

Emotional Intelligence in Eastern Philosophy

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Wisdom in Hinduism regards self-knowledge as the truth, the basis of all Creation, of Shristi. It would turn out that the wise is a person with the self-consciousness of the whole creation in all its facets and forms. There are not many studies regarding emotional intelligence (EI) from the Indian perspective, (Sharma 2012) although EI is found in every text in ancient Indian literature (*Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Ayurveda, etc.*). The Indian philosophical tradition emphasizes the strong nature of emotions, which must be harnessed for a harmonious life. (Gayathri 2015) Patanjali, "the father of Indian psychology," studied the human mind thousands of years before Western philosophers. (Tattwamayananda 1994) Hinduism is more a way of life than a religion, combining the fundamental principles of social, political and economic life. (Engardio and McGregor 2006)

Indian philosophy is based on three fundamental beliefs: (Dasgupta 2009) "*Karma*", "*Atma*" or "Soul" which is indestructible, and "*Mukti*" or "Salvation". "*Karma*" emphasizes the responsibility of a person to decide his happiness through his actions, which have the power to change his destiny. The individual is influenced by society to choose a harmonious lifestyle. "*Atma*" ("Soul") is true "Self", different from biological self. (Swarupananda 1996) The "Self" has as many rebirths as are necessary to cancel the "*Karma*" accumulated before merging with the Supreme Being in eternal peace and happiness. (Gayathri 2015)

The Western concept of the "Self" has been influenced by several philosophers and psychologists such as Descartes, Freud, Adler and Jung, differentiating between "I" and "Me". (Spiro 1993) As opposed to the western philosophy that made the difference between "Self as knower" and "Self as known", in Indian philosophy there are "*Kshetra*" (body, "field") and "*Kshetragna*" ("knower of the field"). (Radhakrishnan 2010) Indian philosophy speaks of "Self" as "Brahman", the almighty force that is present in every individual, which has no beginning, no end, (Gayathri 2015) highlighting the need to unite "Self as knower" and "self as known". (Ho 1995) "Man, the subject, should gain mastery over man, the object", (Ho 1995) gaining control over the "Self", releasing the individual of pain and suffering and thus tending to eternal happiness. *Bhagavad-Gita* emphasizes introspection, a journey towards understanding the "Inner Self", "*Kshetragna*", which helps a person to attain eternal happiness. (Gayathri 2015)

When Mayer and Salovey talk about the realization of the Self, it refers to the "Self" in relation to the external world, the one influenced by external forces, and not to the "Inner Self", "Self as Knower".

There is research on the generalizability of emotional intelligence constructs in different cultures, including in Indian culture. (Narayanan and Krishnan 2003) (Bamel, Rangnekar, and

Rastogi 2011) Studies by Mulla and Krishnan (Z. R. Mulla and Krishnan 2012) examined the concept of "Karma Yoga", as in *Bhagavad-Gita*, as complementary to emotional intelligence. According to him, (Gayathri 2015) "Karma Yoga" proposed by Lord Krishna is a universally applicable concept, which can be understood by people from all cultures, being the first work trying to identify a universal construct for EI based on "Nishkama Karma".

Bhagavad-Gita (The Song of God), considered to be the fifth *Veda*, is the moral guidance of Lord Krishna to Arjuna on the battlefield. It is considered to be the essence of the four *Vedas* (*Rig, Yajur, Sama* and *Atharva*). (Robinson 2014) The *Mahabharata* is the epic saga of the conflict between Kauravas and Pandavas. On a superficial level, it is about confrontation with power. But on a deeper level, it is the war between "*Dharma*" and "*Adharma*", right and wrong. The war in Kurukshetra is thus synonymous with the complex circumstances that the living individual faces. The fear, anxiety, wisdom and despair of the individual are symbolized by Arjuna's situation. As Arjuna struggles with his emotional disorders, the reader receives a perspective on the struggle of an emotionally disturbed person for clarity of thought and action. Krishna's guidance to Arjuna offers a practical solution to get out of this fight. (Gayathri 2015) Striking similarities can be observed here between the emotionally stable person of Krishna (Sthithapragnya) and the emotionally intelligent person of Mayer and Salovey. Arjuna has what we might call the qualified qualities of an emotionally intelligent person, that is, emotional perception and assimilation. Krishna provides a systematic analysis of the available problem and a solution, identifying desire and anger as the two vices that lead an individual to his or her decay:

"Thinking of objects, attachment to them is formed in a man. From attachment longing, and from longing anger grows.

"From anger comes delusion, and from delusion loss of memory. From loss of memory comes the ruin of discrimination, and from the ruin of discrimination, he perishes." (Swarupananda 1996)

(*Bhagavad-Gita*, Ch. II, Slokas 62, 63)

Bhagavad-Gita refers to the emotionally intelligent person as "Sthithapragnya" (the emotionally stable person). Aijuna asks Krishna who is a sthithapragnya, Krishna describes in detail the nature and qualities of a sthithapragnya.

"What, O Kesava, is the description of a man of steady wisdom, merged in Samadhi? How (on the other hand) does the man of steady wisdom speak, how sit, how walk?" (Swarupananda 1996)

(*Bhagavad-Gita*, Ch. II, Sloka 54)

Krishna tells him:

"He whose mind is not shaken by adversity, who does not hanker after happiness, who has become free from affection, fear, and wrath, is indeed the Muni of steady wisdom.

"He who is everywhere unattached, not pleased at receiving good, nor vexed at evil, his wisdom is fixed.

"When also, like the tortoise drawing its limbs, he can completely withdraw the senses from their objects, then his wisdom becomes steady." (Swarupananda 1996)

(*Bhagavad-Gita*, Ch. II, Slokas 56, 57 & 58.)

The difference between Krishna and the proponents of EI theory is that Krishna has a more comprehensive view of the problem. EI studies the cause, discusses the effect and also offers the means to successfully solve the problem, the "Nishkama Karma" path: action with detachment from the result of the action. Mulla and Krishnan pointed out in their research that "Karma Yoga" and emotional intelligence are strongly correlated. (Z. Mulla 2007) The ability model of emotional intelligence can be effectively applied in the Indian context, (Thingujam 2002) which would allow a universal application of emotional intelligence.

This analytical sloka from Bhagavad-Gita (chapter II, verse 15):

"Yam hi na vyathayanthyethe purusham purusharshabha samadhukha sukham dheeram somruthathvaya kalpathe." (In Sanskrit)

"That calm man who is the same in pain and pleasure, whom these cannot disturb, alone is able, O great amongst men, to attain to immortality." (Swarupananda 1996)

(*Bhagavad-Gita*, Ch. II, Sloka 15)

summarizes the whole concept of emotional intelligence (EI, stating that a person who is calm and remains undisturbed either in pain or pleasure, is the one who reaches immortality).

Oriental philosophy sees mind control as a way of life and not as abstract philosophical thinking. The mind has the potential to shape a man's destiny, helping him to achieve inner peace when it is acknowledged and controlled. EI focuses on the success of a man from a materialistic point of view, while the Indian texts have a more holistic approach. *Bhagavad-Gita* is considered an authority not only to identify the nature of emotions, but also to show a way out of the darkness of emotional instability, in the form of a dialogue between emotional disturbance (*Aijuna*) and the universal master (Krishna), and remains an irrefutable answer to many dilemmas or confusions of modern man.

According to *Bhagavad Gita*, selfless service for a good cause and for others, with the right feeling and attitude, is a form of worship and spirituality. (McDermott 1975) (Phillips 2009) Verse 3.4 of *Bhagavad Gita* states that avoiding work or eating is not the way to become free from bondage. (Bhawuk 2011) Inaction is itself a form of action with consequences and karmic impact, according to verse 3.5. (Bhawuk 2011) (Krishan 1997) Verses 3.6 - 3.8 of the *Bhagavad Gita* states that action can be motivated by the body or manipulated by external influences (bondage), or it can be motivated by inner reflection and true self (freedom). (Z. R. Mulla and Krishnan 2014) (Bhawuk 2011) (Bhawuk 2011) (Deutsch and Dalvi 2004) The more "selfless action" is engaged, the more it is considered that *dharma* (the ethical dimension) focuses on other aspects of the action, the more effective it is, and this leads to freedom. (Ganeri 2007)

The path to emotional stability is to remain unaffected by the fruits of action. Thus, one can reach "*karma yogi*", which is the first step towards becoming a "*sthithapragnya*" - the emotionally stable person. Karma Yoga, also called Karma Marga, is one of the four spiritual paths

of Hinduism, one based on "yoga of action". (Raju 1954) Of the ways to spiritual liberation in Hinduism, karma yoga is the path of selfless action (McDermott 1975) (Coward 2012) without being attached to the results of personal actions. (McDermott 1975) According to James Lochtefeld, Karma yoga is the spiritual practice of "selfless action performed for the benefit of others," (Lochtefeld 2001) (Brodd 2009) a way to reach *moksha* (spiritual liberation) through work. (Z. R. Mulla and Krishnan 2014) Karma yoga, says Bilimoria, does not mean the loss of emotions or desires, but an action led by "calm, balance", with "disinterest". (Hooft et al. 2013) According to Phillips, Karma yoga applies to "any action in any profession or family activities", in contrast to other forms of yoga that focus on isolated actions and meditative introspection. (Phillips 2009)

Emotivism claims that ethical statements serve only to express emotions. Ayer says that ethical statements are expressions of approval or disapproval, not statements. Emotivism is thus a metaethical vision, claiming that ethical judgments are not statements, but emotional attitudes. (Ayer 2003) The theory was strongly promoted by A. J. Ayer in his 1936 book, *Language, Truth and Logic*, and further developed by C. L. Stevenson. (Stevenson 1944) Emotivism can thus be considered a form of non-cognitivism or expressivism. It was modified in the 1950s as universal prescriptivism by R. M. Hare. (Hare 1952) The mind is responsible for processing feelings and emotions, resulting in attitudes and actions. There are divergent opinions whether or not emotions are part of the mind. Moral decisions are emotionally sensitive and therefore EI can moderate the framing of different moral attitudes. (Greene and Haidt 2002) EI presupposes a balance between emotion and reason in which neither is fully controlled.

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