilling and meaningful life.

So, a lot of importance in many of these spiritual traditions is also given to the dissolution of ego. A sense of separate individuality or just focusing on yourself is not given much importance, because spiritually this is considered a hindrance to achieve peace in life. So, the Eastern religious traditions like Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Taoism offer diverse perspectives on well-being, although there are broad common themes; they are also very different in terms of the finer nuances of understanding, which emphasize mostly spiritual growth, balance, and the interconnectedness of individuals. So, that's the summary of how they look at well-being from the Eastern perspective.

Now, to understand the Eastern perspective, let me give you a very brief summary of some of how some of these religious traditions look at well-being, because the concept of well-being is basically shaped or colored by these understandings.

So, mostly the religions that influence our sense of well-being in the Eastern tradition include Buddhism. So, in Buddhism, the key concept is liberation from suffering. So, the basic idea in Buddhism is achieving the Nirvana state, which basically means a state free from all suffering. So, that's the goal all Buddhists aim to achieve.

Well-being is connected to that idea. So, well-being is closely tied to the concept of liberation from suffering, which is achieved through mindfulness, ethical living, and the development of wisdom. So, this concept of liberation from suffering obviously needs lifelong practice and training of the mind and body, living an ethical life, developing wisdom, developing mental practices, stability, and so on. All these things are given importance in achieving that goal. So, the goal is to reach Nirvana, a state that is free from suffering.

These are the pathways by which it can be achieved. So, Buddhism focuses on the four noble truths. The first truth states that life is suffering, the second noble truth talks about the cause of suffering. Third, it says that there is a way out of this suffering. The fourth one says the way out of suffering is the eightfold path. So, they talked about eight different steps or important aspects that you can follow to come out of this suffering.

So, this is called an eightfold path. I'm not going into details about all these things because that is not the focus of this lecture, but that is the idea that there are noble truths: universal truths of human existence, which states that life is full of suffering, there is a cause for suffering, and there is a way out of that suffering, which is specifically specified in terms of the eightfold path. Central to this practice of mindfulness (vipassana) and meditation, which foster self-awareness and help individuals observe their thoughts and emotions without attachment. So, that's the practice part of it, which requires a lot of training. So, by practicing non-attachment, compassion, and loving kindness, individuals cultivate inner peace and ultimately reach a state of nirvana or enlightenment, which is free from suffering, and that is the ultimate state of well-being according to this perspective. A lot of these ideas in the countries that follow Buddhism are shaped by this Buddhist perspective.

The next one is Confucianism. A lot of Eastern cultures are also shaped by Confucian thought. So, what is the major philosophy behind this Confucianism? The key concept in Confucian philosophy is that it primarily focuses on social harmony and ethical living.

So, the major focus is how to achieve social harmony, group harmony in society, and how to live an ethical, virtuous, or moral life. So, Confucianism emphasizes the importance of social harmony, moral development, fulfilling one's role within society, and so on. So, this is a very collectivist concept. Here, well-being is not viewed as an individual pursuit, but as something achieved through fulfilling social obligations, cultivating virtues such as benevolence, which is called 'ren' in Chinese, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom, and maintaining harmonious relationships within the family and community. So, the central idea behind the Confucian thought processes indicates that it is not just an individual pursuit of well-being, but something achieved through fulfilling social obligations,

cultivating virtues, benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and so on, while maintaining harmonious relationships.

So, these are some of the major concepts of Confucian thought. They also have the concept of 'Junzi', which means a true gentleman, and serves as an ideal representation of a person who embodies moral excellence and contributes positively to society. So, that's the prototype of a gentleman. So, that's the idea of Confucianism. So, Confucianism teaches that well-being is attained when individuals align their actions with their roles and responsibilities, promoting greater good and social harmony.

So, this typical concept of collectivist ideas, which defines Eastern cultures, is very much the core of Confucian thought processes. So, these thought process also shapes Eastern culture, as a lot of countries follow this tradition.

Taoism is another philosophy or spiritual tradition that shapes the thought processes of Eastern culture. Taoism basically talks about how to live a harmonious life with nature.

Nature includes not only other people, but also every aspect of nature. How can one live harmoniously? So, that's the idea behind Taoist philosophy. In Taoism, well-being is achieved through living in harmony with the natural flow of life (the Tao) and practicing the principles of "Wu Wei" or effortless action. When somebody is in flow with nature, they are not fighting or resisting whatever is happening in their life; they are in the natural flow of life, and then action happens very effortlessly. You don't have to put too much effort and pressure on these things; it automatically and spontaneously flows out of you, because you are in tune with nature. So, that's the basic idea of Taoism. So, Taoists believe that if you keep forcing things that are unlikely to happen because they are not in tune with your natural tendencies, it will create imbalance and stress in life. So, stress is an outcome when you are not in tune with the natural flow of life or when you are forcing something; then stress and imbalance occur. So, aligning with the natural rhythm of the universe brings peace and fulfillment.

So, that's the idea behind Taoism, how to live peacefully aligned with nature, not forcing

things much from your own egoistic perspective. So, that's the idea. This concept of balance is further emphasized through the Yin-Yang principle, which means it is important to balance between both masculine and feminine aspects. How to balance opposite aspects of life such as masculinity and femininity; light and dark; activity, and rest.

One has to make a balance in all the opposites. So, those are the principles of Yin and Yang. So, that is given a lot of importance in Taoism. Taoism encourages simplicity, detachment from material desires, and acceptance of one's life changes and cycles as a way of cultivating tranquility and well-being. So, Taoism places a lot of importance on the acceptance of things. Whatever happens, it's happening because there is a will in nature for it to happen.

If you don't resist, and accept whatever changes are happening, you will feel peaceful and happy. So acceptance is at the core of Taoism. Taoism includes a lot of practices like meditation, breathing exercises, nature immersions like going into nature and reflecting on nature; these practices are commonly used to help individuals connect to the 'Tao' or natural flow of life and achieve a state of greater well-being. This philosophy also influences a lot of Eastern ideas. The last major religion that shapes Eastern thought processes is Hinduism, primarily practiced in countries like India.

Hinduism has a variety of ideas in the context of well-being. It includes things like dharma, spiritual growth, and unity with the divine. That is also another ultimate goal of life i.e how to achieve unity with the divine, which is also called moksha. Now, Hinduism is a very multifaceted religion. It has many diverse views encapsulated within the same religion. It has diverse views on well-being; it emphasizes both spiritual and material aspects. So, Hinduism doesn't deny the material aspects of life; it also embraces spiritual aspects of life, making it a very multi-dimensional religion in that sense.

The concept of dharma is translated by some as a moral duty and by others as a more general sense of the natural rhythm of life. It is a central idea. It guides individuals to live righteously according to their roles and stages of life. By following dharma, individuals

contribute to social harmony and personal fulfillment. So, the moral obligations and duties one has, is also given a lot of importance to achieve well-being in one's life.

Hindu philosophy also highlights four major aims of life that every human being should fulfill in their life. It includes one, which is Dharma, referring to the duty you have, and the natural course of action you need to take according to the roles and responsibilities, one must follow that. The second one is 'Artha', which means material success. Once you achieve a certain stage of life, then you may want to pursue material success in order to achieve well-being.

The third is 'Kama', which means pleasure. Hinduism does not deny pleasures in life; it embraced pleasure as part of one's well-being. The last one is 'moksha', which means liberation. Which means within these stages or the end of these stages, one needs to search for liberation, which means transcending all these aspects of life. Life is binding people within this realm of life. It has many philosophies on how to achieve these, diverse aspects are there, so we cannot go into the details of all these things.

The true well-being is ultimately found in moksha; that's the ultimate aim. Other things are also important in life, but the ultimate aim is moksha. Moksha is defined as the liberation from cycles of birth and rebirth, which is achieved through self-realization and union with the divine. So that's the ultimate aim. Other things are important, but moksha is ultimate because once you achieve that, there is nothing more to be done.

You are free from all kinds of suffering, cycles of suffering of birth and rebirth, because you achieved a union with the divine, there is no need to take birth again as separate individuals. So, that's the ultimate thing. So, well-being is viewed from all these lenses in the Hindu perspective.

So, it also includes practices such as yoga, meditation, and devotion. All these aspects are included to achieve those goals. So, these are some major religions in Eastern cultures that shape the worldviews and form the foundation of this thought process in Eastern cultures such as how well-being is understood. Now we'll see some of the major parameters on

which Eastern and Western cultures are different. Now, we have broadly talked about what the major aspects of well-being are in Western cultures, and we explained broadly how Eastern cultures look at well-being. Now, we will look more specifically at the different parameters on which they actually differ.

They come from those broad understandings only, but we look at more specific differences, how they view worldviews and how they consider well-being as well. So, we will see how Eastern and Western cultures differ in the concepts of eudaimonism and hedonism, because we have discussed these two traditions from the Western perspective. We will see the Eastern perspective, and how it is different from the Western perspective. We will also look at how Eastern and Western cultures differ in self-transcendence versus self-enhancement.

One culture focuses on self-enhancement; another on self-transcendence. We will see how they differ. We will also look at how the focus on harmony and mastery differs in these two cultures. We will also look at contentment and life satisfaction. How these two are also different in these cultures.

We will also look at valuing and avoiding suffering. What is the role of suffering in the concept of well-being in both cultures? We will lastly look at the role of spirituality and religion in the conceptualization of well-being in both cultures. So, these are the things, some of the parameters that we will be discussing in today's lecture, in order to understand the finer differences in the concept of well-being in both Eastern and Western cultures. Now, just to give a note on this, the differences we will be discussing are primarily from the theoretical philosophical viewpoint. In reality, these differences are not absolute but exist on a spectrum with variations within the cultures.

So, these cultures are also not absolute, things are also fluid, but broadly, this is how differences are conceptualized in different cultures, philosophically and theoretically. But these are not absolute; when you look at people in those cultures, there are also spectrums of differences that may be available. So, let us look at some of these differences and how

they are viewed in Eastern and Western cultures. The first one is eudaimonism versus hedonism, how Eastern and Western cultures differ in these two aspects.

We have already seen that Western culture studies both aspects: hedonism as well as eudaimonism. But if you consider the major focus, what is presented in Western culture is eudaimonism or subjective well-being, which is based on a hedonic understanding of well-being. So, in the Western culture, the output of research and the number of people working in those areas, gives much more importance to the hedonic tradition than to the eudaimonic concept in the conceptualization of well-being. Subjective well-being or hedonic well-being scales measure the presence of positive emotion, life satisfaction, and the absence of negative feelings over time. This is how the measurement perspective is conceptualized. This hedonistic approach aligns with Western cultural values such as liberal modernity, hedonism, and romantic individualism.

So, the hedonistic perspective aligns very well with Western worldviews. So, therefore, most of the research actually is aligned towards subjective well-being or hedonic well-being from the Western perspective. Happiness in the contemporary West is predominantly defined by the presence of pleasures and emotions. So, typically, happiness is studied using emotions and pleasures from the Western perspective or Western cultures. Most large-scale multinational studies on mental well-being led by Western researchers over the recent decades have utilized mostly a hedonic framework, relying on subjective well-being measures. This shows which aspect of well-being is given emphasis. Thus, hedonic well-being is generally given much more emphasis in Western cultures.

In Eastern traditions, in terms of hedonism and eudaimonism, generally an Eastern perspective or culture, does not favor hedonism as an aspect of well-being. It doesn't give much importance, it may play some role, but in Eastern culture, they don't give too much emphasis on this aspect or on pursuing only the emotional aspect of well-being.

In Eastern cultures, positive emotions and pleasures are seen as temporary and insufficient to measure true happiness. So, because these are very transitory and keep changing, they cannot be used as true measures of well-being. That's the idea in the Eastern concept; for

instance, if you see the countries or people who follow Buddhism, they reject hedonism, viewing it as a potential path to self-centeredness. In religions like Buddhism, they don't give much importance to the hedonic aspects of well-being, because they say it's too self-centered and will not lead to long-term well-being. Similarly, some traditions that follow Sufism emphasize asceticism as a method for spiritual purification, opposing hedonism.

Although Sufism is not typically known, in some countries, it may still be present. The philosophy of Sufism, along with other aspects, gives a lot of importance to asceticism and tends to deny hedonic aspects.

So, hedonism doesn't play a significant role in the worldview of Eastern cultures in terms of well-being. Eastern philosophy mostly views bodily pleasures with suspicion and promotes techniques for controlling desires to avoid prioritizing pleasures over essential virtues. So, the virtues of life are given more importance than seeking pleasures in life. Suffering is also not very negatively viewed in Eastern cultures. It is viewed negatively mostly from the hedonistic perspective in Western cultures, which do not translate very similarly to Eastern cultures.

Suffering is not dismissed in the Eastern culture, as it is mostly dismissed in Western cultures because in Eastern cultures, suffering is also seen as a requirement for spiritual growth. So, they also play a very important role. So, as a result, hedonism may not be suitable for defining happiness in Eastern cultures, where the emphasis is on virtues and the foundation of a good life.

So, this aligns with the eudaimonic understanding of happiness. Now, if you look at eudaimonic aspects, some of the eudaimonic understanding probably aligns more with the Eastern perspective than with the Western perspective. Although from the Western perspective, some people also study eudaimonic perspectives, but how this eudaimonic perspective is viewed in Eastern and Western culture may also differ. So, the question arises: can the Western eudaimonism that we discussed in the last lecture be applied in the Eastern context? Now, the Eastern concept of happiness is fundamentally eudaimonistic.

If you look at it conceptually, it is not at all hedonistic. So, can we then apply Western eudaimonistic models and measures to the Eastern context? Now, the research in the conceptual analysis shows that the concept of eudaimonic well-being in the Western perspective may not exactly translate into the Eastern perspective. Let us see how that is the case. First, Eastern eudaimonism focuses on selflessness, adaptation to the environment, and relational virtues, while contemporary Western psychology emphasizes autonomy and mastery over one's environment, even in the eudaimonic perspective. So, the specific parameters or indicators of eudaimonic well-being may differ in both cultures.

So, even in the eastern eudaimonic concept, the focus is on selflessness, dissolution of ego, and how to adapt to the environment rather than master it. So, a Western perspective of the eudaimonic focuses on mastery of the environment. So, even in that aspect, they also differ in terms of expression.

In non-Western cultures, even individualistic virtues are directed toward achieving self-transcendence, caring for others, and contributing to the collective. So, that the expression of eudaimonic aspects or parameters may also differ, even though broadly the Eastern perspective follows eudaimonic concepts. The second important aspect of how the eudaimonic concept may differ in the Eastern and Western contexts is that- certain Western virtues, such as autonomy and maintaining clear personal boundaries, are viewed negatively in the East. Although this is eudaimonic perspective from the Western point of view, this perspective subscribed to by the East. Focusing too much on individual autonomy and making too much of one's clear boundaries are not viewed very positively in Eastern culture in terms of well-being, where they are sometimes seen as a source of unhappiness, if one focuses too much on maintaining personal autonomy. So, that is another aspect of the difference. So, conversely, Eastern values like experiencing unity with others or a sense of “no-self”, which are often valued, may be perceived as pathological in Western cultures. Like the concept of no-self, which is at the core of a lot of these spiritual traditions, is about how to dissolve your own sense of individual ego; is not perceived as healthy from the Western psychological perspective. So few things in Western culture may be viewed negatively in Eastern culture. The few concepts in Eastern

culture may be looked at negatively by Western cultures, even within the eudaimonic tradition or indicators of eudaimonic traditions.

Another important thing, for example, 'filial piety', which basically means respect, obedience, and care for one's parents and elders, is a very important tradition in Eastern culture. We generally give a lot of respect. We also show obedience to our elders and parents and take care of them. So, this is something that is a very significant aspect of Eastern culture. It's an important virtue in Eastern cultures, and it's a sign of maturity in Eastern cultures. If you look at Western cultures, such a concept of social expectation can be seen as a constraint that hinders individual potential and self-expression. Such concepts are not given much importance in Western cultures, where people live in their own individual worldviews, and so on. So, that relational aspect is kind of downplayed there. So, this is how they may differ in terms of expression.

The second important concept or parameter on which Eastern and Western cultures differ is the concept of self-transcendence versus self-enhancement. So, if you look at these two concepts, it is basically how the self is defined. How the concept of self is defined in both cultures: in the Western culture, the concept of self is rooted in a very individualistic sense of autonomy, personal freedom, and a focus on oneself. This includes a sense of independence and self-esteem, as well as how to increase your own self-esteem and maintain a strong ego, maintaining boundaries of oneself, are all essential elements of a good life from a Western perspective. This is how the self is defined. So, self-enhancement is given more importance in Western cultures. If you look at Eastern tradition, the views are very different, almost opposite. The Eastern culture views itself as a small part of the collective and cosmos, often downplaying individual identity. Most Eastern cultural or religious traditions do not place much importance on an egoistic sense of self, where the focus is on one's own self, because a person is a very small part of this vast nature or cosmos.

So, glorifying the self is not given much importance because in the holistic view, your place may be very small. For example, Buddhism considers the individual self to be an illusion. So, a lot of Buddhist philosophy looks at individual self as a sense of illusion,

meaning it's a very transitory thing, which is mostly constructed by the mind. Your sense of self changes when you feel very good about yourself, and on the other hand, your sense of self may change when you feel bad about yourself or when something bad happens in your life.

So, this may be a mentally constructed thing and overall may be an illusion. While Confucianism emphasizes the relational self (self in relation to other people in society and community), maturing by prioritizing family and group over personal desires. So, if you see these Eastern cultures, the sense of self is defined very differently. Self-transcendence is given more importance than self-enhancement. So, Hinduism and Sufism also encourage the dissolution of individuality. The key to happiness is that if you can remove your sense of ego, happiness and a sense of well-being enhances, which is not how the Western sense of well-being looks at it.

So, fundamental differences have significant implications for defining well-being and positive psychological qualities. So, this whole definition of the sense of self is different. So, the definition of well-being from the perspective of self in both cultures will be very different, and their implications will be very different? So, the Western models and measurement tools, emphasize self-determination, autonomy, breaking free from societal conventions, and a lot of individualistic concepts. They often neglect social aspects of well-being, focusing on individualistic traits. So, Western models are mostly defined from this perspective, based on their core values. So, this quality may not be an accurate indicator of well-being. So, if we use all these Western indicators in Eastern cultures, they may not accurately reflect the belief systems or worldviews of the people, which a lot of research actually applies.

They just take Western models, use them in Eastern cultures, and analyze the scores. So, in a lot of this Eastern context, such analyses may not reflect the actual views of the people. So, in the Eastern traditions, self-transcendence is a very important aspect of psychological maturity. A less selfish approach to happiness promotes compassion, empathy, and respect, which are considered signs of maturity and well-being in the Eastern tradition. So, this

worldview needs to be considered while measuring well-being in different cultures. So, those cultural worldviews should be taken into consideration when we want to study well-being in different cultures. So, the model should be defined from those cultural worldviews as well, not just automatically or blindly taking Western models into Eastern cultures, that may not actually reflect the true meaning.

The third one is that these two cultures also differ in the emphasis on harmony and mastery, which we have discussed a little bit in the earlier point. Eastern culture focuses more on harmonious relationships with other people in the community and group. On the other hand, mastery, which involves how to master the environment, how to master or control things, is given more importance in Western cultures. So, let us examine some of these aspects: humans are mostly seen as privileged beings who are more intelligent and have the authority to dominate and control the aspects of nature from the Western perspective.

The western perspective thinks that human beings are the most intelligent and that they have the authority to dominate nature. So, these are the major views from the Western perspective. So, this perspective originates from the Enlightenment thinking in the European traditions, which views raw nature as something to be controlled and subdued. Consequently, humans are expected to analyze, label, categorize, manipulate, control, and consume the world's resources. So, the sense of mastery over things, controlling things is very much built into the Western thought processes.

In contrast, Eastern worldviews are quite different. Humanity is considered a very small integral part of the cosmos. There is no separation of humans from nature because we are all part of one cosmos, and everybody is dependent on one another.

Nature and human beings are all dependent on each other. So, it is not like one has to control others. So, there is a sense of oneness. With nature, for instance, Hinduism views humans as a part of nature, with no inherent superiority over other entities. Only the forms differ. So, Eastern views don't see human beings as more superior beings compared to other aspects of nature. There is a sense of unity among all the aspects of nature, and all are dependent on each other. So, if one starts controlling and having mastery over others, there

can be an imbalance, and that is what we look at in actuality in the world as well.

So, the Eastern concept is more of a harmonious nature, focusing on how to build harmony with nature and emphasizing oneness with nature rather than having mastery over nature. So, Eastern philosophy often perceives all beings- humans, animals, plants, and even non-sentient entities as interconnected parts of one whole. So, this cosmos is one thing; one consciousness, and everything is like a part of that.

So, no one is superior than other; everything is part of one thing. So, it is not like one has to be superior to others and control other things. Unlike many Western schools of thought, Eastern traditions do not draw a sharp distinction between humanity and the rest of creation, and concepts like mastering or conquering nature are not very aligned with the ideas of Eastern traditions. It doesn't fit with this worldview. When you think that you are one with everything, then concepts of mastering and controlling do not arise. This fundamental difference between Eastern and Western perspectives has a significant impact on the definition of positive qualities and well-being. So, in alignment with the Western views on humanity's relationship with the environment, qualities like environmental mastery and control are highly valued. This emphasis is evident in contemporary Western concepts of the good life. Like Ryff's model of eudaimonic well-being that we discussed in the last lecture. This model states that a fully functioning person is described as someone who has a sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment; controls a complex array of external activities; makes effective use of surrounding opportunities; and is able to choose or create contexts suitable to personal needs and values. So, this is one of the important parameters of eudaimonic well-being from the Western perspective, which, gives a lot of importance to control and mastery over the environment, which may not fit into the Eastern perspective. So, in the East, on contrast, they prioritize interpersonal harmony, adjustment, where well-being is achieved through mutual sympathy and harmony with others. So, the value of self-transcendence, interdependence, flexibility, and all these things are given importance here.

So, current Western models and measures of well-being are primarily based on a mastery-oriented approach, which often overlooks the importance of harmony emphasized in the non-Western context. This is another very specific difference.

The fourth one is contentment versus satisfaction. Now, which one is applicable to which? Let us see. So, if you look at contentment and satisfaction, these two terms may seem very similar, but they are different. In Eastern cultures, contentment is given more importance; and in Western culture, satisfaction is given more importance. So, let us see how these two things are different. In Western literature, life satisfaction has been an important part of well-being and mental health over the past four decades. In subjective well-being theory, satisfaction is considered a core component of mental well-being. So, if you are more satisfied with your life, you are considered to have more hedonic well-being or subjective well-being. So, this is a very important component of well-being in the measurement of subjective well-being in the Western tradition. In the Eastern tradition, rather than using life satisfaction, the word contentment is used to emphasize well-being.

Thus, contentment actually differs from satisfaction. How it is different? So, while on a superficial level, contentment and satisfaction may look very similar, but they actually differ. In the East, contentment includes satisfaction along with other qualities, so contentment is satisfaction along with some other aspects. It is a delicate balance between joy and sorrow, maintained through both happy and difficult times. If you are able to maintain a balance between joys and sorrows, then you can experience contentment.

So, you are content when you are able to accept both the success and failure, and the joys and sorrows of your life. It is not just satisfaction with something in life. Contentment comes from the acceptance of the opposite spectrums of life. So, that's called contentment, and Eastern tradition gives more importance to contentment as an indicator of well-being, as compared to just satisfaction. So, some other examples included in Hinduism, for example, contentment is not viewed as passive acceptance.

So, it is not just that you cannot do anything; so, you will accept everything. So, it's not that passive kind of acceptance. Rather, it is described as an intensely dynamic acceptance

of the results of one's efforts in the moment-to-moment struggle of life. So contentment does not include situations in which you are helpless and cannot do anything, so you are just passively accepting the situation. Contentment means situations in which you are actively striving and doing everything, irrespective of the outcome, which can be both positive or negative. Therefore, being actively involved in the process, irrespective of the outcome, is called contentment. So, this acceptance involves facing failure or suffering with composure, dignity, and gracefulness; and is believed to stem from realizations of the transcendent self. It comes from spiritual maturity. Contentment comes from spiritual maturity and practices.

So, that's something that is a much broader term than just satisfaction with life and it is given more importance in Eastern cultures. The concept of contentment in the East is spiritually significant, because all the spiritual traditions give importance to the sense of contentment, which involves a deep sense of peace with oneself, others, and the cosmos. It comes from a harmonious relationship with others and the cosmos. In these traditions, contentment is not influenced by goal achievement, social comparison, or the amount of suffering one endures.

It may not depend on any of these things, that when you achieve a goal, you feel more content. Even when you are not able to achieve goals, you can still experience contentment. Therefore, contentment may be a state of mind. So, in contrast, Western psychology specifically focuses on subjective well-being, where life satisfaction is given more importance. Life satisfaction is often treated as a goal in itself. Furthermore, the subjective well-being framework considers satisfaction as a desirable state of mind regardless of the underlying causes.

So, it basically comes from the idea that satisfaction is considered a goal. So, you have to do something in life so that you are more satisfied with life. When you achieve a goal, you will be satisfied. So, that's a goal-oriented approach. So, when you achieve that satisfaction, it is linked to something in your life.

So, when life goes positively, you will be satisfied with your life. So, it is more oriented towards that approach. Satisfaction obviously comes from some positive things in life. You will feel less satisfied when things go wrong. But contentment is independent of positive or negative outcomes. People can achieve a sense of contentment even in both positive and negative outcomes. So, the sources of life satisfaction, such as desire gratification, social comparisons, and pleasures, are typically not emphasized as long as satisfaction is achieved.

So, satisfaction itself is considered a goal. How you are achieving that satisfaction is not given much importance. So, conceptually, that may be different. So, Eastern culture focuses on contentment, while Western culture focuses more on satisfaction as a concept related to well-being.

The fifth one is to what extent this culture focuses on avoiding suffering in terms of well-being. So, in the Western tradition, the hedonistic approach, by definition, wants to avoid suffering and negative emotions. So, that's included in the definition itself. It emphasizes how to maximize pleasures and happiness in life and avoid suffering and negative things in life, including negative emotions. So, suffering is not welcomed in Western tradition, and it is seen as something to be avoided in the hedonistic traditions. This perspective can make it challenging to accept hardships, negative emotions, suffering, or unhappiness as a part of a broader fulfilled life, because you are asked to avoid them. So, by definition, these things are not welcomed in life. So, in hedonic psychology, the absence of subjective well-being is considered negative, and researchers often overlook potentially positive aspects when someone reports feeling unhappy. So, if you feel less happy or have more suffering, then according to the Western model, you will have less well-being; which may not be true in the Eastern sense.

From the Eastern perspective, the subjective well-being model, which partly defines happiness as the absence of negative emotions, appears unrealistic because hardships and suffering are unavoidable aspects of life. Eastern eudaimonistic theories accept that negative emotions and anhedonia can coexist with a truly happy life. So, one may have a

very happy, meaningful life, which may be very high in terms of the Eastern concept of well-being, but at the same time, the person may also experience negative emotions or some sense of sadness or depression as well. It is very much possible that both can coexist. So, these are not exclusive. For example, in Taoism, rejecting unhappiness alongside happiness is thought to lead to suffering. So, if you reject suffering, then whenever there is suffering in your life, it will create more problems, because you are not accepting suffering. So, rejection leads to more suffering.

So, acceptance leads to greater happiness. Similarly, Buddhist psychology suggests that happiness and unhappiness are interdependent and cannot exist independently. They are two sides of the same coin. You cannot avoid any one. So, both have to be considered.

Such views are not very prevalent in the Western concept. In the Eastern tradition, a certain degree of suffering is often viewed as essential for a happy life, because it makes you more mature and helps you grow in life. A state of well-being is achieved more in a long-term sense when you suffer and struggle with your life, and you become wiser and more mature after facing hardships and difficulties in life. So, that is something very much ingrained in the ideas of Eastern traditions.

This is emphasized in most religions, such as Hinduism, Confucianism, these religions emphasize adhering to virtues, even if they come at a hedonic cost or suffering. So, if you focus on your virtues and important duties, then even if you face suffering, it will give you happiness. So, Buddhism also says that enduring suffering allows individuals to purge the consequences of past actions, particularly past bad actions. If you suffer more, that means that the consequences of past bad actions will be removed.

So, in a sense, it purifies you. So, these things are also included in this idea. So the focus is not on avoidance of suffering, the focus is on acceptance of suffering and flourishing through suffering. So overall, non-Western traditions or Eastern cultures tend to recognize positive aspects of negative emotions more, as compared to Western traditions, where suffering hardships are generally considered things to be avoided. So, this perspective has

significant implications on the conceptualization of mental well-being. For instance, individuals from an Eastern background who experience negative emotions over a month might score very low on contemporary subjective well-being scales, yet they may still find genuine happiness in their life during that time due to spiritual and existential reasons. So, if you just follow Western models and use them in Eastern cultures, it may again lead to erroneous judgment. For example, if a person living in a non-western country is experiencing negative emotions, but overall, his sense of happiness and meaning in life is very good. If his subjective well-being is measured by a western scale, he may score very low. Contemporary subjective well-being measures fall short of capturing this nuanced understanding of well-being from the eastern perspective.

So, that is something that needs to be focused on in research. In contrast, Western psychological eudaimonism is more accommodating of unhappiness and suffering. If you see the eudaimonic perspective, it is still much more accommodating of suffering and unhappiness. Although it is not given much importance in Western culture, some aspects of this are also studied in the Western context. However, this theoretical openness has not fully translated into a dominant eudaimonic model in Western cultures. Although eudaimonic models are more open to suffering, they still do not play a central role in Western cultures.

The last one is about the relevance of spirituality and religion. This is something which we have been talking about from the beginning of this lecture, that spirituality and religion play a much larger role in the Eastern perspective in terms of defining well-being as compared to Western perspectives. The religion plays a more important role in Eastern cultures. So, if you see, in Eastern tradition, you cannot avoid spirituality and religion when we talk about well-being. You cannot capture the sense of well-being.

Dominant Western research often prioritizes materialistic values and moral pluralism, religion and spirituality are typically examined as predictors of mental well-being. In Western cultures, the well-being literature looks at how religious beliefs influence well-being, as they are considered predictors of well-being, so they are not included in the definition of well-being. So, that is how it differs. They use spirituality or religion as a

variable that can influence well-being.

So, it is like a separate thing in the Western model. So, the Western models often assume that happiness and satisfaction should be found within this worldly life. But in the Eastern tradition, spirituality and religions, along with their understanding of the experience of life, are very much intertwined in the definition of well-being. For this culture, happiness is often rooted in a religious or metaphysical perspective, where transcendence, spirituality, mystical experiences, adherence to religious duties, and participation in religious rituals are essential components of happiness. So, well-being and happiness are integrated into the religious and spiritual concepts.

So, this is not a separate aspect that has to be looked at in the religion. So, it is more integrated into the definition of well-being itself in the Eastern tradition. This emphasis on mystical experiences and transcending everyday existence, this state of no self or unity with God, is regarded as an ideal. So, religion defines well-being in a lot of the spiritual and religious traditions in Eastern cultures. So, that is another major difference. A lot of these mystical and transcendental experiences may not fit with the Western conceptualization of materialism, positivism, and rationalism; and they may dismiss many of these ideas from Eastern cultures. Consequently, Western clinicians may interpret many mystical states as pathological, or they may not understand these phenomena, because it is considered important or a sign of well-being only in Eastern cultures, not in Western culture. Therefore, from the perspective of Western culture, they may view it as a pathological thing.

In summary, examining religion or spirituality merely as a predictor of happiness in Eastern cultures may be insufficient, if you just look at it as a separate thing that influences well-being; this may not fit well in Eastern culture. This idea may not be very suitable. Instead, happiness should be conceptualized and assessed through religious and morally informed lenses. That is something that is more tuned towards Eastern tradition.

In these cultures, not all positive emotions or achievements are regarded as components of happiness, they must also be morally justified. Only studying positive emotions may not

be good enough, but whether they are morally justified or not, that has also been an important connotation in Eastern traditions. So, these are some of the things.

Now, let us come to the conclusions about what we have discussed and highlight the major takeaways from this lecture. Now, while we have seen that there are significant differences between Western and Eastern concepts of happiness and well-being, we have observed that each culture focuses on different aspects, often on mostly opposite spectrums.

It is crucial to recognize that both approaches, such as harmony and mastery, exist in all cultures. Now, you know, a lot of these approaches can exist in both cultures as well, even though broadly they may differ. Individuals in any culture may adopt values from both poles. For example, you may find individuals in Western cultures who are more tuned to or follow lifestyles of Eastern cultures, and vice versa; there may be many people in Eastern cultures who lean more towards Western values. So, individually there may be a lot of differences, people from all the poles and spectrum can be found in every culture. For instance, a qualitative study by Delle Fave and colleagues in 2011 found that some Western participants associate happiness with inner harmony, even though inner harmony is more associated with Eastern cultures, but a lot of Western people actually look at inner harmony as a part of their culture, as a part of their concept of happiness. Additionally, research by Mongilner and colleagues suggests that older Americans are increasingly linking happiness to peacefulness, aligning with the Eastern perspective. So, a lot of people within each culture may be oriented toward a lot of diverse spectrums. However, notable differences can still be found between Western and Eastern cultures regarding the opportunities for these qualities to manifest, and these distinctions remain despite globalization. Even though there may be individual differences, broadly speaking, if you look at it as a culture, there are still differences in their manifestation in different cultures.

So, this distinction will remain despite globalization. The differences between the cultures are more fluid, and it may become less as time passes. Now certain qualities are universally recognized as essential to happiness in both cultures, with many qualitative studies indicating that the success of interpersonal relationships plays a significant role in how happiness is understood across both Western and Eastern cultures. For example, some

aspects are given importance in both cultures, such as the importance of relationships or how the relationship with other people can play a very important role in one's well-being. Research shows this positive relationship, which is an important part of well-being, is also emphasized in Western eudaimonic models such as Ryff's model. However, how and what aspect of the relationship is given importance can also differ in culture and its manifestation.

The same psychological qualities can manifest differently in Western and non-Western contexts. Some studies have been conducted in this direction. For example, one study shows that South African participants highlight familial relationships as vital to happiness, while German participants focused on selecting friends based on personal character, reflecting Germany's more individualistic culture. So, even though the relationship plays an important role in both cultures of different countries, the aspect of the relationship that is given importance may differ in certain countries and cultures. For example, here the South African participant focused on familial relationships more than other aspects, while the German participant focused on selecting friends based on the characteristics of the person. So, many studies show that even though one particular aspect, like a positive relationship with others, plays an important role in both Eastern and Western cultures, how it manifests could also differ in the cultures.

So, this example illustrates that abstract qualities important for a good life, can vary in expression across cultures. Therefore, more nuanced models and measurements are necessary to account for both the similarities and differences in cultural interpretation. So, the need of the hour is that- in order to study empirically or from a research perspective, understanding cultural aspects needs to be given significant importance. Importance has to be given to cultural aspects in order to conceptualize models and form measurement instruments, so that proper measurements can be made from a cultural perspective and so that we don't impose Western models on other cultures. So, these are some of the indicators that show how cultures can differ in terms of conceptualization and therefore, culture has to be integrated into the measurement of the models.

So, these are some of the important things about how Eastern and Western cultures differ in terms of the conceptualization of well-being or positive psychological dimensions. So, with this, I stop here. Thank you.