

Emotional Intelligence to Emotional Stability – a Repertoire of Knowledge from the Bhagavad- Gita

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Abstract: *The Bhagavad-Gita, which is a part of the Mahabharata says, Yam hi na vyathayanthyethe purusham purusharshabha Samadhukha sukham dheeram somruthathvaya kalpathe (In Sanskrit)(That calm man who is the same in pain and pleasure, who these cannot disturb alone is able, O great amongst men, to attain to immortality.) (Swami Swarupananda, 1996)(Bhagavad-Gita, Ch. II, verse 15) A person who is calm and unperturbed even in the face of adversities, treating pain and pleasure on the same scale, is the one who attains immortality, says this sloka from the Bhagavad-Gita – the song celestial. Is it the same that the theorists of emotional intelligence are looking for, as they reiterate the importance of keeping a check on one's emotions for a peaceful and successful life? The following paper throws light on the striking similarities between an emotionally intelligent person and the 'Sthithapragnya', as Lord Krishna calls him in the Bhagavad Gita.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Let's not forget that the little emotions are the great captains of our lives and we obey them without realizing it. ~Vincent Van Gogh, 1889.

“Emotions are internal events that coordinate many psychological subsystems including physiological responses, cognitions and conscious awareness [4] Emotions are instinctive which were there with man even before he evolved into what he is today. When man evolved from apes he developed the rational brain which distinguishes him from other animals. This rational brain has helped him to understand and analyze his emotions and given him an edge over the others. But many a time it can be seen that he sadly fails to use his rational brain against the emotional one. It is often rationalization in retrospection. There is an emotional outburst first and the analysis later – often too late for redemption. Thus it can be said that emotions define a person

[2] *Mano matram jagat; mano kalpitam jagat. (“the world is as the mind sees and feels it; the world is as the mind thinks of it’.* [5] The recent years has witnessed the immense scope and relevance of “Emotional Intelligence” (EI) in every realm of life. Research abounds in proving the role of EI in bridging the gap between the successful and the talented, but not so successful people. This paper approaches EI from a different perspective – from the perspective of an Indian mind, which is trained and groomed to perceive emotions as the root cause of all evils. The Bhagavad-Gita, which is considered the fifth Veda, talks about not just emotional intelligence, but goes a step forward to discuss emotional stability. The lessons that we

can take from this time tested book are innumerable and this paper adds a drop to the ocean

[2] *Yam hi na vyathayanthyethe purusham purusharshabha Samadhukha sukham dheeram somruthathvaya kalpathe (In Sanskrit)*

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

(Bhagavad-Gita, Ch. II, verse 15)

A. The Path to Emotional Stability

A person who is calm and unperturbed even in the face of adversities, treating pain and pleasure on the same scale, is the one who attains immortality, says this sloka from the Bhagavad-Gita – the song celestial. Is it the same that the theorists of emotional intelligence are looking for, as they reiterate the importance of keeping a check on one's emotions for a peaceful and successful life? This paper identifies the slokas from the Bhagavad Gita which brings forth the traits of an emotionally intelligent person. This paper also restricts itself to the second chapter of the Bhagavad-Gita, as it is beyond the scope of this research to analyse the entire text in a few pages.

The second chapter of the Bhagavad-Gita gains significance as it gives a brief insight into both ‘Gnana Yoga’ (realization through knowledge) and ‘Karma Yoga’ (realization through work). The slokas 16 – 39 describe the indestructible nature of the ‘Atman’ or the ‘Soul’, the knowledge of which helps human beings to unfetter the worldly bondage and realize the absolute truth, the ‘Brahman’. The direction of Hindu philosophy is towards attainment of ‘Moksha’ – the state of no rebirth, where the soul establishes itself in supreme bliss, goes back to where it came from, the source, the ‘Brahman’. In the below mentioned slokas, Krishna speaks in detail, the nature of the ‘Soul’ which is

Na jayate mriyate va kadacinnayam bhutva bhavita va na bhuyah

Ajo nityah sasvatoyam purano na hanyathe hanyamane sarire (In Sanskrit)

(This is never born, nor does It die. It is not that, not having been, It again comes into being. This is unborn, eternal, changeless, ever Itself. It is not killed when the body is killed.) [7]

Bhagavad-Gita, Ch. II, Verse 20

Vasamsi jeernani yatha vihaya navani grhnathi naroparani

Tatha sarirani vihaya jirmanyanyani samyati navani dehi (In Sanskrit)

(Even as a man casts off worn-out clothes, and puts on

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others which are new, so the embodied casts off worn-out bodies, and enters into others which are new.) [7]

Nainam chindanthi sastrani, nainam dahati pavakah

Na chainam kledayantypo na sosayati marutah
(In Sanskrit)

(This (Self), weapons cut not; This, fire burns not; This water wets not; and This, wind dries not.) [7]

Bhagavad-Gita, Ch.II, Verse 22, 23

Avyaktadini bhutani vyakta madyani bhārata

Avyaktanidananyeva tatra ka paridevana (In

Sanskrit)

(All beings are inmanifested in their beginning, O Bharata, manifested in their middle state, and unmanifested in their end. What is there then, to grieve about?) (Swami Swarupananda, 1996)

Bhagavad-Gita, Ch.II,

Verse 28

Dehi nityamavadhyoyam dehe sarvasya bhārata

Tasmatsarvani bhutani na tvam socitumarhasi
(In Sanskrit)

(This, the indweller in the bodies of all, is ever indestructible, O descendant of Bharata. Therefore, thou oughtest not to mourn for any creature.) (Swami Swarupananda, 1996)

Bhagavad-Gita, Ch.II, Verse 30

This knowledge gives clarity of thought, word and deed to an individual as he is not rocked by the uncertainties of life on earth. He stands firmly established in the supreme truth that the life here on this earth along with all its pain and pleasure is but impermanent. Thus, he loses value for the petty worldly gains and strives to attain the eternal bliss of becoming one with the supreme lord, the 'Brahman'. This supreme truth calms the mind, establishes it in peace, which is fundamental to emotional stability. A tranquil mind is emotionally, cognitively intelligent. As Krishna says,

Prasade sarvadhukhanam hanirasyopajayate

Prasannacetaso hyasu buddhih paryavatisthate
(In Sanskrit)

(In tranquillity, all sorrow is destroyed. For the intellect of him, who is tranquil-minded is soon established in firmness.) (Swami Swarupananda, 1996)

Bhagavad-Gita, Ch.II, Verse 65

Thus, the yoga of knowledge, or the Gnana Yoga is one way of attaining emotional stability. The alternate for those who are action oriented is the yoga of action or the Karma Yoga. Let us see what Krishna has to say about karma yoga and its benefits.

Karmanyevadhikaraste ma phalesu kadacana

Ma karmaphalaheturbuh ma te sangostvakarmani
(In Sanskrit)

(Thy right is to work only; but never to fruits thereof. Be thou not the producer of the fruits of (thy) actions; neither let thy attachment be towards inaction.) (Swami Swarupananda, 1996)

Yogasthah kuru karmani sangam tyaktva dhananjaya

Siddhyasiddhyoh samo bhutva samatvam yoga ucyate (In Sanskrit)

(Being steadfast in Yoga, O Dhananjaya, perform actions, abandoning attachment, remaining unconcerned as regards success and failure. This evenness of mind (in regard to success and failure) is known as Yoga.) (Swami Swarupananda, 1996)

Durena hyavaram karma buddhiyogaddhananjaya
Buddhau saranamanviccha krpanah phalahetavah
(In Sanskrit)

(Work (with desire) is verily far inferior to that performed with the mind undisturbed by thoughts of results. O Dhananjaya, seek refuge in this evenness of mind. Wretched are they who act for results.) (Swami Swarupananda, 1996)

Buddhiyukto jahatiha ubhe sukrtaduskrtē

Tasmadyogaya yiyasva yogah karmasu kausalam
(In Sanskrit)

(Endued with this evenness of mind, one frees oneself in this life, alike from vice and virtue. Devote thyself to this Yoga. Yoga is the very dexterity of work.) (Swami Swarupananda, 1996)

Bhagavad-Gita, Ch.II, Verse 47, 48, 49, 50

Yada te mohakalilam buddhirvyatitarisyati

Tada gantasi nirvedam srotavyasya srutasya ca
(In Sanskrit)

(When thy intellect crosses beyond the taint of illusion, then shalt thou attain to indifference, regarding thing heard, and things yet to be heard.) (Swami Swarupananda, 1996)

Bhagavad-Gita, Ch.II, Verse 52

Krishna points out that action without desire, action that does not bind the doer with the outcome is the right kind of action. When an individual acts for the sake of action, because it is the right thing to do, and does not fear the result, then his mind remains unfettered. Taking the example of Arjuna himself, Arjuna was distressed at the war with his cousins because he was worried about the outcome. He was upset because he found no gain or happiness in winning the war. He did not want to fight because there was no positive result for him at the end of the war. Winning he loses, losing he gains nothing. If on the other hand, Arjuna does not think or worry about what is to happen after the war, but proceeds to the fight because it is his duty as a Kshatriya to fight when called upon, then there is no confusion or emotional turmoil. He does what has been expected of him not what is convenient or productive. This 'Nishkama Karma' has a dual effect. It frees the doer from the emotional imbroglio of worrying about the outcome and also frees him from the responsibility of the outcome as well. It is a liberating feeling which annihilates any negative thoughts or emotions. When the mind is free from negative emotions, it calms down and a calm, tranquil mind is the fountainhead of all things positive.

Ragadvesaviyuktaistu visayanindriyaiscaran

Atmavasyairvidheyatma prasadamadhigacchati
(In Sanskrit)

(But the self-controlled man, moving among objects with senses under restraint, and free from attraction and aversion, attains to tranquility.) (Swami Swarupananda, 1996)



Bhagavad-Gita, Ch.II, Verse 64

A tranquil mind offers peace and peace of mind leads to uninterrupted happiness. Tranquility is also the identity of emotional stability; for, an emotionally stable man would be,

*Duhkesvanudvignamanah sukhesu vigatasprah
Vitaragabhayakrodhah sthitadhirmunirucyate
(In Sanskrit)*

(He whose mind is not shaken in adversity, who does not hanker after happiness, who has become free from affection, fear, and wrath, is indeed the Muni (man of meditation) of steady wisdom.) (Swami Swarupananda, 1996)

*Yah sarvatranabhisenehastattatprapy
subhasubham*

*Nabhinandati na dvesti tasya prajna pratisthita
(In Sanskrit)*

(He who is everywhere unattached, not pleased at receiving good, nor vexed at evil, his wisdom is fixed.) (Swami Swarupananda, 1996)

*Yada samharate cayam kurmonganiva sarvasah
Indriyanindriyarthebhyastasya prajna pratisthita
(In Sanskrit)*

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

Bhagavad-Gita, Ch.II, Verse 56, 57, 58

Emotional management is when an individual can emote or withdraw his emotions at his will, and emotional stability is to stay firm in tranquility with neither of the opposites affecting him.

*Apuryamanamacalapratisthitam samudramapah
pravishanti yadvat*

*Tadvatkama yam pravisanti sarve sa santimapnoti
a kamakami (In Sanskrit)*

(As into the ocean – brimful and still – flow the waters, even so the Muni into whom enters all desires, he, and not the desirer of desires attain to peace.) (Swami Swarupananda, 1996)

Bhagavad-Gita, Ch.II, Verse 70

One who has conquered all desires, attains peace, with his mind unperturbed and tranquil. Even as the ocean remains unchanged and unaffected with all the rivers flowing into it, the self-contained man remains stable in the face of any calamity. Desire, says Krishna is the root cause of every evil and the one who effaces all desire, good and bad attains emotional stability, becomes the ‘Sthithapragnya’ (emotionally stable; firm). But, a failure to contain desires leads to ruin.

*Dhyayato visayanpumsah sangastesupajayate
Sangatsanjayate kamah kamatkrodhobhijayate
(In Sanskrit)*

(Thinking of objects, an attachment to them is formed by man. From attachment, longing, and from longing, anger grows.) (Swami Swarupananda, 1996)

*Krodhadhbhavati sammohah
sammohatsmrtivinhramah*

*Smrtibhramsadbhuddhinaso
buddhinasatpranasyati (In Sanskrit)*

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

Bhagavad-Gita, Ch.II, Verse

62.63

Krishna makes it very clear, if an individual trains himself to annihilate desires, he is firmly established in peace and tranquillity; and a failure of which leads him to complete ruin.

Thus, it can be seen that Emotional Intelligence is a concept that is not new to the Indian reader. Though there is hardly any serious research on EI from the Indian perspective [6] anyone who has read through the ancient Indian literature will be aware that EI is embedded in every text [3]The Indian philosophical tradition stresses on the powerful nature of emotions, which have to be harnessed for a harmonious life. References to the description and functions of the human mind can be found in the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, and the texts of Ayurveda. Patanjali, who is considered to be the ‘Father of Indian Psychology’, had done a systematic, thorough research on the mysteries of the human mind, thousands of years ahead of the western study .[8] Though the Indian philosophy has a religious strain which focuses or guides an individual in turning his mind on the Supreme Being, a careful study will reveal the fact that it is perfectly attuned to the down- to- earth needs of the present world as well [1]Hinduism is more a way of life than a religion and combines in it the fundamental principles of social, political and economic life. These principles are advocated through innumerable stories which have been orally passed down to several generations.

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