

Asakti-Anasakti and Religiosity: A Correlational Study

Dr. Vinay Kumar Singh^{1*}

ABSTRACT

The central aim of the present study was to ascertain the relationship between asakti–anasakti and religiosity. A total of 100 samples (50 males and 50 females) were selected randomly from Rae-Bareilly district in India. The age range of the participants was 20 to 44 years. Two measures (1) Test of Asakti–Anasakti by Bhushan and Jha (2017), and (2) Religiosity Scale by Bhushan (2009) was administered. Descriptive statistics (Mean & SD), Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient and stepwise hierarchical multiple regression was computed through SPSS to analyze the data. Findings of correlation suggest that people belonging to the general caste tend to exhibit higher level of religiosity compared to other caste groups ($r = -0.26$; $P < 0.01$) while other correlations observed are not statistically significant. Regression analysis revealed that no predictor explained variance of asakti–anasakti but predicting the religiosity only caste emerged as a significant predictor and explained 7 percent variance.

Keywords: *Asakti-Anasakti, Religiosity, Sex, Age, Caste, Education, Area of living*

Asakti and anasakti are two important concepts in spiritual and philosophical traditions, particularly in Hinduism which represents attachment and non-attachment, respectively. Bhushan (1996) noted that asakti and vairagya (detachment) represent two extremes on a spectrum while anasakti remains at the centre. In the context of Hindu philosophy, the teachings of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita play a pivotal role in illustrating these concepts. Lord Shri Krishna, in the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, emphasizes the importance of performing one's duties (karma) with anasakti, means without attachment to the results. This non-attachment does not mean renouncing the world but rather engaging with it selflessly, offering all actions to the divine and freeing oneself from the consequences of desire.

Asakti and anasakti are indigenous concept. They are often discussed in the context of one's relationship with the material world, personal desires and the pursuit of spiritual goals (Roy & Kumar, 2023). Both concepts are central to understanding human psychology, ethics and spirituality. *Asakti-anasakti* reflects a broad aspect of personality. It is bipolar dimensions of personality which encompass two contrasting tendencies of an individual's behavioral and emotional orientation (Bhushan & Jha, 2017).

Asakti is characterized by a strong emotional and psychological dependence on worldly objects, desires, people and outcomes. It constricts consciousness by fostering *raga, dwesha*

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Feroze Gandhi College, Rae-Bareilly (U.P.), India

*Corresponding Author

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and *ahamkara* which leads psychological challenges. In many spiritual and religious teachings, excessive attachment is seen as a root cause of suffering and a barrier to spiritual liberation. Attachment can tie an individual to material pursuits and desires, thereby preventing one from focusing on higher, transcendent goals. The deeper the attachment, the more one is likely to experience frustration, disappointment and sorrow when these attachments are threatened or unfulfilled (Roy & Kumar, 2023; Bhushan & Jha, 2017).

On other hand, anasakti fosters self-mastery, mental and physical stability, and freedom from extreme reactions. Anasakti marks the path to liberation from *raga*, *dwesha* and *ahamkara*. It is the ability to engage in life and perform one's duties without being overly concerned about the outcomes and personal desires. Anasakti is often seen as a path to inner peace, spiritual freedom and growth which allowed individuals to act selflessly and without attachment to personal gain (Roy & Kumar, 2023; Bhushan & Jha, 2017).

Roy and Kumar (2023) identified five key themes related to asakti. First, asakti is composed of Raga (desire), Dwesha (aversion), and Ahamkara (ego). Second, excessive attachment to material things leads to intellectual, mental and spiritual decline. Third, asakti functions through the interplay of the three *gunas* - *sattva* (purity), *rajas* (passion), and *tamas* (inertia). Fourth, regulating and controlling asakti leads to anasakti, promoting inner balance. Finally, devotion and dedication to a higher consciousness or God free one from bondage and the negative effects of attachment.

The term religiosity refers to religious faith. Religiosity encompasses the practices, beliefs, rituals and emotional devotion one has toward a particular religion or spiritual path. It includes not only the intellectual aspects of faith but also the practical and emotional engagement with religious rituals, ethical codes and personal spirituality. Religiosity can involve various forms of devotion, ranging from strict adherence to rituals and ethical precepts to a more individualized spiritual experience (Bergan & McConatha, 2000; Walker, 2003; Holdcroft, 2006; Bhushan, 2009). Kelly (1995) defined spirituality as a personal sense of connection to a transcendent presence in the universe while religion was described as the institutional, ritual and doctrinal expression of that spirituality.

Banth and Talwar (2010) noted that yogic practitioners demonstrated significantly greater anasakti compared to the secular population. Young, Cashwell and Shchserbakova (2000) described that spirituality plays a significant role in moderating both depression and anxiety with a greater impact on depression. Fehring, Brennan and Keller (1987) examined a strong inverse relationship between spiritual well-being and negative moods but it was not directly linked to psychological adjustment. Young, Cashwell and Woolington (1998) also explored the connection between spirituality and psychological factors such as cognitive development, moral development and purpose in life. Their findings indicate a link between spirituality, moral development and a sense of purpose.

In a study Jha (2002) observed that *asakti* has significant positive correlations with insecurity, depression, anxiety, hostility, and the *tamas* and *rajas* *gunas* but it shows a negative correlation with religiosity and *sattva* *guna*. In contrast, Roy and Kumar (2023) observed that anasakti plays a role in fostering peace and happiness.

Sex, age, caste, education and area of living of respondents' also have been incorporated in this study. Rajeev and Hebbani (2020) revealed that male and female do not differ significantly in the level of anasakti. Rodrigues et al. (2017) described that females and older

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adults demonstrated higher levels of religiosity and spirituality whereas income showed no significant correlation. Kayastha et al. (2010) also observed the presence of secure attachment in middle childhood and adolescence. Gupta and Agrawal (2020) conducted a study on urban educated adults in India and found that older age groups exhibited higher levels of anasakti which indicates a potential progression of anasakti with age.

Caste has its origin in ancient India but it has remains a deeply embedded social reality. Prasad (2023) noted that caste typically exists independently of religiosity. Dasgupta et al. (2016) observed notable variations in behavior and personality across caste groups. Specifically, Indian undergraduate students from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes exhibit distinct behavioral preferences and personality traits.

Objectives:

The study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- To examine the relationship between asakti/anasakti and religiosity as well as its correlation with demographic factors such as sex, age, caste, education and area of living.
- To understand the impact of religiosity and demographic factors on asakti/anasakti as well as influence of demographic factors on religiosity.

Hypotheses:

The present study put forth the following hypotheses:

- There will be significant correlation between asakti/anasakti and religiosity.
- Demographic variables such as Sex, age, caste, education and area of living will correlate significantly with asakti/anasakti and religiosity.
- Religiosity will be most powerful predictor of asakti/anasakti.

METHODOLOGY

Sample:

The study sample was randomly selected from both urban and rural areas of Rae-Bareilly district in India. It consisted of 100 participants with 65 from urban areas and 35 from rural areas. The sample included an equal distribution of 50 males and 50 females with age range from 20 to 44 years.

Measures:

Following two measures were used to collect the data in the present study:

- 1. Test of Asakti–Anasakti (TAA-BJ):** This test was used to assess the asakti-anasakti of the participant. It was developed and standardized by Bhushan and Jha in 2017. The test comprises 40 items and each item has to rate by using four response categories: Always, Often, Seldom and Never. Participants have to mark (✓) in the box that most closely aligns with their response. The reliability coefficient of the test was determined 0.87 using the test-retest method. A higher score on this scale indicates a stronger tendency toward asakti.
- 2. Religiosity Scale (R S):** This scale was used to assess the religiosity level of the participants. It was developed and standardized by Bhushan in 2009. The scale consists of 36 items and each item has to rate on five-point Likert scale i.e. Totally Agree, Agree, Can't Say, Disagree and Totally Disagree. Against each item five numbers are given in order so that 5 indicate the response "Totally Agree" and similarly 1 represents "Totally Disagree". Participants have to circle the number that

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best reflects their response to each statement. The reliability of the scale was assessed using the split-half and test-retest methods, yielding reliability coefficients of 0.69 and 0.78, respectively. A higher score on this scale indicates higher level of religiosity.

Procedure:

Each participant was approached individually by the researcher. After building rapport, they were informed that the study is purely for academic purpose and assured that their responses would be remain confidential. Participants were requested to carefully read the instructions printed on the front cover of each test and encouraged to raise any questions or clarify doubts if needed. They were also instructed to provide their name, sex, age, caste and other necessary details on the front page of the both tests. Participants were instructed to record their answers exclusively within the specified spaces allocated for each item. After completing both tests, the responses were thoroughly checked to confirm that no questions were left unanswered. Scoring was carried out according to the procedures outlined in the test manual.

RESULTS

The data was analyzed using SPSS version 25. The analysis included descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient and stepwise hierarchical multiple regression. The results are presented below:

Table-1: Mean, SD & Intervariable Correlations (N=100)

Sl. No.	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Sex	1.50	.50	-						
2.	Caste	1.62	.62	-.07	-					
3.	Area of living	1.35	.48	.06	.08	-				
4.	Education	2.12	.70	.14	-.08	-.07	-			
5.	Age	25.46	5.66	-.05	-.09	-.16	.06	-		
6.	Asakti-Anasakti	95.75	15.50	.08	.02	-.09	-.11	-	-	
								.08		
7.	Religiosity	131.09	15.15	.08	-.26**	.04	.02	.19	-	-
									.13	

** P<0.01

Table-1 shows means, standard deviation and intervariable correlations among demographic variables (such as sex, age, caste, education and area of living), asakti-anasakti and religiosity. The general picture of correlation amongst the variable is that only caste is significantly and negatively associated with religiosity ($r: -0.26; P < 0.01$). This indicates that general caste people are more religious than other caste people. Other correlations are weak and not statistically significant. It indicates that there are no strong relationships among sex, age, caste, education, area of living and asakti- anasakti. Thus, the proposed hypothesis no.2 is partially accepted which states that demographic variables such as Sex, age, caste, education and area of living will correlate significantly with asakti/anasakti and religiosity. The correlation between asakti/anasakti and religiosity is also weak and not statistically significant. Hence, findings of the present study do not support the proposed hypothesis no.1 which states that there will be significant correlation between asakti/anasakti and religiosity. It means that attachment/non-attachment tendencies do not appear to be strongly related to religiosity, particularly people of Rae-Bareli district.

Table-2: Stepwise Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Religiosity (N=100)

Predictor	R ²	β	t-value
Caste	.07	-.26	-2.66**
** P<0.01			

{R= .26, R²= .07, F= (1, 98) = 7.07**}

Note: Four predictors (Sex, Area of living, Education and Age) could not be entered into the regression equation.

Table-2 presents the findings of stepwise hierarchical multiple regression analysis. In this study when asakti–anasakti was considered criterion variable as result none predictor (i.e. Sex, Caste, Area of living, Education, Age and Religiosity) could enter into the regression equation and explain any variance. Thus, the findings of the present study do not support the proposed hypothesis no.3 which states that religiosity will be most powerful predictor of asakti/anasakti. But when religiosity was taken as criterion variable only caste explain the variance. The total variance explained by caste are 7 percent and β is negative (β= -.26). Other predictors (i.e. Sex, Area of living, Education and Age) do not explain any variance at all. It means that only caste play a significant role in predicting religiosity within a sample from Rae-Bareilly district in India.

DISCUSSION

This study was an attempt to explore whether individuals with higher levels of asakti (attachment) tend to display more intense religious practices and beliefs or if those who embrace anasakti (non-attachment) are more spiritually engaged in ways that transcend material concerns. The findings of this study suggest that asakti-anasakti and religiosity are not significantly correlated among the participants from Rae-Bareilly district in India. This result does not align with Jha's (2002) findings who reported a significant negative correlation between asakti and religiosity. The findings also contrast with Banth and Talwar's (2010) study which indicates that yogic practitioners demonstrated significantly greater anasakti compared to secular individuals.

A noteworthy result from the regression analysis is that caste emerged as a significant predictor of religiosity. This finding is in line with Dasgupta et al. (2016) who pointed out variations in personality traits and behaviors across caste groups. But in contrast, Prasad (2023) noted that caste often exists independently of religiosity. Additionally, Dasgupta et al. (2016) also reported behavioral and personality differences across caste groups though they did not specifically examine religiosity. The negative beta value (β = -0.26) indicates that individuals from higher caste groups demonstrated greater religiosity than those from lower caste groups.

The lack of significant effects of sex, age, education and area of living on asakti/anasakti and religiosity aligns with Rajeev and Hebbani (2020) who reported no significant gender differences in levels of anasakti. Additionally, Gupta and Agrawal (2020) noted that older individuals exhibited higher levels of anasakti but this trend was not observed in the present study. Rodrigues et al. (2017) reported higher religiosity among females and older adults yet these variables did not predict religiosity in the current analysis. These discrepancies may be attributed to regional and cultural differences, variations in measurement tools and sample-specific characteristics.

CONCLUSION

Finally, the results of the present study suggest that asakti/anasakti and religiosity are not strongly correlated in the population of Rae-Bareilly district in India. Additionally, caste was the only significant predictor of religiosity which indicates that social stratification plays a role in shaping religious engagement. Other demographic factors such as sex, age, education and area of living do not significantly contribute to variations in asakti/anasakti and religiosity. Thus, we can say that future studies should consider a larger and more diverse sample to explore the complex relationship between asakti/anasakti and religiosity in different cultural and social contexts.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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