Chapter – VIII

Conclusion

8.1 A BRIEF DISCUSSION ON THE CONCLUDED STUDY

As one reads through the Mahabharata, and becomes familiar with the innumerable characters, one discovers that each character is propelled by a different purpose which shapes his/her destiny. Duryodhana is consumed with his jealousy for the Pandavas, Dhritharashtra cannot go against the wishes of his son in spite of knowing the terrible consequences, Karna is tormented by his doubtful birth, Bhishma is bound by his vow to protect the throne of Hastinapur, Yudhishthira tries to tread the path of non-violence in spite of being a Kshatriya, and so on. Each one of them holds on to these powerful characteristics of them to the extent of being the cause of misery to themselves and others. The striking resemblance of these characters to the people around us in this real world is what makes the Mahabharata the most interesting book. It adds relevance to this study, which started with the aim of identifying whether the theory of emotional intelligence can be practically applied in real life situations to help individuals in managing stress and assist them in problem solving. The possibility of the concept being used negatively was also kept in mind. As the study draws to a conclusion, this chapter sums up the findings of the analysis of select characters and identifies the fresh and new prospects in the study of emotional intelligence.

The analysis of the four characters chosen for this study has opened forth interesting prospects in comprehending emotional intelligence. As was seen in the analysis, each character handles his emotions in a distinct way. Duryodhana was aware of his emotions, but this awareness did not enable him to distinguish between its positive and negative effects. He strived to justify his negative emotions of jealousy and hatred which eventually convinced him that he was on the right path. On the other hand Dhritharashtra who was equally aware of his emotions realized its negativity. He was also fully aware of the potency of his emotions in bringing destruction. He strives to steer himself away from those destructive emotions, but fails pathetically. He remains helpless against his destructive
thoughts. As a result, he hides behind a veneer of justice, which only helped him lose respect and trust. Yudhishtira holds on strongly to non-violence and peace to an extent that it becomes the very reason for the terrible Kurukshetra war. As the reader travels with the characters through the upheavals of their lives, he learns the power of emotions in shaping the individual’s destiny. It opens his understanding to managing and controlling his emotions in leading a problem-free, peaceful, fulfilling life. It also helps him understand the emotional struggles in others which would enable him to be more empathetic and at the same time cautious in handling challenging circumstances or complex individuals.

The aim of this study was to find whether

• emotional intelligence helps a person to manage stress, assists in problem solving and be successful in relationships
• a role model of an emotionally intelligent person can be identified for the common man, and
• there is a possibility that EI can be used negatively

Four characters from the Indian epic ‘The Mahabharata’ – Duryodhana, Dhritharashtra, Yudhishtira and Arjuna – were chosen for this purpose. The ‘Ability Model’ of emotional intelligence as proposed by Mayer and Salovey was taken to analyze the said characters’ emotional journey. The four aspects or levels of emotional intelligence as projected by the ability model were applied to the emotional lives of the selected characters. The analysis of these characters against the ability model of emotional intelligence has enabled the reader to comprehend the theory of emotional intelligence in the backdrop of real life challenges. A quick look into the findings of the analysis of the characters will reiterate this fact.

Duryodhana’s character stands a clear example of unbridled emotions wreaking havoc. In spite of being an able administrator (the subjects of Hastinapur were happy and content under his governance), a loyal friend (Karna is a good example of the respect and affection he had for his friends), and an excellent warrior (Krishna warns Yudhishtira and Bhima that Duryodhana cannot be defeated in a duel), he fails to evince an appreciation as these qualities are shrouded in his hatred for the Pandavas. His entire life is spent in scheming
and plotting against the Pandavas which gives him not a moment’s peace. All his decisions are influenced by this ever burning hatred which leads him to a tormented life. At the same time it cannot be denied that these emotions sharpened his thought process (though in the negative) which becomes evident in his careful scheming against the Pandavas. His emotional management also passes muster as one sees evidence of keeping his emotions under check when the circumstances were not in his favour (accepting Dhritharashtra’s decision to give away half the kingdom to the Pandavas after their wedding to Draupadi and during Yudhishthira’s Rajasuya Yagna where the assembled kings are in favour of the Pandavas). Nevertheless, he is a simmering volcano ready to erupt which eventually does at the Pandavas’ defeat in the game of dice. All his skills in emotional intelligence are completely negated with this outburst which marks the destruction of Duryodhana along with the entire Kaurava clan.

The analysis of Duryodhana’s character against the four levels of emotional intelligence as proposed in the ‘ability model’ throws light on the fact that he was good in emotional perception and emotional facilitation of thoughts. Though there is no clear evidence of his emotional understanding, on a few occasions he proves his emotional management skills as well. But a closer study of the character reveals that his emotional intelligence skills were at function only when he saw gratification of his own interests. He does not use them to put things in the right perspective. He could think clearly when he was conspiring against the Pandavas. As long as any action promised the destruction of the Pandavas, he could scheme and plot to the minutest detail. But he fails to address the fundamental question – were the Pandavas actually a threat to him, be it in wealth or popularity. Was it necessary for him to destroy the Pandavas to ensure power for himself. In his baseless hatred and jealousy for the Pandavas, he again fails to identify the inherent quality in Yudhishthira to avoid any conflict. This trait in Yudhishthira is proved time and again as he does not retaliate to any of Duryodhana’s taunts, settles down with half the kingdom without any complaint, accepts the defeat in the game of dice and the following exile meekly, and even after all the ignominious treatment meted out to him, his wife and his brothers is eager to avoid the war by negotiating for a meager five villages in the place of the entire kingdom of Hastinapur.
As Duryodhana fails to exploit or even recognize this characteristic in Yudhishthira, it raises pertinent questions on his emotional intelligence skills. In spite of having the potential to identify emotions in himself and others (as he plots to kill the Pandavas at Varanavata, or as he invites Yudhishthira to the game of dice), his emotional intelligence skills fail him where the Pandavas were concerned. He completely fails to fathom their strengths or weaknesses. This presents an interesting dichotomy of emotions sharpening the individual’s thought process, and at the same time clouding his judgment. So, does one identify Duryodhana as an emotionally intelligent or unintelligent person?

Apart from this crucial question that the analysis raises, it does answer the three questions raised at the beginning of the study. Duryodhana stands on the dark side of emotional intelligence as he uses these skills for destructive purposes, and as a result of which these skills do not help him in problem solving or assist him in managing stress. He earns the wrath of those around him as he holds on to his enmity towards the Pandavas with tenacity. Quite obviously he cannot be identified a role model, at the best presented as a warning to the power of strong, unrestrained emotions wreaking havoc.

If Duryodhana stands testimony to the fact that uncontrolled emotions pull down the admiration for and the honor of a person, Dhritharashtra is an illustration of strong emotions prompting an individual to deceitfulness and manipulation. If Duryodhana stands on the dark side of emotional intelligence, Dhritharashtra stands on the darkest side of the same. His manipulative skills in plotting against the Pandavas, all along maintaining an image of honesty and impartiality strikes a chill in our hearts. He exhibits his adeptness in all the four skills of emotional intelligence as he proceeds with cold precision in annihilating the Pandavas. Though there are fleeting moments where he is tormented by his conscience in prompting and supporting Duryodhana’s evil designs, he remains on the negative side of emotional intelligence by his own choice. He chooses Kanika’s advice on cold blooded politics over Vidura’s sane advice to make peace with the Pandavas. Time and again, he ignores Vidura’s warning that he was heading towards his own destruction in supporting Duryodhana. Knowingly and willingly he chooses his path of treachery and deceit in ensuring the kingdom for his son. His emotional intelligence skills are sharper and
more accurate and he proves himself competent in all the four tenets of the ‘ability model’. Be it emotional perception or emotional facilitation of thought, emotional understanding or emotional management, he was precise in assessing others and shrewd in turning the situations in his favour. He too holds on to his emotions with tenacity. In spite of his knowledge that his strong emotions are leading to destruction, he makes no conscious, sincere attempt to overcome them. He does summon Vidura and makes him preach the values of a just ruler, but lacks the motivation to put that advice to practice.

The analysis of Dhritharashtra’s character tells us that a person can still map his own and others’ destruction with his strong emotions in spite having the ability to perceive, facilitate, understand or manage emotions. The saddest part is that he chooses the path of destruction with his eyes open, unable to contain his emotions. Dhritharashtra too stands testimony to the dichotomy of emotions sharpening the individual’s intellect as well leading him to irrevocable loss. As in the case of Duryodhana, Dhritharashtra too fails evince appreciation for his emotional intelligence skills as they are shrouded in his evil intention to destroy the Pandavas. In answering the questions raised at the beginning of this study, Dhritharashtra’s emotional intelligence skills, employed negatively do not help him lead a stress free life. He is tormented and pulled between his deep love for his son and the knowledge that he was unfair to the Pandavas. Again he stands a strong proof of emotional intelligence being used negatively.

Duryodhana and Dhritharashtra have been proved to be on the darker side of emotional intelligence. Moving on to Yudhishthira, as was seen in the analysis, he was always seen as one who avoided conflicts and strived to live a peaceful, non-controversial life. He retains his composure even at the most trying times (be it disrobing of Draupadi in the open court or when Kichaka physically abuses her again in full view of Virata’s subjects and courtiers). If Duryodhana and Dhritharashtra earn one’s wrath by not controlling their emotions, Yudhishthira does so in not reacting or even responding at the most critical, crucial moments. His management of emotions often identifies him with insensitivity as he remains unmoved by the plight of his wife and his brothers at the hands of Kauravas. If Duryodhana and Dhritharashtra stand at one end of emotional intelligence, Yudhishthira
stands on the other end, both fruitless and potentially destructive. Yudhishthira’s awareness of emotions in himself and others and his management of his emotions have only led him to decisions which had not considered the sensitivities of others. In his eagerness not to antagonize Duryodhana and to avoid war, he throws away his and his brothers’ fortunes. It can be seen that though Yudhishthira had all the skills of an emotionally intelligent person, many a time he displayed insensitivity towards others’ feelings and that strongly disqualifies him as a suitable candidate for a role model. Emotional management is the skill to connect or disconnect to a particular emotion at any given time. Yudhishthira is able to disconnect from his emotions, but is unable to emote at the right time for the right need.

To sum up, it can be said that Yudhishthira had all the skills of an emotionally intelligent person as proposed by Mayer and Salovey, but he also reveals that an emotionally intelligent person can be insensitive if he does not balance between awareness and management of emotions. Answering the question whether his emotional intelligence skills helped him in problem-solving and assist him in leading a stress free life, it has to be accepted that it did help him to resolve the problems, but the significant question remaining, to whose comfort or benefit.

After looking at the complexities of emotions and emotional intelligence, Arjuna’s character breathes life into the theory as he stands an irrefutable proof that emotional perception can lead to emotional facilitation of thought, emotional understanding and emotional management. His life proves that all these abilities will definitely assist a person in problem solving, lead a stress free life and build healthy, strong relationship with people around. Duryodhana, Dhritharashtra, and Yudhishthira help one understand that emotions or emotional intelligence is not an out of the pocket remedy for maladies, sometimes even the very intelligence of emotions leading to trouble. Arjuna on the other side stands for everything positive about the theory that emotional intelligence does lead an individual to a better life fruitful in every sense for himself and others.

As has been said elsewhere in this study, it would be befitting to conclude that emotional intelligence should be combined with a sense of duty and responsibility towards the society
at large – ‘Lokasangrahameva’ (for the welfare of society) as Lord Krishna declares. When it fails to do so, it definitely spells doom.

8.2 OUTCOMES OF THE STUDY

As one goes through the upheavals and challenges faced by the above discussed four characters, one can surmise that –

1) Whether negative or positive, when a person is not able to contain or regulate his emotions, he falters in his decisions. Duryodhana and Yudhishtira are both examples of this fact. While Duryodhana leads himself to destruction as he is unable to contain his hatred and jealousy for the Pandavas, Yudhishtira in his eagerness not to antagonize anyone almost throws away his good fortune and finally inherits a kingdom that is empty and fruitless. If jealousy and hatred are Duryodhana’s nemesis, it is goodness to the extreme that is the reason for Yudhishtira’s misfortunes.

2) There can be no half measures in being emotionally intelligent. Duryodhana and Yudhishtira do show promising potential for emotional intelligence, but fail to capitalize as they are defined by their penchant for strong emotions – good or bad.

3) Emotional Intelligence can be manipulated and used negatively as is seen in the case of Dhritharashtra, who is fully aware of his and others’ emotional states and exploits it to the fullest extent. His support to Duryodhana is also an exploitation of Duryodhana’s jealousy for achieving his own intention – retaining the throne of Hastinapur for himself and his sons.

4) Emotional intelligence does help a person to maintain his integrity, gives him the courage to face the challenges of life, helps him manage stress and build good relationships, as is seen in the case of Arjuna who can be identified as a role model.

5) It is but a thin line that separates emotional management and insensitivity as is seen in the case of Yudhishtira.

6) Emotions have the power to facilitate intelligent thought process and at the same time cloud a person’s clarity of thought and judgment, as is seen in the cases of Duryodhana and Dhritharashtra.
7) If leaving strong emotions go unchecked leads to destruction (as in the case of Duryodhana and Dhritharashtra), not emoting at the needful times will also lead to irreparable damage (as in the case of Yudhishthira).

8) Arjuna can be identified as a role model for those who strive to be emotionally intelligent, and Duryodhana and Dhritharashtra as warning to the dark side of emotional intelligence.

**8.3 SCOPE FOR FURTHER STUDY**

As this study comes to a close, it throws open innumerable prospects of understanding and applying the theory of emotional intelligence in real life through the various other characters of the Mahabharata. As mentioned earlier, each character in the Mahabharata is a strong personality who can be analyzed and studied to throw light on the complexities of emotions and the responses they evince in people. Karna, Bhishma, Vidura, Drona are some of the characters who need to be studied to understand better, human mind and its emotionality. Apart from this the women characters can also be researched upon which will help one understand a woman’s perspective in handling emotions. There can also be a comparative study between the men and the women characters which would enable one to assess whether gender plays any prominent role in emotional intelligence. Furthermore, these characters can be given as case studies and analyzed in training sessions for emotional intelligence which would help the trainees understand the theory better. Probably, they can be introduced in high school and college level curricula to enable the students to understand and appreciate human emotions and its complexities. An insightful Sanskrit sloka proclaims,

*Paadam acharyamaadattam, paadam shishyah swamedhayaa,*

*Paadam sahabhrhmachaaribhyah, paadam kaala krameena.*

From the above sloka, it is recognized that one fourth of the knowledge gained by a student is from the teacher, one fourth from his own self, one fourth from his fellow pupils and one fourth during the course of his life. The experiences in life are sometimes so unforgiving that though the lesson is learnt, it leaves inexplicable scars on the individual. An effective alternative would be to learn life’s lessons through other people’s lives, and this is where
literature takes the lead. As the student rides the tide with the complex characters of the Mahabharata, he gains the wisdom to face life and its challenges with ease and confidence. This research can be considered fruitful if it makes a positive change in at least one student’s life. With this closing remark, the study draws to a close, concluding that this research in understanding emotional intelligence through the Mahabharata is only the beginning, a mere drop in the ocean with innumerable, exciting prospects.