Chapter – IV

Duryodhana

4.1 OUTLINE

As mentioned earlier, the character of Duryodhana is first analyzed against the theory of EI and assessed whether he is emotionally intelligent. Subsequently, it is examined whether his emotional intelligence helps him to successfully handle stressful, challenging situations. In the process one will be able to identify in him a role model of how one should or should not conduct oneself. Following this, with Duryodhana’s character as a background, it can be ascertained whether EI can be used negatively. The same methodology will be followed for the rest of the selected characters as well. Mayer and Salovey in their four branch ‘ability model’ propose four stages – emotional perception, emotional facilitation of thinking, emotional understanding and emotional management – through which an individual is identified as an emotionally intelligent person. The character of Duryodhana will be analyzed against these four levels. But before that, a brief general analysis of the character would be helpful in ascertaining his emotional intelligence.

4.2 A BRIEF CHARACTER SKETCH OF DURYODHANA

The reason why Duryodhana is taken first for the study is, of all the characters taken for the study, he is the least emotionally intelligent when compared to the other characters taken for the study. Also, of all the characters in the Mahabharata, he is the least complex. Most of the characters change their opinions according to the situation, or remain uncertain in their actions. Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, is a good example. When her husband Pandu asks her to invoke the celestials and beget children through them, she obliges and gives birth to Yudhishthira, Bhima and Arjuna. When Pandu, in his desire of having more children presses her to use the mantra yet another time, she refuses by saying “The wise do not sanction a fourth delivery even in a season of distress. The woman having intercourse with four different men is called a Swairini (heanton) [sic], while she having intercourse
with five becometh a harlot.”¹ It is the same Kunti who sanctions and convinces Draupadi to marry her five sons, the Pandavas. Bhishma, though, is fond of the Pandavas and acknowledges their righteousness, never intervenes to protect them from the evil schemes of Duryodhana and his accomplices. Knowing fully well that the Kauravas’ actions will lead to the annihilation of the entire race, and in spite of having the authority to question and prevent them, he remains a mute spectator. Dhritharashtra is like a pendulum perennially swinging from ‘to do’ and ‘not to do’. Time and again, with Vidura’s advice he tries to make peace between his sons and the Pandavas, but it is short lived and only until Duryodhana convinces him otherwise. His mind again sways towards his son’s schemes in spite of knowing its consequences. On the other hand, Duryodhana is so steadfast in his enmity against the Pandavas that it never diminishes even for a second. We are not talking of enmity towards anybody as a virtue but simply bringing notice to the fact that good or bad, Duryodhana’s thoughts, beliefs and actions always fell in a single line. There is not a single instance where he repents or thinks of reconsidering his actions. He is convinced that he is right in coveting the wealth of the Pandavas. It is with authority that he says, “Discontent is the root of prosperity. Therefore, O king, I desire to be discontented. He that striveth after the acquisition of prosperity is, O king, a truly politic person.”² According to him, it is Kshatriya Dharma (the Dharma or the duty of the ruler class) to covet the property of others and expand his territory, and he is only following this Dharma when he schemes to gain the kingdom of the Pandavas. Duryodhana is defined by the jealousy he entertains for the Pandavas and this characteristic trait remains an identity for him. From the beginning till the end he remains an enemy and an arch rival to the Pandavas. He does not repent or regret his actions and even in his death takes a dig at Yudhishthira laughing at the hollow victory of the Pandavas.

¹ Adi Parva, Section CXXIII, page 259.
² Sabha Parva, Section LIV, Page, 109.
4.2.1 THE CURSE OF DURYODhana

Duryodhana is generally identified with evil, even from his birth. The Mahabharata describes his birth as bringing in evil portents which spell doom for the Kuru clan and the elders advising Dhritharashtra and Gandhari to abandon this wanton child for the benefit of their race. The wise Vidura says, “O King, O bull among men, when these frightful omens are noticeable at the birth of thy eldest son, it is evident that he shall be the exterminator of thy race.” The parents understandably ignore the advice and dote on their first born and the seeds of Duryodhana’s obstinate character are sown there. He grows up into a fine young boy, but along with him grows his jealousy for the Pandavas. Right from the beginning when Kunti comes back to Hastinapura seeking refuge, Duryodhana is tormented by a feeling of insecurity that the kingdom would go to Yudhishthira, the eldest prince and the son of Pandu. His own father Dhritharashtra was only a caretaker in the absence of Pandu. The thought that he would be at the mercy of the Pandavas is so appalling that he tries everything in his means to eliminate them. Adding fuel to the fire is Bhima’s physical prowess, which practically subdues everybody without a chance for any resistance. Though Bhima tormented the Kauravas in childishness and never with any malice, Duryodhana, already insecure, develops a deep rooted hatred for Bhima and his brothers.

4.2.2 DURYODhana, DESTINY’S CHILD

Duryodhana’s character is shaped by three important factors –

One, the curse that he would be the cause of destruction of the entire race, a sense of insecurity that he is second only to Yudhishthira and the popularity of the Pandavas who were constantly extolled for their virtues. The bad omens presented at the time of his birth alarms everybody, including his parents and the elders of the Kuru dynasty go to the extent of asking the parents to abandon the child in the welfare of the entire race. Duryodhana

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3 Adi Parva, Section CXV, Page 242.

4 Adi Parva, Section CXXVIII, page 267.
grows up with this antagonistic feeling against him. Not given a chance to prove himself, he is from the beginning cast in the mould of evil.

Two, Dhritharashtra himself is not so comfortable with the fact that Pandu’s son and not his own would inherit the throne. Though he is careful in masking his emotions, at certain unguarded times his mask falls to reveal the ugly face of envy and covetousness. He tries to satisfy his own yearning through Duryodhana. By supporting Duryodhana, he intensifies Duryodhana’s hatred towards the Pandavas.

Three, maybe if the Pandavas had had a streak of malevolence in them, they would have retaliated and this retaliation would have made them seem more human. When there is an equal and a befitting reaction from the other side, the antagonist is happy that his efforts have hit the mark. Probably, the intensity of Duryodhana’s feeling for the Pandavas would have diminished and the Pandavas would also be seen as ordinary human beings capable of erring. But unfortunately for Duryodhana, Pandavas, under the guidance of Yudhishthira, remain nobility personified. They take all the humiliations heaped on them with a calm and unperturbed dignity which always put them a cut above the Kauravas. To rub salt on the wound, everytime Duryodhana tries something to destroy the Pandavas, they emerge stronger and more powerful. All these deeply ingrains in him, the need to prove himself as far superior to the Pandavas. Thus we can see that Duryodhana is not by nature bad or evil, but circumstances play against him and is more a victim of fate and destiny. The nobility of Duryodhana comes to the fore at various instances and a few are discussed below.

4.2.3 DURYODHANA, THE NOBLE PRINCE

There is another less recognized face for Duryodhana which is noble and warm hearted. The goodness in Duryodhana though not explicity said, can be understood when the people of Hastinapura lament his death. The ‘Shalya Parva’ speaks about the sorrow of the citizens of Hastinapura on hearing their beloved prince Duryodhana, dead. Aswatthama and Kripa are heartbroken to see their beloved Duryodhana lying with his limbs broken, covered with dust. The sorrow turns into wrath as Aswatthama pledges to avenge Duryodhana’s defeat by killing the Pandavas. He is successful to an extent as he slaughters
everybody except the five Pandava princes – all the sons of Draupadi, Dhridhtadyumna (Draupadi’s brother) and other equally powerful warriors.

If Duryodhana was only evil personified, why would the subjects lament his death? It goes without saying that he was an able administrator and a just ruler who ruled well and had earned the love and affection of his subjects. Though he wins over the Kingdom of Yudhishthira through unfair means, he proves himself to be a just ruler ever conscious of his subjects’ happiness. He performs innumerable yagnas, giving away riches to the needy and deserving people. He “remained ever intent on the welfare of the rulers of the earth, and he worshipped the foremost of the Brahmanas by celebrating sacrifices with profuse gifts.”

Karna is another excellent example for Duryodhana’s generosity and warm heartedness. Maybe, when at first he anointed Karna as the king of Anga, he did so with a motive of having a strong ally to counter Arjuna’s prowess. But over a period of time there develops a warm and close friendship between the two that Karna refuses to abandon Duryodhana even after knowing that the Pandavas were his own brothers. When Karna dies in the battle field, Duryodhana is crushed emotionally and never recovers fully. Even as Karna remained loyal to Duryodhana, Duryodhana too trusted Karna completely. He respected Karna’s decision when Karna declared that he will not participate in the war till Bhishma is alive. Even though Duryodhana understood the need for Karna’s help in defeating the Pandavas, he did not interfere with Karna’s decision or force Karna into the war. Such was his love, respect and trust for his friend. Also, when on the battlefield, even the so called upholders of Dharma, the Pandavas resort to trickery, Duryodhana never once breaks the code of conduct. But sadly, though Duryodhana had in him the nobility to do good unto others, this quality is never acknowledged or appreciated by anyone. His jealousy and hatred towards the Pandavas is so strong that his noble qualities take the back stage. So strong are his emotions for the Pandavas that it is all consuming and does not allow him to focus on and expand his virtues. Thus, it becomes evident no matter how good or capable, a person is

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5 Vana Parva, Section CCLVI, Page 507.
urged into evil ways when he is under the sway of emotions. He is so singular in his pursuit of gratifying his emotions that everything else takes a second place. It becomes evident that when an individual fails to rationalize and control his emotions, he triggers not only his own destruction, but of all those around him. A further analysis into the actions of Duryodhana will throw light on the extent to which an individual stoops down when in the grip of powerful emotions. To establish this, three different incidents which had great influence on the lives of the Kauravas and the Pandavas and which potentially changed the course of their lives are taken.

4.3 DURYODHANA’S FIRST ACT OF INSOLENCE AGAINST THE PANDAVAS

When the Pandavas with their mother Kunti come to Hastinapura after Pandu’s death, Yudhishthira is sixteen years of age. Duryodhana who is one year younger to Yudhishthira and one day older to Bhima was fifteen years old. The first open act of Duryodhana’s insolence against the Pandavas is at that early age of fifteen. Growing up together, whenever the princes were engaged in games, Bhima endowed with extraordinary physical prowess, used to make fun and defeat the one hundred Kauravas as though they were just one person. Bhima’s playful pranks of drowning them in water, shaking them down the trees and pulling them by hair left Duryodhana with helpless anger. Unable to counter him, Duryodhana resorts to crookedness. The plot he conceives is so well thought and planned. It is appalling to note the deviousness of this young mind as it calculates the pros and cons of the action. Realizing that the Pandavas relied largely on Bhima’s strength, Duryodhana calculates that if he kills Bhima then he can easily overpower and confine Yudhishthira and then Arjuna. With these three Pandava brothers out of his way, there would be none to stop him and he will be the sole king of Hastinapura. He does not act rashly, but weighs all the possibilities and plots carefully. He plans elaborately and first erects a palace in Pramanakoti, on the banks of Ganga. He builds this palace for sporting in the water and then invites the Pandavas. Once they reach the place, all the attendants are dismissed and the princes go around enjoying the beauty of the place. As they are engaged in various

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6 Adi Parva, Section CXXVIII, Page 267.
games and sports, Duryodhana, “that wicked youth who had nectar in his tongue and a razor in his heart,” treated Bhima with specially cooked food that was strongly poisoned. Bhima partakes of the food and with the effect of the poison, lies down under a tree losing his senses. Exceedingly glad that his plan was successful, Duryodhana does not want to leave anything to chance. What if anybody finds Bhima in this state and saves him? So he binds Bhima tightly with the chords of various shrubs and throws him into the river. When in the evening the princes return to Hastinapura, Yudhishthira notices that Bhima is missing and looks for him. Duryodhana is careful to mask his emotions and casually mentions that maybe Bhima had left before them. Yudhishthira is frantic when he realizes that Bhima had not returned home. But Duryodhana remains quiet and secretly happy that his actions have borne fruit. No one takes the initiative to search for Bhima which tells us that nobody was ready to earn the displeasure of Duryodhana. Though it is on everybody’s mind that Duryodhana was the cause, none question him. The authority he exercised on others, even at that early age shows the powerful nature of his character. Though Bhima later on returns with his strength increased manifold with the blessings of Vasuki, the Naga king, one gets an insight into the cruel and devious mind of Duryodhana who would go to any extent to satisfy his desire to inherit the throne.

4.3.1 THE SECOND ATTEMPT

Defeated in his first attempt against the Pandavas, Duryodhana is even more cautious in scheming the second plot against them. He takes the support of his father and plans more elaborately. This time he does not focus on Bhima alone, but on all the five brothers along with their mother Kunti. According to his plan, he urges Dhritharashtra to send the Pandavas to Varanavata to witness the festivities there. Once in the city of Varanavata, the Pandavas are made to stay in a palace specially built for them by Purochana. Purochana had under the orders of Duryodhana built the palace with lac and all things inflammable. At an opportune moment when no one suspects anything, Purochana is advised to set the palace on fire, thereby killing the Pandavas and their mother. We see that the intensity of

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7 Adi Parva, Section CXXVIII, Page 268.
Duryodhana’s emotions has gone up several notches that he is not prepared to spare even the mother. On the other hand it also throws light on his shrewdness in assessing people. When Dhritharashtra is worried that they would incur the wrath of the elders – Bhishma, Drona (the guru of the Pandavas and Kauravas), Kripa (the princes’ guru earlier to Drona, and Drona’s brother-in-law), Vidura and Aswatthama (Drona’s son), Duryodhana’s judgment of each one’s reaction is accurate. He consoles and encourages Dhritharashtra by pointing out that Bhishma would remain neutral in case of any conflict as he had no excess of affection to neither Kauravas nor the Pandavas. Duryodhana knows that Drona’s son Aswatthama was on his side and Drona would never entertain enmity towards his son. Thus, they would have the support of Drona as well. Wherever Drona’s allegiance was, Kripa’s support goes without saying, as Kripa’s sister is married to Drona. Vidura would be the only one who would stand against them, but he too can do nothing without anybody’s support. Though Vidura would never sanction such a heinous action, without any political clout or real power, he can never achieve anything. Vidura is a dependant of the Kauravas, and however hoarse he may cry foul, there will never be a single person who would listen to him against the wishes of Dhritharashtra and Duryodhana.

After this careful analysis, he waits for a full one year when he tries to win over the people of Hastinapura by doing innumerable good deeds and giving away much wealth to the poor and needy. He does not rush headlong into the action. Like a tiger waiting to pounce on the prey at the right moment so that it cannot escape, Duryodhana waits patiently. Only after ascertaining that he had earned a good name with the people, he induces the Pandavas to go to Varanavata and that too on their own accord. Dhritharashtra extols the beauty of the city and describes in detail the famous festival of Pasupati (Shiva). After raising the curiosity of the Pandavas, gives them leave to attend the festivities. He makes it appear that it was the Pandavas’ wish to visit Varanavata. The gullible Pandavas fall into the trap and make arrangements for the visit. Even after the Pandavas reach Varanavata, Duryodhana does not act immediately. He waits for a whole year and only after ascertaining that no one has any

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8 Adi Parva, Section CXLIV, Page 305.
suspicions of any evil intention from his side, commands Purochana to set fire to the palace of lac. Of course, with Vidura’s timely intervention and caution, the Pandavas survive and escape to safety, but this second incident throws light on Duryodhana’s maturity in handling situations. His emotions against the Pandavas have only grown stronger and deeper, but he is neither impulsive nor reckless. He is willing to wait to get the desired results. He is like the tiger waiting to spring upon its prey at the right time giving it little chance of escape. Every move is well thought of and calculative. This cold bloodedness strikes a chill in our hearts as it makes him more dangerous and ruthless.

4.3.2 THE GAME OF DICE

The game of dice assumes greater significance as it marks the peak of Duryodhana’s hatred. It gives a clear insight into the abysmal depths to which an individual falls when in the grip of strong emotions. From here there is no turning back as Duryodhana reaches a place from where he goes hurtling down to his own destruction.

Smarting with the defeat of his intentions, Duryodhana is extremely careful not to lose in his third attempt. Already cautious, this time he takes great pains in planning a fool proof plan which leaves no room for chance. Consumed with jealousy at the prosperity of the Pandavas, he takes his uncle Sakuni’s counsel in plotting the downfall of Pandavas. He knows that he cannot achieve it easily as the Pandavas had grown in strength with strong allies in Drupada and Krishna. It is difficult to defeat them in battle. He also realizes that though Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Karna and the rest were on his side, the Pandavas were equally powerful and who can be sure of the result in a battle. With all these in mind, Duryodhana sees the game of dice as the right means to coveted the wealth of the Pandavas. There is no bloodshed in the game of dice, and victory is sure as there is none in all the worlds who would compete with Sakuni in rolling the dice and win. Though Dhritharashtra is hesitant, perceiving Duryodhana’s affliction, gives permission to invite Yudhisthira for the game. Yudhisthira though, is aware that he is no match for Sakuni, accepts to play and the game begins. Duryodhana provided the stakes for Sakuni and Yudhishtira starts with staking his pearl necklace. Slowly, as the momentum of the game picks up, Yudhishtira
loses all of his immeasurable wealth. If the game had stopped here, maybe there would have been some redemption for Duryodhana, as he had gained the entire wealth of the Pandavas, but he is not satisfied. Locking arms with Sakuni, he goads Yudhishthira to play further. Yudhishthira too caught in the web of desire to win, and unable to resist himself, pledges his brothers one by one – Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva – and loses them all. As is the wont of a gambler, Yudhishthira plays on feverishly and goes on to pledge himself. Much to the glee of Duryodhana he loses. Yudhishthira who was lauded for fairness of conduct and nobility stoops to the level of pledging his wife Draupadi - an appalling act that would put even the most insolent wretch to shame. As expected, Sakuni wins and Draupadi is lost as well. Drunk with the pride of success, and inebriated with his victory over the Pandavas, Duryodhana charts his own doom as he orders his brother Dussasana to drag Draupadi to the court. The ever faithful brother drags the princess of Panchala to court seizing her by her hair. Menstruating and attired in a single cloth, Draupadi’s piteous application for decency and fairness of conduct falls on deaf ears. Duryodhana is intoxicated by his victory over the Pandavas, and all his suppressed and hitherto unsatisfied emotions take complete control over him. Unmindful of demeaning himself in insulting the daughter-in-law of the Kuru dynasty, he sanctions Dussasana to disrobe Draupadi in the open court in front of everyone assembled. Though Draupadi is saved by Krishna’s divine intervention and is miraculously draped with yards and yards of cloth which Dussasana is never able to remove, this dreadful action of disrobing Draupadi seals his fate as the Pandavas resolve to pay back for each insult in a befitting manner. Bhima openly declares that he will break open the breast of Dussasana and drink his life blood. Even after this Duryodhana does not stop his insults and forgetting that Draupadi was his brother’s wife who is equal unto his mother, moves his garment to reveal his left thigh in the full view of Draupadi and taunts her to accept him and come sit on his lap. There is no stopping him as he heaps insult after insult in taunting the Pandavas and their beloved wife. He goads Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva to disown Yudhishthira and thereby earn their freedom. He jeers at Draupadi asking her to convince the brothers to accept that Yudhishthira was not their master and thereby avoid slavery. Nobody except Vidura and Duryodhana’s brother Vikarna dares to stop Duryodhana. The terrible conduct
of Duryodhana is fittingly supported and encouraged by Karna. Gloating at the misery of the Pandavas, together they crush and grind the dignity of Pandavas. Duryodhana reaches a point where he can never redeem himself, when terrible omens are noticed. It is as though the Gods themselves could not tolerate the insolence of Duryodhana, and sent terrible signs of disaster – jackals began howling to which the asses responded in braying and terrible birds answered with their blood curdling cries. It is only then that Dhritharashtra intervenes and tries to pacify the Pandavas and Draupadi by granting them their freedom and all the wealth they had lost.

Duryodhana is infuriated at Dhritharashtra for letting the Pandavas go scot-free. He is enraged at his father for not realizing that Pandavas will never rest without avenging their insults. So saying, he makes Dhritharashtra to bring back the Pandavas for another round of play. This time he promises that he would not go beyond taking their wealth. The Pandavas come back and this time Yudhishthira plays with the wager that whoever loses will surrender their kingdom and go to the forests for thirteen years. The extra clause is that the thirteenth year should be spent incognito and in case they are identified should go back to the forest for another thirteen years. As expected Yudhishthira loses and hanging their heads in shame, surrounded by the laments of the people of Hastinapura, the Pandavas begin their exile. Duryodhana is unable to contain his happiness at the affliction of the Pandavas and his brother Dussasana openly leers at Draupadi saying that she had no use in her husbands who were unable to protect her when in distress. He taunts her to choose one amongst the Kauravas as her husband for a better life. The ruthless dance of hatred and jealousy reaches its zenith.

4.4 THE VICE LIKE GRIP OF EMOTIONS

Proving that desires can never be satisfied, Duryodhana does not stop with sending the Pandavas to the forest. He wants to see them in their destitute situation, gloat on their misfortunes and pointing out to all that they have lost, make them more miserable. He confesses to Karna, “the joy that I may feel in obtaining the sovereignty of the entire earth is nothing to that which will be mine upon beholding the sons of Pandu attired in barks of
trees and deer-skins.” At the pretext of supervising the cattle stations, obtaining Dhritharashtra’s permission, Duryodhana, Karna, Sakuni and others proceed to the forests. Intoxicated with power and ever egoistic, Duryodhana commands his attendants to erect tents right in the place where the gandharvas (a sect of celestials), were residing. Annoyed at Duryodhana’s interference, the gandharvas fight the Kaurava army. Unable to withstand the prowess of Chitrasena, the head of the gandharvas, Karna flees from the battlefield. Duryodhana is held captive. But as fate would have it, Chitrasena happened to be a good friend of Arjuna and at his instance hands over Duryodhana to Yudhishthira. Yudhishthira of course sets Duryodhana free. What starts as a venture to jeer at the Pandavas turns table as Duryodhana is forced to bear the ignominy of being saved and set free by the very same Pandavas.

Duryodhana’s taunts do not stop there as he plans the next one. Durvasa maharishi who is famous or rather infamous for his temper visits Duryodhana. When he is about to take leave, Duryodhana places a request to him that he should honour Yudhishthira and his brothers also with his visit. Duryodhana mischievously appeals to Durvasa to visit the Pandavas with his entire retinue after Draupadi had finished her meal. The reason being, Surya, (the Sun-God) had presented the Pandavas with an ‘Akshaya Paathra’ (a vessel which endlessly produces food every day until Draupadi had fed all their guests and finally takes her food) which would stop giving food after Draupadi has eaten. Duryodhana plans that if Durvasa reaches the Pandavas’ hermitage after everyone had eaten, there would be no food left. Yudhishthira would be unable to entertain the sage appropriately. Incensed, Durvasa would curse the Pandavas. This is what Duryodhana expects when he sends Durvasa to the Pandavas. Of course with the timely intervention of Krishna the day is saved for the Pandavas.

But, what comes to the forefront is that Duryodhana’s jealousy and hatred induces him to focus all his resources on destroying the Pandavas. It was seen earlier that he has the nobility and warm heartedness which would have earned him respect and recognition on

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9 Vana Parva, Section CCXXXVI, Page 481.
par with that of Yudhishthira. It is sad to note that his emotions constrict him to baseless vengeance. Further, the unthinking humiliation that he heaps on the Pandavas, and his inhuman treatment of Draupadi tells us to what extent an individual can stoop down as his baser instincts get the better of him.

Thus far, it was seen that Duryodhana is in the tight grip of his emotions and thereby orchestrates his own destiny. As he fails to control his emotions we understand him as an emotionally unintelligent person. But is it so? Who is an emotionally intelligent person? One who is able to keep his emotions in check? Mayer and Salovey say that there are four levels through which an individual reaches the stage of being emotionally intelligent. So, before concluding whether Duryodhana is or is not emotionally intelligent, the character of Duryodhana needs to be analyzed a little more with the theory of emotional intelligence as proposed by Mayer and Salovey.

As mentioned earlier, Mayer and Salovey (1997) in their ‘ability model’ have proposed four branches, or to be more precise, four levels through which a person becomes emotionally intelligent. As it has been already discussed this in detail in the literature review, the character of Duryodhana is analyzed against these four branches – emotional perception, emotional facilitation of thought, emotional understanding and emotional management.

4.5 ANALYSIS OF DURYODHANA’S CHARACTER AGAINST THE ‘ABILITY MODEL’

Duryodhana’s character is first analyzed against the first two branches emotional perception and emotional facilitation of thought, and then moves on to emotional understanding and emotional management.

4.5.1 EMOTIONAL PERCEPTION AND EMOTIONAL FACILITATION OF THOUGHT

The first two branches or to be more precise the first two levels in the ladder of emotional intelligence are to accurately perceive emotions in oneself and others and make intelligent
use of these emotions for achieving the desired ends. These two branches are interrelated as a person who is aware of his emotions would automatically process that information in a productive way. The evidence of this is seen in Duryodhana’s conduct.

Duryodhana is accurate in perceiving and expressing his emotional states. When Duryodhana pleads with Dhritharashtra to sanction the killing of the Pandavas at Varanavata, he implores “… O father, extinguish the grief that consumeth me like a blazing fire, that robbeth me of sleep, and that pierces my heart, even like a terrible dart.”

On yet another occasion when the Kauravas are returning to Hastinapura after attending the Rajasuya Yagna performed by Yudhishthira, Duryodhana remains quiet and pensive. When his uncle Sakuni inquires, Duryodhana bursts out, “Beholding Yudhishthira’s prosperity of such splendor, my heart burneth, afflicted with jealousy, although it behoveth me not to be jealous.”

When he tells Dhritharashtra that burning with jealousy, he “has lost colour and become melancholy, pale and emaciated”

it is understood that he is able to associate his physical reactions accurately with those of his emotions as well. Thus, it is seen that Duryodhana is capable of perceiving his emotions quite accurately. That he is good at understanding the emotions of others also becomes evident from the way he manipulates his father to support his schemes against the Pandavas. Every time he seeks Dhritharashtra’s support, he puts forth his arguments in such a way that Dhritharashtra cannot refuse. At times he goes to the extent of even emotional blackmailing. When Dhritharashtra hesitates to consent to the game of dice and says that he needs to consult Vidura before accepting the proposition, Duryodhana is quick to retaliate “If thou consultest with Kshatta, he will make thee desist. And if thou desist, O king, I will certainly kill myself. And when I am dead, O king, thou wilt become happy with Vidura. Thou wilt then enjoy the whole earth; what need hast thou with me?”

Duryodhana knows that

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10 Adi Parva, Section CXLIV, Page 305.
11 Sabha Parva, Section XLVI, Page 94.
12 Sabha Parva, section XLVIII, Page 97.
13 Sabha Parva, XLIX, Page 98.
Vidura’s advice will influence Dhritharashtra. But he also knows that Dhritharashtra will never do anything that would harm or upset Duryodhana. So to stop his father from consulting Vidura and also to reiterate how essential it was for him to subdue the Pandavas, he takes the extreme step of threatening Dhritharashtra that he would kill himself if his wish was not respected.

His emotional perception is quite high when he plots against the Pandavas. He is shrewd in assessing accurately what would be the responses of others to his actions and only after weighing the pros and cons does he venture into his actions. His arguments with Dhritharashtra when they plot to kill the Pandavas in Varanavata have already been mentioned earlier. There is clarity of thought and accurateness of assessment. The same is true when he decides to invite Yudhishthira for the game of dice. He knows the weakness of Yudhishthira for the game and makes use of this weakness. Also, later on when the Kauravas and the Pandavas are getting ready for the war and gathering support from various kingdoms, King Shalya comes to meet the Pandavas to give them his support. Duryodhana recognizing a powerful ally in Shalya, entertains and makes hospitable arrangements throughout the way to keep his journey comfortable. Shalya is under the assumption that the Pandavas are the ones who have entertained him. At the opportune moment, when Shalya is satisfied and overjoyed with the hospitality, Duryodhana meets him and admits that it was he and not the Pandavas who had made all the arrangements.

Taken aback, yet caught in the moral dilemma of appreciating Duryodhana for his hospitality, Shalya is forced to join hands with the Kauravas against the Pandavas. One needs to acknowledge the shrewdness of Duryodhana in assessing Shalya’s response and gaining his support. Thus, it is seen that Duryodhana is good in understanding the emotions of others, and also makes good use of it. Further, it can be understood that he has the skill to turn a potentially negative trait into something positive and desirable. He makes good use of not only others’ but also his own emotions.

When Duryodhana approaches Dhritharashtra to sanction the game of dice, Dhritharashtra tries to convince Duryodhana that his jealousy towards the Pandavas is unfounded. Dhritharashtra points out to the fact that Duryodhana was equally wealthy with the
kingdom of Hastinapura at his control. But Duryodhana refuses to see the wisdom in these words and rebukes Dhritharashtra for acting against the Dharma of a Kshatriya. He argues that he was but simply following the Kshatriya Dharma when he covets the wealth of the Pandavas. He points out that the duties of the kings do not conform to that of a common man and it behove the rulers to attend to their own interests. He argues that “The attainment of success is the sole criterion that should guide the conduct of a Kshatriya”\(^\text{14}\) and that one who strives to attain immeasurable wealth is a true politician. He is smart enough to point out that he is not attached to the property as wealth and property can be plundered at any moment, but to remain idle and not follow one’s duties is a sin. Therefore, he is but doing his duty. Further, it is the duty of a Kshatriya to put down an enemy, however insignificant he may be. In this case, when Pandavas have grown in power and wealth in spite of all the attempts against them, it is imperative that they should be controlled and brought under the power of the kauravas. Here Duryodhana quotes the incident of Indra, the lord of the celestials killing Namuchi (a demon king) even after a promise of peace. Indra makes peace with Namuchi, but kills him in an unsuspecting moment. Indra was not at fault in killing an unsuspecting person, especially when he was made to believe that there was no enmity between them. It was only political tactics with the interests of his subjects in mind. So also, it becomes important to destroy the Pandavas when there was still a chance. It would be foolish to regret or repent later when Pandavas have taken the initiative and gained supremacy over the Kauravas. Duryodhana drives home his point saying “A foe, however insignificant, if suffered to grow in prowess, swalloweth one like the white ants at the root of the tree eating off the tree itself.”\(^\text{15}\) Duryodhana’s arguments go on until Dhritharashtra is convinced that the game of dice was indeed a good idea. In fact, as there would be no bloodshed, it is preferable to war. But what one sees here is Duryodhana’s intelligent interpretation of his emotions. He convinces everyone that he is fully justified in the way he felt about the Pandavas. It can be seen that Duryodhana’s emotions enable him to think intelligently and he was capable of thinking intelligently of his emotions as well. Through

\(^\text{14}\) Sabha Parva, SectionLIIV, Page 109.

\(^\text{15}\) Sabha Parva, SectionLIIV, Page 109.
his clever arguments, he validates his actions and his antagonism towards the Pandavas. He gets the people around him to act according to his own wishes. He harnesses his emotions with the desired ends, convinces and motivates people to act according to his wish.

Another instance where Duryodhana’s acute sense of emotional perception and emotional facilitation of thought comes to the forefront is when he convinces King Shalya to be the charioteer to Karna. After Karna is anointed the chief following Drona’s death, he puts forth a request to Duryodhana. He points out that he is equal unto Arjuna in military skills and his own bow is as powerful as Arjuna’s ‘Gandiva’. The only thing that he lacked was a good charioteer. Arjuna’s success on the battlefield was not because of his own military prowess, but also because of Krishna’s timely help and guidance. Thus, if Karna too had an equally skilled charioteer, it would be child’s play for him to defeat Arjuna. Karna identifies Shalya as the person and Duryodhana approaches Shalya to do him this favour. It should be remembered that Shalya wanted to fight for Yudhishthira, but was forced to join Duryodhana. Also, other than Duryodhana, none had any great respect for Karna because of his lowly birth. Thus, when Duryodhana approaches Shalya with Karna’s request, he is infuriated with the callousness of Duryodhana and the audacity of Karna to want him to be a charioteer to a charioteer’s son. Fully anticipating Shalya’s response, Duryodhana is well prepared. He pacifies Shalya by saying that when he wants Shalya to be Karna’s charioteer, it was not as a service to Karna, but as a person who is equal unto Krishna himself. Even as Karna was a warrior on par with Arjuna, so were Shalya’s exceptional skills as a charioteer equal unto Krishna’s skills. Duryodhana was placing Shalya in a position equal to none other than Krishna himself. Duryodhana addresses Shalya in such sweet, conciliatory words, that it is impossible to refuse him. “Karna is certainly superior to Partha in the matter of weapons, O bull among men. Thou too art superior to Krishna in knowledge of steeds and might. Without doubt O ruler of Madras, thy knowledge of horse is double that which the high-souled Vasudeva hath”\textsuperscript{16} Shalya is pacified and accedes to Duryodhana’s request.

\textsuperscript{16} Karna Parva, Section XXXII, page 73.
Thus, it can be seen that Duryodhana was not only good at perceiving emotions in himself and others, but was also good at putting to good use of this knowledge. This satisfies the stipulation of the second branch or the second level of the ‘ability model’, which is emotional facilitation of thought, or put in simple terms, ‘Using Emotions’ (Caruso, et. al., 2003). It also becomes evident that awareness and intelligent use of emotions go hand in hand. When a person is able to accurately perceive his emotions, he is automatically inclined to put good use of that knowledge.

4.5.2 EMOTIONAL UNDERSTANDING AND EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT

Emotional understanding is the ability to understand complex emotions – to perceive when one emotion transforms into another, and emotional management is the skillful management – to remain open to feelings whether pleasant or unpleasant and most importantly to attach or detach oneself from a particular emotion at any given point of time. When Duryodhana’s character is analyzed against these qualities, one does not find any instance where he exhibits emotional understanding, but he is good enough in emotional management.

As one traces Duryodhana’s actions from his youth till the Kurukshetra war, it is seen that he is predominantly influenced by his strong emotions of jealousy and hatred for the Pandavas. One can track the transformation of his emotions from one to another. For example, it is known that his hatred towards the Pandavas stems from the feeling of insecurity that he would not inherit the throne. This feeling of insecurity is nurtured by several other factors like Dhritharashtra’s support, Bhima’s physical strength, and Pandavas’ popularity among the people of Hastinapura, and takes deep root in Duryodhana’s mind. When he is unable to eliminate the Pandavas, and every plot that he schemes against them boomerangs and makes them more powerful, his insecurity turns to hatred. This hatred is combined with jealousy when the Pandavas prosper right in front of his eyes and he is forced to be a mute spectator. When he finally gets the better of the Pandavas through the game of dice, he is dizzy with his success. The emotional state of Duryodhana is an admixture of several emotions – a sense of accomplishment, pride,
triumphant, a sense of superiority, egoistic, and so on. Unable to contain his delight in overpowering the Pandavas, he reacts almost like a madman who is unaware of anything but the only fact that the Pandavas are at his mercy at last. All the pent up emotions find a gateway in his treatment of the Pandavas and Draupadi. He remains in this euphoric state, even after the Pandavas go in exile. Only when his attempts to further insult and put the Pandavas into trouble fails, does he come back to his normal self. One can safely presume that Duryodhana was certainly unaware of these emotional changes in him as there is not a single instance which supports his emotional understanding. It is also that blinded by his success in overthrowing the Pandavas through the game of dice, he remains unaware or ignorant to the emotions of the Pandavas. He fails to understand and take caution from the fact that all his taunts and jeers at the Pandavas will not allow them to be passive and they will retaliate. He fails to take cognizance of the fact that he had forced the Pandavas to cross their line of tolerance. This limitation is but natural as we had seen even the earlier segment that he failed to perceive the emotions of the Pandavas from the beginning. Thus, we see that Duryodhana is found lacking in the third branch of the ‘ability model’ - emotional understanding.

Emotional Intelligence is all about knowing your emotions and above all knowing when and how to express it as well as controlling it (Cherniss, 2000). This is the core of emotional intelligence theory. Emotional management or control of emotions is the eventual aim of the proponents of the theory. Is Duryodhana capable of emotional management? One does see evidence of this skill in him at various instances. Whatever be his shortcomings, it needs to be accepted that he is not reckless. We see him calculate every move of his against its results and act accordingly. The only instance he loses control over himself is when the Pandavas are won in the game of dice. Elsewhere he is seen as a man who is in complete control of his emotions. When we say he was in control of his emotions, we do not mean that he did not feel or have any emotions. His jealousy and hatred for the Pandavas never diminishes for even a second, but he is wise enough in expressing or suppressing these emotions in accordance to the circumstances.
The first time one witnesses his emotional management skills is when the Pandavas are given half the kingdom after their marriage to Draupadi. Knowing fully well that the Pandavas had grown in strength and no longer at the mercy of the Kauravas, Dhritharashtra decides to pacify and keep the Pandavas in good humour. Consulting with the elders, he divides the kingdom of Hastinapura and gives the Pandavas one half. Though Duryodhana is not happy with it, he realizes that it is not the time to express his displeasure, or is it worth opposing the decision. Though furious at the Pandavas’ good fortune, he remains quiet. He never intervenes or expresses his opinion. Neither does he accept nor does he disapprove of the decision.

The second instance is when Yudhishthira performs the Rajasuya Yagna. As fate would have it, Duryodhana was left in charge of the vast wealth brought as gifts by the various kings to Yudhishthira. He is consumed with jealousy at the sight of this bounteous wealth as he acknowledges later on to Sakuni and Dhritharashtra. But while at Yudhishthira’s palace, he keeps a tight check on his emotions and suffers his jealousy in silence. He does not let his feelings show. When the ‘first honour’ of the Yagna is given to Krishna, Sisupala, the king of Chedi opposes it and hurls abuse at Yudhishthira, Krishna and all those who intervene on behalf of Yudhishthira. Duryodhana again remains a mute spectator keenly assessing the reactions and responses of every other person. Though personally, he would have supported Sisupala, he remains quiet as he quickly assesses the situation and realizes that the Pandavas’ supporters were more in number and his opposition would not bear fruit.

Later on when he goes around the palace marveling at the architecture and the prosperity of the Pandavas, he commits a few stupid mistakes. Mistaking a wall to be a door, he tries to walk through it and hurts his forehead. At another place he mistakes a pond to be an illusion and falls into the water. Bhima and Draupadi laugh and mock at his stupidity. Though infuriating, he maintains a stoic silence. He hardly reveals his displeasure at that juncture, as he knows that he was in a place where he had neither the power nor the support to defy the Pandavas. He remains quiet, returns to Hastinapura and then gives a befitting
reply through the game of dice. These instances give enough evidence that Duryodhana had emotional management skills.

Thus, it is seen that Duryodhana is good at perceiving, facilitating and managing emotions. So, does one decide that Duryodhana is an emotionally intelligent person? If so, how does one justify his emotional outrage against the Pandavas? After analyzing the emotional intelligence skills in him, one wonders where did these skills go hiding when he had to deal with the Pandavas.

There are a number of instances when he does not recognize the goodness or rather the meekness of Yudhishtira. Headstrong and intensely jealous, he fails to recognize the fact that Yudhishtira would have willingly given away the kingdom if only Duryodhana had openly and politely expressed his wish to him. Yudhishtira was a person who avoided conflict of any sort. This characteristic trait of him is evident from the fact that he never retaliates or even mentions his displeasure in Duryodhana’s evil measures against the Pandavas. He takes the inhuman treatment and insults quietly and does not react or respond in any way. Not only does he remain silent, he urges his brothers to have a tight lip. There are other instances also which throw light on the fact that Yudhishtira never wished a confrontation. The subjects of Hastinapura were well aware of this quality of Yudhishtira. They openly lament the unfair treatment of the Pandavas by Dhritharashtra and Duryodhana saying that their enmity towards the Pandavas was baseless. They comment “Neither the sinless Yudhishtira, nor Bhima the foremost of mighty men, nor Dhananjaya the (youngest) son of Kunti, will ever be guilty (of the sin of waging a rebellious war).”17 Even after the Pandavas come back from the exile of thirteen years, Yudhishtira, till the end, until all ways have been blocked tries to avoid the war. He is willing to compromise with just five villages or even five houses in the place of his entire kingdom if only the war can be avoided. That Yudhishtira’s decision was always respected and accepted by his brothers without a question is a well known fact. Even after Yudhishtira pawns and loses them in the game of dice, they remain loyal to him stating that Yudhishtira was their lord

17 Adi Parva, Section CXLVII, Page 307.
and master at any time. The kingdom was thus at Duryodhana’s asking. But Duryodhana fails to materialize on these opportunities.

As long as Duryodhana saw gratification of his emotions on the other end, he was able to think clearly. But, every time someone advised him against his feelings for the Pandavas, he turned a deaf ear and remained obstinate. He refuses to see good reason in their arguments. What’s more he fails to perceive opportunities for him in various situations which demand him to drop his jealousy and hatred for the Pandavas. So is Duryodhana good at perceiving and making good use of emotions? Does he manage his emotions?

4.6 FINDINGS OF THE ANALYSIS

Summing up what has been discussed so far, it can be concluded that Duryodhana had the skills of an emotionally intelligent person, but unfortunately they did not help him when he needed them the most, as his hatred and jealousy for the Pandavas get the better of him. When one looks at Duryodhana’s character, one sees that his emotions are more dominant than his emotional intelligence skills. Thus, based on the above analysis, it can be safely concluded that in spite of a person being competent enough in the emotional intelligence skills as identified in the ‘ability model’, chances are fairly good that these abilities can be swept away by the stronger power of emotions. Unless an individual consciously and persistently makes an effort to curb his emotions, there is good reason for him to falter against the onslaught of powerful emotions. To quote Krishna from the Bhagavad-Gita,

\[ \text{Yatato hyapi kaunteya purushasya vipaschitah} \]
\[ \text{indriyani pramathini haranti prasabam manah} \] (in Sanskrit)

The turbulent senses, O son of Kunti, do violently snatch away the mind of even a wise man, striving after perfection. (Swami Swarupananda, 1996)

(Bhagavad- Gita, Ch. II. Sloka 60)

As Krishna points out, even for the wise, who consciously strive to control their emotions, it is a difficult process because the nature of emotions is such that it imbalances even the most diligent.
So to answer the questions that were raised at the beginning of the character analysis –

Does Duryodhana satisfy the ground rules of an emotionally intelligent person as laid down by the ‘ability model’? Yes, he does. Maybe not to the desired extent, but none can deny the fact that Duryodhana possessed these qualities. So, is Duryodhana emotionally intelligent or not? One sees good evidence of his skills of emotional perception and intelligent use of emotions. He is successful in managing his emotions as well. The only area he is not adept or rather we do not have evidence to support is his ability for emotional understanding. Barring the one incident – the game of dice, when he loses control, we see him exhibiting the skills of an emotionally intelligent person. Does one penalize him for that one incident, or recognize his abilities and appreciate his actions? Can one justify Duryodhana’s actions against the Pandavas and praise his emotional intelligence in dealing with several challenges? Do we label Duryodhana’s actions as a result of ‘intelligent thinking’ or crookedness? Do we appreciate Duryodhana for his political acumen, or do we denigrate him that he strives to gain an upper hand through dishonest means?

Even as it can be seen that Duryodhana shows promising skills in emotional intelligence as defined by the ‘ability model’ it is also true that it helps him little in handling his emotions in the right manner. This leads to the inevitable question which is the right way of dealing with emotions? Does a person justify his emotions and proceed to gratify it as Duryodhana does, or does he analyze whether his emotions are positive or negative and proceed to nurture or restrain them? What is the criterion for deciding emotions as positive or negative? Love is a positive emotion, but the same love when it exceeds the bounds, turns into a destructive force. Dhritharashtra’s love for Duryodhana is one such. It forces him into actions that are deplorable, which finally leads to the destruction of all his sons. Each emotion should be analyzed against its end result. Does it promise a positive outcome for everybody involved? To go back to the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna has a simple solution – ‘Lokasangrahameva’. Anything that results in the well being of the society at large is desirable and that should be the guiding factor of an individual’s actions. As Carr (2000) argues, EI should be “dependent on the moral end which it serves.” In spite of his emotional intelligence skills, Duryodhana fails to evoke appreciation or praise from us as
all his skills are focused on destroying the Pandavas. When EI lacks a moral backing, it fails to evince interest. It is in fact scary. We do not want anyone to emulate Duryodhana rather we would project him as a warning.

As De Raad (2005) notes, the use of EI in manipulative and non-prosocial ways is a neglected area of study, and without this forewarning emotional intelligence is like a sword in the hands of a child who does not know its true potential and may thus harm itself and others. Persons like Duryodhana use it to their advantage and prove that emotional intelligence can be used negatively as well.

Moving on to our other question, does EI help Duryodhana in managing stress? No, it does not, as he is constantly planning and scheming and worried about the fortunes of the Pandavas. In spite of his awareness of his emotions, in spite of knowing that his jealousy is uncalled for, he is able to neither control nor subdue it. Similarly, his knowledge of others’ emotions does not help him much as he does not utilize the information for a positive reason. He processes the information for defeating the Pandavas through dishonest means. All these negative thinking does not allow him to be stress free. Even when he controls his emotions and remains quiet when Khandavaprashta was given to the Pandavas and during the Rajasuya Yagna, he is not happy. His emotions are swirling inside him waiting for an outlet and the victory in the game of dice blows the lid open. The hitherto reined in emotions burst forth in full force and the result is for all to see – the inhuman treatment of the Pandavas and Draupadi. In fact, this leads us to the question, is controlling emotions good at all? Maybe if Duryodhana had given vent to his emotions at the partition or at the Yagna, he might not have forced himself to such a heinous act. So is controlling or giving vent to emotions good? What is the deciding factor? Circumstances? Consequences? How does one identify or realize the deciding factor? The answer is the same as that of the previous question. EI when used constructively, helps in managing stress, when it is not so, EI does not help the individual lead a stress free life.

We have answered the three of the four questions we raised at the beginning of this analysis – is Duryodhana emotionally intelligent, does his emotional intelligence help him in
managing stressful situations, and is there a possibility of EI being used negatively. The fourth question finds a natural answer as we find that Duryodhana is hardly a personality to be followed or emulated. At the best he can be discussed as an example of a person who fails to rise to potential heights in spite of having all the abilities because of his inability to channelize into constructive actions.