Chapter – VII

Arjuna

7.1 OUTLINE

The third son of Pandu, the warrior non-pareil, charismatic, and the close friend of Lord Krishna, Arjuna in many ways remains the central character of the great epic the Mahabharata. He shared a special bonding with all those who came in contact with him – be it the Gandharva Chitrarada or Drupada who vows to make Arjuna his son-in-law, King Virata or his son Uttara, Lord Shiva who bestows his blessings on him or Lord Krishna with whom he shared a special intimate friendship, his Guru Drona or his grandsire Bhishma. He had Yudhishthira’s intellect and Bhima’s sensitivity, which made him a complete person loved and cherished by everyone. A man of very few words, he was a man of action. One finds him always in the middle of the action, be it imprisoning Drupada at Drona’s behest, winning the hand of Draupadi by bringing down the spinning fish, burning the Khandava forest, acquiring divine weapons from Lord Shiva, fighting the Kaurava army in support of King Virata’s son Uttara, or the final war of Kurukshetra. Gandiva (his divine bow) was his identity and he remained the greatest warrior of his times. Nevertheless, he was a compassionate and a caring person who was sensitive to others’ sufferings and did his best to alleviate their sorrows. Before moving on to an analysis of his character against the theory of emotional intelligence, the following section will briefly discuss his character.

7.2 A BRIEF CHARACTER SKETCH OF ARJUNA

‘Arjuna’ means one who is sinless and whose “acts are always stainless.” He was a person of grit and determination who stood above his adversities and achieved success. This trait in Arjuna is brought out by none other than his guru Drona. Human as he was Drona wanted to instruct his own son Aswatthama in several superior methods of warfare than any of the others, including Arjuna and thus instructed each of his students to bring a

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53 Virata Parva, Section XLIV, Page 76.
pitcher full of water before the lessons. While he gave narrow mouthed pitchers to everyone, he gave a broad mouthed one to Aswatthama so that he would come earlier and benefit with extra lessons. When Arjuna came to know about this he did not confront his Guru or sulk like any ordinary person, rather he filled his own pitcher faster using the ‘Varuna’ (the god of rain) weapon and thereby came for the lessons as quick as Asvatthama. Drona was delighted, yet wanted to test him further. He instructed the cook to take care not to give food in the dark to Arjuna. But as fate would have it, one night as Arjuna was having his food, a strong gust of wind put off the light and Arjuna continued eating in the dark his hand going to the mouth out of habit. This drew his attention to the force of habit and started practicing with his bow in the night. As a result, he became an expert at wielding the bow even in pitch darkness. As he practiced day and night sacrificing his sleep, he earned the epithet ‘Gudakesa’ meaning one who conquered sleep. Mightily pleased, Drona clasping him unto his bosom declared, “Truly do I tell thee that I shall do unto thee by which there shall not be an archer equal to thee in this world.”

This is what Arjuna wanted – to become the greatest archer in the world, and he elicits a promise to that effect from his guru through his fortitude. This single minded pursuit of his objective remains the distinct characteristic of his throughout his life. Fortunately for Arjuna this trait was mixed with a sense of responsibility and compassion for his fellow humans and thus made him stand apart from people like Duryodhana who would go to any length, insensitive to others’ sufferings to achieve their goals. Ever considerate to others’ distress, he was always the first to respond in helping others. Two episodes very early in his life establish this quality in him.

The first was when Drona was requested by Bhishma to tutor the Kauravas and the Pandavas in the skills of warfare. Having accepted them as his pupils, one day, Drona called them apart and told them, “I have in my heart a particular purpose. Promise me truly, ye sinless ones, that when ye have become skilled in arms, ye will accomplish it.”

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54 Adi Parva, Section CXXXIV, Page 280.

55 Adi Parva, Section CXXXIV, Page 279.
everyone remained silent Arjuna alone accepted to satisfy Drona’s wishes. When everyone was hesitant about what could be asked of them and thus did not promise him anything, Arjuna alone reposed faith in himself and also acknowledged his duty towards his guru accepting to accomplish whatever it was that Drona would ask him. This clearly sets him apart as a person who was loyal and reliable.

The other instance which proved Arjuna’s reliability was when Drona was seized by an alligator while he was bathing in the river Ganga. As he calls out for help, the princes stand confounded while Arjuna alone quickly responds by striking the alligator with quick shafts and killing it instantly. Drona was extremely pleased with the alertness of Arjuna in protecting those in distress which is the foremost characteristic of a Kshatriya and bestowed upon him the ‘Brahmasira’, a weapon of immense power which cannot be wielded by ordinary people. “Accept, O thou of mighty arms, this very superior and irresistible weapon called Brahmasira with the methods of hurling and recalling it.” It is worth noting that Drona did not consider even his son Aswatthama as worthy of this weapon because only a person who had the welfare of others in mind and also one who had absolute control over his senses was worthy of this weapon. Drona identified both these qualities in Arjuna and thus imparted the knowledge of wielding the ‘Brahmasira’ to him alone. Later on Lord Shiva too bestows his celestial weapon the ‘Pasupata’ to Arjuna for the very same reasons. As Drona cautioned him that ‘Brahmasiras’ should not be used frivolously for it had the power to destroy the entire universe, so does Lord Shiva too instructed him that the ‘Pasupata’ “should not be hurled without adequate cause.” Yet both reposed immense faith in Arjuna that he would never utilize these divine weapons for frivolous, personal gains. Arjuna stands up to his reputation as one beholds him having the power to hurl the ‘Brahmasiras’ to counter Aswatthama and withdraw it as well while Aswatthama was unable to take back the weapon. ‘Lokasangrahameva’– for the welfare of the society – as

56 Adi Parva, Section CXXXV, Page 283.

57 Vana Parva, Section XL, Page 91.
Shri Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita, remains the hallmark of Arjuna. Bold yet compassionate, assertive yet sensitive, strong yet sympathetic, was Arjuna the irresistible.

Having waxed eloquent on Arjuna’s strong points one wonders if he was above human weaknesses, the perfect, ideal human being. Of course not, says Vyasa, (the great sage who authored the Ramayana) as it is beyond the capacity of any human being to be perfect. Even Lord Rama who was portrayed as the ideal man took certain debatable decisions which remain unresolved till date. Arjuna is no exception and a careful read points out to his immense pride in being the undisputed archer of his times as his Achilles’ heel.

Though Arjuna never makes a deliberate, obvious comment on his wish to become the greatest and undisputed archer, he leaves no stone unturned to achieve the same. As seen in the previous section, one cannot but appreciate his single mindedness in pursuing this goal and succeeding in it as well. If not for the episode of Ekalavya that stands as an aberration, Arjuna’s success could be admired as the most commendable one. But Arjuna proves that in spite of his excellent qualities he is human enough to give in to baser emotions like jealousy. As was seen in the above discussion, Drona had promised Arjuna that there would be no other archer equivalent to Arjuna in the entire universe. But as fate would have it the Nishada prince Ekalavya comes as an unsuspecting rival to the supremacy of Arjuna. It was Ekalavya’s cherished dream to become the disciple of Drona and he approaches Drona with the same request. But Drona refuses him politely saying that he would tutor only royal princes and hence cannot accept Ekalavya as his pupil. Undeterred, Ekalavya makes a clay image of Drona, instills him in his mind and initiating himself as Drona’s disciple starts practicing the skills of archery. His devotion to his guru makes him excel in the skills of archery in no time. Once as the Kaurava and the Pandava princes go into the forests for a hunting expedition, deep into the woods, the hunting dog which accompanied them sees the dark hued Ekalavya and starts barking at him. The Nishada prince playfully shoots seven arrows in quick succession that it fills the dog’s mouth before it could close its mouth. At the same time the dog is neither injured nor hurt. Stupefied with such deftness of hand, the princes bow their heads in shame and inquire about the youth. Ekalavya proudly introduces himself as the disciple of guru Drona. Cut to the quick, Arjuna walks up to his preceptor.
and asks, “Thou hadst lovingly told me, clasping me to thy bosom, that no pupil of thine should be equal to me. Why then is there a pupil of thine, the mighty son of the Nishada king, superior to me?” Thereupon Drona in the name of his preceptor’s fee demands Ekalavya’s thumb which the devoted disciple gives unhesitatingly. This incident throws light on the depth of Arjuna’s desire to remain the undisputed warrior of his times, which incites his jealousy towards Ekalavya, and this desire remains ever burning and undiminished in him till the end. To aim at excelling in one’s chosen field cannot be termed as a weakness, but when the person cannot tolerate another of equal skills, it leaves much to be desired of his character. The only saving grace for Arjuna is that he does not exhibit such unwarranted jealousy as he grows up in years. In his later years as an adult one does not find him giving in to such baser instincts to fell his rivals. Even his rivalry towards Karna is a more matured and civilized one, not that of how he felt and acted against Ekalavya, but the pride he took in being the most skilled archer with none to equal him remained with him.

Is taking pride in one’s achievements a weakness? It is, when that pride turns to conceit and the person starts believing that there is none who could defeat him. Fortunately for Arjuna every time he was carried away by his vanity and about to suffer the consequences he was quick to regain his senses and focus on solving the problem. The instance of his duel with Lord Shiva who comes down to test his skills before blessing him with the divine weapon ‘Pasupata’, is a good example. Arjuna undertakes severe penance to please Lord Shiva and acquire celestial weapons to help him conquer the Kauravas in the battle. Pleased with his austerities Shiva comes down in the form of a ‘Kirata’, a hunter and aims his arrow at the same boar that Arjuna had aimed at. Angered at the Kirata for having aimed his target Arjuna engages in a fight with him. In a few minutes Arjuna realizes that the Kirata was invincible and that he was losing the battle. Hurt and ashamed, he installs Lord Shiva in his mind and starts worshipping him with garlands. He is surprised and shocked to see the very same garlands on the Kirata’s neck and realizes that it was none other than Shiva with

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58 Adi Parva, Section CXXXIV, Page 281.
whom he was fighting. Prostrating before him, he asks for forgiveness, which Lord Shiva readily acknowledges and blesses him with the celestial weapons he asks for. If it was pride that forced Arjuna to pick up a fight with the Kirata in the first place, it is the realization of his mistake that drives him to surrender to Lord Shiva. Thus, Arjuna at many instances displays his arrogance in being the best warrior, but is also quick to realize his mistake and take necessary steps to ease the situation.

The other instance where he displays his smugness in being the best archer is when he seeks Krishna’s help for the Kurukshetra war. Both Duryodhana and Arjuna arrive at the same time seeking help from Krishna, and Krishna who was a close relative of both places the choice of his entire army on one side and his own self without weapons on another side. As Arjuna chooses Krishna even though he would not fight, Duryodhana is happy with the enormous army of Krishna. When Krishna asks Arjuna the reason for choosing him in spite of knowing that he wouldn’t fight, Arjuna’s answer is typical of him, saying, “I question not that you are able to slay them all. I also am alone capable of slaying them, O best of men. But you are an illustrious person in the world; and this renown will accompany you. I am also a suitor of fame; therefore you have been selected by me.”\footnote{Udyoga Parva, Section VII, Page 10.} One cannot help but smile at Arjuna’s childlike simplicity in competing with God incarnate Krishna, and deputing him to be his charioteer. But that is exactly what endears Arjuna as his pride never snowballs into egotism and remains harmless to anyone. There is not a single instance where his desire to be the undisputed warrior propelled him to unsatisfactory or degrading acts. There was not a person who was affected except of course Ekalavya by this excessive pride of Arjuna in his skills as an archer.

To sum up, Arjuna, in spite of his drawback remains loved, respected and cherished by one and all because of his ability to realize his mistakes, and more importantly, because of his sensitivity towards others’ sufferings and readiness to help them out of trouble. With that conclusion the following section will proceed to analyze his characteristics against the tenets of the ability model of emotional intelligence.
7.3 ANALYSIS OF ARJUNA’S CHARACTER AGAINST THE ABILITY MODEL OF ‘EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE’

The characters analyzed so far – Duryodhana, Dhritharashtra and Yudhishthira – each display strong emotions. While Duryodhana explicitly showcases his emotions, Dhritharashtra struggles to mask his emotions and Yudhishthira suffers in silence. The path of non-violence advocated by Yudhishthira is in part owing to his adherence to the path of Dharma, but majorly to his fear of Karna and the rest of the Kuru warriors. In contrast, Arjuna stands apart as a person who remains calm and unperturbed throughout the epic. There are no dramatic displays of emotions. Even when he speaks to Drona regarding Ekalavya it is not aggressive or rude, but a gentle strain of disappointment and jealousy. When he expresses his grief in facing his kith and kin in the Kurukshetra war and refuses to fight, it is but a dignified and controlled expression of those intense emotions. Never once does he go overboard losing his senses in the tight grip of strong emotions. The only brief instance where he loses his temper is when Yudhishthira insults him asking him to hand over the Gandiva to someone else. Otherwise, even his displeasure is displayed with remarkable control. The reason why this elaborate introduction is given is because it is difficult or rather impossible to demarcate incidents where Arjuna displays the different emotional intelligence skills in isolation. At every instance it is a combination of emotional awareness leading to emotional facilitation of thought moving on to emotional understanding and emotional management. Thus the analysis of Arjuna’s character based on the ability model of emotional intelligence will differ slightly from that of the other characters where the different incidents will be discussed drawing attention to his emotional intelligence skills.

7.4 ARJUNA’S EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The first incident that would be taken into account is Draupadi’s marriage to all the five Pandavas. Arjuna wins the hand of Draupadi contesting with great kings in the court of Drupada. The challenge set by Drupada was to shoot the fish stuck on a spinning wheel. The contestant should bring down the target by looking at its reflection in a pool of water kept below. As the kings one after the other fail to bring down the fish, Arjuna clad as a
Brahmin youth (as the Pandavas were in disguise in Ekachakrapura after their escape from the palace of lac) rises from his seat, effortlessly shoots the target and wins the hand of Draupadi. The assembled kings take it as an affront that a Brahmin should defeat them in archery and decide to attack Drupada. Arjuna with the help of Bhima makes them all retreat and brings his bride home. It is at this juncture that with Yudhishthira’s ploy Kunti unwittingly commands the brothers to share their spoil. It does not take Arjuna more than a second to understand the dynamics of the situation. There was obvious admiration in the brothers’ look at the beautiful Draupadi. Kunti was worried that there would be dissension among the brothers at Draupadi’s pretext. Yudhishthira was concerned that Drupada’s support would go to Arjuna alone. The urgency of the situation demanded sealing any possibility of dissension among the brothers and Yudhishthira declares that Draupadi would be the wedded wife of all the five. Ever dutiful and putting their conjoined welfare in the front Arjuna goes with the plans of Yudhishthira. Yudhishthira for a moment is consumed with guilt that he had denied Arjuna his rightly won bride and suggests that Arjuna wed Draupadi first and then the rest would follow suit. But Arjuna quickly replies that it was the custom for the eldest to wed first and he would wed Draupadi after Yudhishthira and Bhima. There is not the slightest hesitancy from Arjuna’s side as he quickly perceives the intentions of his brother and gives his unstinted, whole hearted support. If at all there was any remorse or disappointment there is not the slightest hint and Arjuna happily consents to Yudhishthira’s plans. He remains a passive observer never interfering in the discussion between Yudhishthira, Kunti, Vyasa, Drupada and Draupadi’s brother Dhrishtadyumna. He perfectly understood that any comment from his side for or against his brother’s wishes would topple the delicate balance of the situation. Pandavas’ wedding to Draupadi had more political implications and emotional complications. The greater picture before the Pandavas was to remain united to face the powerful Kauravas. It was not in a fight for the rightful share of the kingdom, but for even to return to Hastinapur the Pandavas needed support. Drupada would be the powerful ally who would ensure their safe entry to Hastinapur and thereafter help them gain their fair share of the kingdom. Also, if Arjuna betrays his feelings, even for a fleeting moment, it would destabilize the whole situation and show Yudhishthira in a poor light. The brothers too would be consumed by guilt and
desire at the same time, which can turn to displeasure and anger towards Arjuna. Thus he remains absolutely controlled and passive. By this he displays extraordinary skills of emotional perception – when he understands the emotions of his brothers, emotional facilitation of thought – the awareness makes go with the decision appropriate to that situation, that of all the brothers marrying Draupadi, emotional understanding – as he perceives along with Kunti and Yudhishtira that the admiration in his brothers’ eyes for Draupadi could spiral into intense desire that may lead to jealousy and hatred among them, and emotional management – where he pushes his own feelings for Draupadi to the background and wholeheartedly accepts to share his bride with each of his brothers.

The second instance where one experiences Arjuna’s emotional intelligence skills is when at Indraprastha after their wedding to Draupadi. At the divine sage Narada’s advice the brothers come to an agreement that Draupadi would live as their wife for one year in turns and whoever would broach on their privacy would retire to the forests for twelve years observing the vows of a ‘Brahmacharin’ (a bachelor) as penalty. As fate would have it, one night when Draupadi was in the chambers of Yudhishtira, a Brahmin, crying pitifully, comes seeking help from Arjuna as his cattle were being taken away by thieves. Arjuna immediately assures the Brahmin not to fear. But unfortunately his weapons were in the very chamber where Draupadi and Yudhishtira were resting. Now Arjuna is caught between the dilemma of violating their agreement and entering the chamber of Draupadi and Yudhishtira and the duty of the ruler to protect his subjects from danger. It is only for a brief moment that he hesitates before deciding to put his subjects’ welfare in front of his own interests. He reassures himself that “Virtue is superior to the body and lasteth after the body hath perished”\(^{60}\), enters the chambers of Draupadi and Yudhishtira, takes his weapons and brings back the cattle safely for the Brahmin. Having dispensed his duty as a ruler satisfactorily, he comes to Yudhishtira and bowing before he seeks his permission to retire to the forests for twelve years according to their agreement. Yudhishtira tries his best to convince him that it cannot be regarded as a sin when the situation compelled him to violate the rule. Moreover, according to the custom the younger brother does not stand

\(^{60}\) Adi Parva, Section CCXV, Page 417.
sinned if he enters the chambers of his elder brother rather it is the elder brother who is prohibited from entering the chambers of his younger brother when he is sharing it with his wife. But none of these arguments convince Arjuna as he remains clear in his thoughts and firm in his decision. He counters Yudhishtehira saying, “I have heard, even from thee, that quibbling is not permitted in the discharge of duty. I cannot waver from truth. Truth is my weapon.”

Arjuna displays commendable traits of responding quickly to an emergency, putting the welfare of others before his own, upholding the honor of the king, and keeping his own personal word of honor. The decisions he takes are appropriate and as the situation demands. Here too his emotional intelligence skills become distinct. His emotional perceptional skill is understood by his understanding the urgency of the Brahmin’s plight, and his own responsibility in having to help the Brahmin. He quickly assesses his own emotions and comes to a clarity that personal commitment comes only next to his obligation to his subjects. This realization facilitates his thought process and thus decides to enter the chambers of Draupadi and Yudhishtehira even at the cost of violating his personal promise. His emotional understanding skills are well realized when he understands that the Brahmin’s despondency would escalate into anger which would snowball into a loss of faith in the King which is highly dangerous and would destabilize the peace of his kingdom. Last but not the least, he once again pushes his own discomforts to the background with his decision. Retiring to the forests for twelve years means forgoing his turn of living with his beloved Draupadi and wait until his next turn came. But he pushes back his personal discomforts and disappointments and decides to alleviate the Brahmin’s sorrow. He displays absolute control over his senses as he decides to go to the forests for twelve years, strictly observing the vow of a ‘Brahmacharin’ (a bachelor). When he resolves to go to the forests against the wishes of Yudhishtehira, we again see emotional understanding. Even though in the heat of the moment Yudhishtehira was trying to convince him against going to the forests, there might arise a contention at a later period that Arjuna did not keep up his word and took exception, which might lead to displeasure among the brothers.

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61 Adi Parva, Section CCXV, Page 418.
The third episode that brings to light Arjuna’s emotional intelligence skills is when he is in the forests on a self-imposed exile for violating the privacy of Draupadi and Yudhishthira. As he wanders in the forests in the company of ascetics, he comes to the banks of the sacred Ganges and decides to reside in those regions for a while. One day as he enters the Ganges to offer his morning ablutions, he finds himself being dragged by an unseen force into the waters. It was the ‘Naga’ princess Ulupi who had taken him to her father Kauravya’s kingdom under the water. Surprised, yet patient, he smilingly addresses the princess, “O timid one! Whose is this beautiful region, who art thou and whose daughter?” Ulupi smitten by her love for Arjuna, addresses him, “O sinless one, I am still unmarried. Afflicted as I am by the god of desire, on account of thee, O thou of Kuru’s race, gratify me today by giving thyself up to me.” Though taken aback, Arjuna gently refuses her advances and explains his condition of having to maintain the vow of Brahmacharin. But Ulupi is persevering and goes on to argue that the condition of remaining a Brahmacharin applies only in connection to Draupadi and not with any other woman and thus Arjuna was free to gratify her wishes. His promise will not be broken by accepting Ulupi’s advances. Moreover, it was the duty of a man to satisfy the woman who openly expresses her love and thereby even if Arjuna’s virtue suffers it is inconsequential compared to the sin he would have incurred by refusing her advances. When Arjuna remains relentless, Ulupi threatens him by saying that she would lay down her life if her wish is unfulfilled. As it was also Arjuna’s duty to protect those in misery, he was bound to save her life by granting her wish. “If thou do not act in this way, know that I will destroy myself. O thou of mighty arms, earn great merit by saving my life. I seek thy shelter, O best of men! Thou protectest always, O son of Kunti, the afflicted and the masterless. I seek thy protection, weeping in sorrow. I woo thee, being filled with desire. Therefore, do what is agreeable to me.” Thereby Arjuna does not hesitate or procrastinate but spends the night with her. Without much explanation the emotional intelligence skills come to the forefront.

62 Adi Parva, Section CCXVI, Page 419.
63 Adi Parva, Section CCXVI, Page 419.
64 Adi Parva, Section CCXVI, Page 420.
He perceives the desperation in Ulupi’s request, understands that the desperation may catapult to helpless anger which can drive her to any drastic action that might harm him and thus concedes to her wishes. His emotional management is also excellent as he is able to deny and accept her advances at one breath. Above all these the most prominent characteristic of his, sensitivity to others’ distress is well realized. Similar to the previous incident where he puts the Brahmana’s cause before his personal promises, here too he strives to alleviate the distress of the princess setting aside his promise to remain celibate in those twelve years of exile. At the same time, neither of these decisions are rash that would dishonor him or harm anyone else but well thought out and well balanced ones.

Moving on to the next instance, it is the shameful and disgracing position the Pandavas find themselves in after Yudhishtihira stakes and loses all his brothers, himself and their beloved wife Draupadi. As Draupadi is dragged to the court by her hair and Dussasana tries to disrobe her, the entire assembly is taken aback and stunned at both Duryodhana’s and Yudhishtihira’s despicable actions. While the latter had the impropriety to pledge his wife, the former disrobed his brothers’ wife and the queen of Hastinapur in full view of the entire court. As Draupadi demands justice from the assembled elders, as the court is divided in its opinion about Duryodhana’s acts, as the Pandavas stand with their heads hung down in shame and helpless anger, Duryodhana drives the last nail in the coffin. He mockingly addresses the Pandavas challenging them to disown their beloved Yudhishtihira and earn freedom. He tells Vidura, “Let them say that Yudhishtihira is not their master. Yajnaseni will then be freed from her state of bondage.”65 Having won the wealth of the Pandavas and their stake in the kingdom along with their honor and reputation, Duryodhana aims at completing the destruction by creating enmity among the brothers. This would ensure that they do not regroup to gather support and attack the Kauravas at a later period. As emotions are flying high Arjuna recognizes Duryodhana’s ploy and though himself disgusted with Yudhishtihira’s act, realizes the need to stand united to salvage at least what was remaining of their honour and reputation. If there was dissension among the Pandavas that would be

65 Sabha Parva, Section LXX, Page 139.
the death knell. There can be no recover from that situation. At such precarious condition it is Arjuna’s wit alone that saves the day for the Pandavas. He hits back at Duryodhana quipping, “This illustrious son of Kunti, king Yudhishthira the just, was certainly our master before he began to play. But having lost himself, let the Kauravas judge whose master he could be after that.”66 The answer is loaded with meaning. Tactfully he returns the query to Duryodhana avoiding a direct answer and at the same time conveys his displeasure in Yudhishthira as well. By throwing back a loaded question, he hits back the ball into Duryodhana’s court. His refusal to give a direct answer also betrays his opinion that he was not pleased with Yudhishthira. Two birds in one stone. One does feel inclined to appreciate Arjuna’s highly controlled expression of his displeasure at his brother’s disgraceful actions, even at such a volatile situation, and at the same time diffuse Duryodhana’s tactic to create enmity. His response stands in stark contrast to that of Bhima who rages to burn the hands of Yudhishthira that gambled away their honor. “I shall burn those hands of thine. Sahadeva bring some fire”67, fumes Bhima. Arjuna perceives his own – disgust at Yudhishthira’s despicable act and dismay at the turn of events, and those of others’ emotions – Yudhishthira’s guilt, Bhima’s and Draupadi’s fury, Dhritharashtra’s ecstasy, Duryodhana’s craftiness to destroy the Pandavas completely, Vidura, Bhishma and the other Kuru elders’ helplessness, the people of Hastinapur’s shock – understands that each of these emotions might culminate into terrible effects for the Pandavas and thus tries to save the situation through his control of emotions. He reins in Bhima’s anger as well pointing out, “Thou shouldst not fulfil the wishes of the enemy. Practise thou the highest morality.”68 He remains the one sane person in that emotionally charged situation. He maintains silence for the most part realizing that this was hardly the place and situation to express his anger or displeasure. Nevertheless, as the Pandavas depart to the forests in exile, he silently vows to avenge all their insults. As Sanjaya describes to Dhritharashtra, “Even now Arjuna proceedeth, encased in mail and furnished with his couple of quivers,

66 Sabha Parva, Section LXX, Page 139.

67 Sabha Parva, Section LXVII, Page 130.

68 Sabha Parva, Section LXVII, Page 130.
frequently taking up the Gandiva and breathing hard and casting angry glances around.”69
Once again Arjuna proves himself as an emotionally intelligent person satisfying all the
tenets of emotional intelligence.

The most important incident that remains the highlight of Arjuna’s character is his reaction
at the warfront. After the negotiations for peace draw a flank, both sides, the Pandavas and
the Kauravas stand against each other with their armies assembled at the Kurukshetra. The
invincible Arjuna clad in his armour requests Krishna to position the chariot in such a way
that he can view all those who were standing against him in the Kaurava army. “O thou that
knoweth no deterioration, place my car (once) between the two armies, so that I may
observe these that stand here desirous of battle, and with whom I shall have to contend in
the labours of this struggle.”70 Therein he sees his own flesh and blood, his grandsire, his
uncles, his cousins, brothers, brothers-in-law, guru, friends and well-wishers. Beholding
them assembled against him a terrible despondency grips him at the prospect of having to
kill them all in order to get back his kingdom. The futility of gaining a kingdom shorn of all
those who are dear to him hits on him so strongly that he casts aside his bow and arrows
and says, “I will not fight.”71 What follows is the excellent conversation between Krishna
and Arjuna as Krishna convinces Arjuna of his duty to fight as a Kshatriya. It is the
Bhagavad-Gita which is considered the fifth veda and contains eternal truths on the aspects
of birth, death, the role of fate, the power of emotions to lead a person astray, the need to
control the emotions to realize the supreme being and most importantly describes the
attributes of a ‘Sthithapragnya’ or the emotionally stable person. As Krishna’s description
of a ‘sthithapragnya’ has already been discussed in the literature review, this section
concentrates only on Arjuna’s emotional intelligence skills that are revealed through this
episode. As Mayer and Salovey propose he clearly perceives his emotions as he describes
his mind state, “Beholding these kinsmen, O Krishna, assembled together and eager to

69 Sabha Parva, Section LXXIII, Page 143.
70 Bhishma Parva, Section XXV, Page 52.
71 Bhishma Parva, Section XXVI, Page 54.
fight, my limbs, become languid, and my mouth becomes dry. My body trembles, and my hair stands on end. Gandiva slips from my hand, and my skin burns.\textsuperscript{72} Perceiving his emotions leads him to supplicate to Krishna for help and he becomes an eager disciple as Krishna enlightens him on the Dharma of following one’s duty without attaching oneself to the fruits of his actions. Krishna tells Arjuna that it was not Arjuna who brought about the war, but as placed in a position where he had to fight, he had to only follow his Kshatriya Dharma and fight without being affected by the outcome – good or bad. During the course of the enlightening conversation Arjuna poses several questions to clear his doubts on the various subjects that Krishna expounds on and by the end Arjuna regains his confidence and clarity of thought ready to uphold his Kshatriya Dharma and face his opponents. This instance reveals Arjuna’s ability to perceive his emotion, process it intelligently and seek help, has the intelligence to understand Krishna’s advice and is able to come out of his despondency gaining back his confidence.

The above discussed incidents bring out the emotional intelligence skills in Arjuna as proposed by Mayer and Salovey. Apart from these there are myriad other instances which throw light on the ability of Arjuna to control his emotions. He was capable of controlling his mind which sets him above the rest of the characters discussed in the previous chapters. To enumerate a few, one can bring to mind his reaction to his son Abhimanyu’s death and towards the end his power to hurl and take back the terrible weapon ‘Brahmasiras’.

Arjuna’s quickness in assessing any situation comes to the fore as he encounters Abhimanyu’s (his son through Subhadra, Krishna’s sister), death. Drona promises Duryodhana to capture Yudhishthira so that he can be tempted to another game of dice and exiled which is far easier victory than that of fighting. As per the plan the ‘Samsaptakas’ (kings who had taken a vow that they would kill Arjuna by the end of the day’s battle) take Arjuna away to a farther end of the battlefield while Drona arranges his army in a ‘chakravyuh’ – a circular array which is difficult to penetrate. Only Arjuna had the knowledge of penetrating this ‘vyuha’ and coming out of it as well. Abhimanyu had learnt

\textsuperscript{72} Bhishma Parva, Section XXV, Page 52.
from his father to penetrate but not to come out. At a time when Arjuna was not there, Abhimanyu comes forward to penetrate the ‘vyuha’ as Yudhishtira along with Bhima, Nakula, Sahadeva and other warriors decide to follow him into the ‘vyuha’. But Jayadratha, the king of Sindhu spoils their ploy and Abhimanyu is caught alone in the midst of all those great warriors. He dies a heroic death after successfully stalling great warriors like Drona, Karna, Aswatthama, Duryodhana, Dussasana and the rest. As Arjuna is returning to the camp in the evening he does not find the usual cheerful welcome of the soldiers. He discomfort grows as he sees all the warriors hang their heads. He comes to the part where his brothers were camped. Seeing them plunged in grief, it does not take a second to perceive what could have happened. He throws a series of questions, expressing his doubt, “I do not, again, see Abhimanyu. Nor doth he come to congratulate me. I heard that Drona had today formed the circular array. None amongst you, save the boy Abhimanyu, could break the array. I, however, did not teach him how to come out of that array, after having pierced it. Did you cause the boy to enter that array? Hath that slayer of heroes, viz., the son of Subhadra, that mighty Bowman, having pierced that array, through numberless warriors of the enemy in battle, fallen, at last in the fight?”

One look at the cheerless faces of his brothers and not finding Abhimanyu enables Arjuna to guess the entire episode in a second. If this is not emotional intelligence, what is?

Before bringing the analysis of Arjuna’s emotional intelligence to a close, it would be ideal to bring to notice his remarkable ability in managing his emotions. The most significant event that tells us his emotional management is when he goes to acquire the celestial weapons while in exile. He performs severe austerities and penances that require extreme control and focus of his mind and senses. He continues his penance, not for a day or two, but for four continuous months. The first month he survives on eating only fruits at an interval of three nights, which is gradually increased to an interval of six nights in the second month and to a fortnight in the third month. The fourth month he survives only on air. The fierce asceticism of Arjuna shook the entire earth and the great rishis go to Lord

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73 Drona Parva, Section LXXII, Page 138.
Shiva and appeal for protection, “This son of pritha possessed of great energy is engaged in the most difficult of ascetic austerities on the breast of Himavat. Heated with his asceticism, the earth is smoking all round, O god of gods.” Such was the power of Arjuna’s penance of tremendous control over body and mind. Not swerving once from his aim, he is able to completely control and focus his mind on acquiring Lord Shiva’s blessings.

The other equally noteworthy incident is after the Kurukshetra war when Drona’s son Asvatthama attacks the Pandava camp in the night and slaughters all the sleeping warriors including the sons of Pandavas and Draupadi’s brother Dhrishtadyumna. Only the Pandavas survive as they had stayed elsewhere and not at their usual camping site. Not satisfied with the carnage Asvatthama aims the ‘Brahmasiras’ against the Pandavas. Krishna spurs Arjuna to use his knowledge of the ‘Brahmasiras’ for the protection of himself and his brothers. Thereupon Arjuna aims the ‘Brahmasiras’ to neutralize Asvatthama’s weapon. Even at that juncture he does not lose his cool and wishes only the welfare of his brothers and Asvatthama himself, not for destruction. But the power of that weapon was such that, “Numerous peals of thunder were heard; thousands of meteors fell; and all living creatures became inspired with dread. The entire welkin seemed to be filled with noise and assumed a terrible aspect with those flames of fire. The whole earth with her mountains and waters and trees, trembled.” The region where the ‘Brahmasiras’ was hurled would suffer a drought for twelve years with not a drop of rain falling on a vast area. Such was the destructive power of the ‘Brahmasiras’ which had to be taught to only highly noble souls who had the power to control their mind and those who had the welfare of people in mind. Drona and Lord Shiva both give this weapon only unto Arjuna. Drona imparts the knowledge of this weapon only after persistent requests from Asvatthama and that too reluctantly as he knew that Asvatthama did not have the power to control himself. This is proved by his heinous acts of slaughtering the sleeping soldiers and hurling the

74 Vana Parva, Section XXXVIII, Page 85.
75 Sauptika Parva, Section XIV, Page 34.
‘Brahmasiras’ in a fit of anger not worried about the consequences. What is worse, he is unable to take it back as it needs greater power than to hurl it. Arjuna had the power to take it back as well, which he does promptly at the behest of sages Narada and Vyasa for the welfare of humanity. Thus it becomes clear that Arjuna is a person who is adept and skilled in all the four levels of emotional intelligence as proposed by Mayer and Salovey in not just one or two instances but consistently, throughout his life.

7.5 FINDINGS OF THE ANALYSIS

The above analysis clearly identifies Arjuna as an emotionally intelligent person who had the welfare of the society at large. Answering the research questions in regard to Arjuna becomes simple with his response to every difficult situation, bringing out his emotional intelligence. In turn, his emotional intelligence allows him to manage stress and helps in problem solving as seen in all those various incidents. Moreover, he is sensitive to others’ suffering which endears him to everyone. Thus, it can be safely concluded that Arjuna can be projected as a role model for an emotionally intelligent person.