Chapter – II

Literature Review

2.1 OVERVIEW

The theory of ‘Emotional Intelligence’ (EI) could not have come at a more opportune time when the society is heading towards abysmal depths of intolerance and violence over slightest provocation. In 1997, John Gottman in his book, ‘Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child’, spoke about the marked difference in the psyche and approach of children to various issues. He observed that children from the mid 1970’s to late 1980’s had become more sulky, irritable, nervous, depressed and lonely. With both the parents working to meet the economic demands, families becoming smaller, children were facing a lack of social life. They were turning to television and computers for entertainment and interaction and time spent with relatives and friends were on the downhill. Fifteen years later, we can see that the situation has only regressed further. Thus, the concept of harnessing and driving the crest of emotions towards a better life holds promise for the future.

Any theory, to sustain interest and to withstand the rigorous demands of academic research needs to establish itself as distinct from and at the same time have some correlation to the already proven existing theories of the same field. A distinct research paradigm emerges when scientists deal with data in a systematic fashion (Kuhn, 1970). The theory or the model is then subject to severe discussion, debates and questioning which takes the concept to its maturity. Unless the theory holds itself well against the Karl Popper’s Test – that “the theory has the potential to explain things that other theories cannot, or if it has the potential to explain things better than other competing theories.”(Emmerling and Goleman, 2003), it cannot be accepted. Does the theory of EI meet these standards? As a concept which holds promise for a better society that is tolerant and empathetic towards the flaws and shortcomings of their fellow humans, the theory of EI has the added responsibility of proving itself beyond doubt not only to academicians but also to the non-academic people.
As an emerging field, diverse definitions are proposed to define the concept and it becomes imperative to clarify which EI is going to be discussed. Although the phrase emotional intelligence has been in the literature for a while even before Payne, (Leuner, 1966, as cited in Petrides, 2011) the concept in its present form has its roots in Salovey and Mayer’s construct of 1990. The concept was welcomed as new and if proven, a path breaking finding. But, the current popularity of the theory owes itself to Daniel Goleman’s book ‘Emotional Intelligence – Why it can matter more than IQ’ (1995). Following the popularity, innumerable constructs have been proposed (many not based on empirical data – Goleman’s book itself was not strictly based on research or tested data). Active research and interest in this field has led it to its current position where the theory has forked into two different approaches – Mayer and Salovey’s ‘ability’ model and Goleman and Bar-On’s ‘mixed’ models. Pertrides and Furnham (2001), claimed that there was a fundamental difference in the measurement and construct of Emotional Intelligence and subsequently proposed a differentiation between the ‘Ability EI’ and ‘Trait EI’. According to them, ‘Ability EI’ involved actual abilities which were directly applicable to cognitive ability, and thus should be measured with ‘maximum-performance tests’ (Pertrides and Furnham, 2001, pg. 425), and ‘Trait EI’ which comprises “behavioral dispositions and self-perceived abilities” was related to the study of personality and thus should be measured using self report questionnaires (Pertrides and Furnham, 2001, pg. 426). The three major models of EI – “the ability-based model of Mayer and Salovey, Bar-On’s model of Emotional-Social Intelligence, and Goleman’s model of EI” (Fernandez-Berrocal and Extremera, 2006) are here briefed in the following section.

2.1.1 GOLEMAN’S ‘COMPETENCY MODEL’

As observed earlier, Goleman’s contribution to the field of EI is phenomenal in the sense that he took the theory to a wider section of the audience and popularized it to such an extent that it made to the cover page of ‘Times’ instantaneously. Though criticized as embracing claims not rooted in research (Lindebaum, 2009), he nevertheless sensationalized the topic with his book ‘Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ’ with tall claims bordering on hyperbolic sometimes, making sweeping statements
like EI was the reason for “nearly 90% of the difference” between star performers and average ones (Goleman, 1998). Inspired by the findings of Salovey and Mayer, Goleman pursued research in emotional intelligence and proposed a four branch model which was further classified into twenty emotional competencies. He differed from Salovey and Mayer’s model of EI, as he added a few personality traits like trustworthiness, innovation, team player, etc., which has also earned the criticism that it was ‘preposterously all encompassing’ (Locke, 2005). He believes that these emotional competencies are not innate talents, but those that can be learned and developed. In turn, the potential to develop these emotional competencies depended on a person’s emotional intelligence which he believes is a latent, inborn talent. Emotional intelligence and emotional competencies are like apples and apple sauces (Goleman, 2003). While EI is natural, emotional competencies are the offshoot of EI. His four branch model (2001) included:

a) Self-Awareness: Emotional Self-awareness, Accurate Self-Assessment and Self-Confidence.

b) Self-Management: Self-Control, Trustworthiness, Conscientiousness, Adaptability, Achievement Drive and Initiative.

c) Social Awareness: Empathy, Social Orientation and Organizational Awareness.


Goleman (1998) was the first to apply the concept of EI to business through his article in Harvard Business Review. He drew attention to the fact that effective leaders had a high degree of emotional intelligence. A sound technical knowledge and a good IQ were ‘threshold capabilities’ (Goleman 1998) which were ‘entry level requirements’. On the other hand, good interpersonal, social and team building skills, help a person develop a good rapport with his colleagues, higher officials and subordinates which are vital for a person’s success. If IQ got a person a good job, it was EI which would help him retain it
and be successful in his workplace (Emmerling and Goleman, 2003; Cherniss et. al. 1998; Boyatzis and Oosten, 2002).

Based on the Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) – already developed by Richard Boyatzis (1994), which measured the competencies of managers, executives, and leaders, Goleman developed his Emotional Competency Inventory (ECI) – a multi rater instrument that provides self, manager, direct report, and peer ratings on a series of behavioral indicators of emotional intelligence (Stys and Brown, 2004). Forty percent of the new instrument was from the earlier questionnaire SAQ, which was validated against the performance of hundreds of managers, executives and leaders in North America (Boyatzis et. al., 2000). Aiming to develop an instrument that can be applied across all occupations and life settings, the ECI improved upon the SAQ. Competencies which were not addressed by the SAQ were added and focused on with new test items. Based on the samples collected from 596 people who were managers and sales persons, reliability and intercorrelation of the items were analyzed and the ECI was revised and rewritten in 1999. The revised version asks the respondents to describe themselves and others on each item on a scale of 1 to 6 with each step progressively labeled beginning with “… the behavior is only slightly characteristic of the individual…” to the highest response “… the behavior is highly characteristic if this individual…” (Boyatzis et. al. 2000). A study conducted on 358 managers across the Johnson and Johnson Consumer & Personal Care Group assessed if there were any specific leadership skills that distinguished between high and average performers and came out with significant results that found a strong relationship between superior performing and emotional competence (Cavallo & Brienza, 2004).

The ECI is complete and effective in the sense, it incorporates a person’s self-assessment and others’ assessment of him/her giving a 360° perspective, but, it also raises a serious question of reliability. How far can a person’s assessment of himself be accepted is debatable, given the condition that he might be giving an answer based on his presumptions regarding his emotional competencies. An overconfident person might think that he is emotionally competent whereas a person with low self-esteem might under estimate his competencies. As Grubb and McDaniel (2007) observe, the mixed models are vulnerable to
faking as they include ‘non cognitive dimensions’ and use self-report measures. Also, it is
opined that the content of ECI overlaps with at least four of the Big Five personality
dimensions and other psychological concepts in motivation and leadership (Matthews et.
al., 2002; Van Rooy & Viswesvaran, 2004, as cited in Conte, 2005). As very few ‘peer
reviewed assessments of the reliability and validity of ECI have been undertaken and
published’ (Conte, 2005), it is best to leave the validity of the construct to further research
and study.

2.1.2 BAR-ON’S ‘TRAIT MODEL’

Bar-On’s model of emotional intelligence focuses on the ‘potential’ for success rather than
success itself and is more process-oriented than outcome-oriented (Bar-On 2002). He posits
that emotional intelligence can be learned and developed over a period of time through
training, programming and therapy (Stys and Brown, 2004). The Bar-On model differs
from Goleman’s model as it includes stress management and general mood components
like optimism and happiness. Apart from these, he incorporates reality testing, which
asserts how far a person is aware of the gap between the actual meaning and his construed
meaning of a given situation, and also impulse control which is an ability to control oneself
from reacting to a situation in a reckless manner. Bar-On’s (2006) model outlines the
following five components which are further classified into fifteen subcomponents.

**Intrapersonal**: Self Regard, Emotional Self-Awareness, Assertiveness, Independence, and
Self-Actualization.

**Interpersonal**: Empathy, Social Responsibility and Interpersonal Relationship

**Adaptability**: Reality Testing, Flexibility and Problem Solving

**Stress Management**: Stress Tolerance and Impulse Control

**General Mood Components**: Optimism and Happiness

As the construct incorporates both emotional and social competencies, Bar-On refers to it
as the ‘Emotional Social Intelligence’ (ESI) rather than emotional intelligence or social
intelligence (2006). He defines his ESI as “... a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands.” Bar-On’s model associates emotional intelligence to positive psychology which contributes significantly to a person’s happiness and psychological wellbeing in life (Bar-On, 2010; Bar-On, 2006). He believes that individuals with higher emotional quotient (EQ) are more competent in coping with demands, challenges and pressures of everyday life. Thus, the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) – a self-report measure – used to measure the ESI, focuses on measuring one’s ability to cope with environmental demands and pressures (Bar-On, 2002), rather than personality traits or his cognitive capabilities.

ESI is operationalised by the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) which was originally constructed to examine a theory of emotional and social functioning on which Bar-On was working for his dissertation. Bar-On (2006) claims that his model is a ‘better predictor of human performance’ in the workplace and in academics. The US Air Force (USAF) explored the potential application of EQ-I to predict the performance of pilots, Para rescue jumpers and air traffic controllers in their training programs and found that the accuracy level of this model was 75%. By being able to identify the trainees who would successfully complete the training, the USAF estimates that it will be able to save approximately $190,000,000 by selecting the right people for the course. The results also confirmed the predictive validity of Bar-On’s construct (Bar-On, 2010). Nevertheless, questions are raised regarding the content and predictive validity of EQ-i. Newsome et. al. (2000), point out to a study undertaken on 160 Canadian college students, where the total EQ-i score had a correlation of just 0.01 with their GPA (Grade Point Average) and conclude that the data is inadequate to use the EQ-i as a selection device. It has also been noted that Bar-on’s model, similar to that of Goleman’s ECI is vulnerable to being faked, as the respondents can deliberately doctor their answers for positive scoring (Grubb III & McDaniel, 2007). Thus, the field is still open for the construct to be scientifically proven and validated.
2.1.3 MAYER AND SALOVEY’S ‘ABILITY MODEL’

When Mayer and Salovey introduced the concept of EI in 1990, they defined it as “an ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions.” They believed that any task is loaded with information, ‘affective information’ and understanding and regulating it would help individuals ‘to solve problems and regulate behavior’ (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). They conceptualized a set of skills which they believed would assist a person in regulating his emotions. They identified three broad skills – ‘appraisal and expression of emotion, regulation of emotion and utilization of emotion- which were further classified as:

**a) appraisal and regulation of emotion:** in self (verbal and non-verbal perception) and others (non-verbal perception and empathy) – a person who is able to accurately perceive his emotions will also be able to respond to his emotions accurately, and in turn will be better in expressing them to others. At the same time, he should be able to understand the emotions in others as well. This allows him to adapt to the situation and have better social skills. These skills are a part of emotional intelligence as it requires the processing of emotional information in oneself and in others.

**b) regulation of emotion:** in self and others – emotions can be triggered and regulated according to a person’s will, when he is adept at consciously perceiving those factors which have a feel good effect and those which do not. This ability also sharpens his senses towards perceiving the emotions of others and effectively adapting himself or influencing others as the situation demands. As the authors themselves acknowledge, this can sometimes have a negative bearing as people may try to manipulate others to meet their own demands – good or bad.

**c) utilization of emotions:** flexible planning, creative thinking, redirected attention and motivation – this ability is included in the construct because, people with emotional intelligence should be at an advantage in solving problems adaptively (Salovey and Mayer,
An awareness of his emotional state helps him plan his actions, think creatively, redirect his focus and motivate himself to get the best out of any situation.

### 2.1.3.1 IMPROVEMENTS MADE ON THE ABILITY MODEL

The initial conceptualization focused on perceiving and regulating emotions. As the authors felt that this was incomplete without ‘thinking’ about emotions, they redefined the theory as “Emotional Intelligence is the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). Based on this definition, a four branch model was proposed – the four branches moving from basic psychological processes to more complex ones. They also believe that an emotionally intelligent person had the ability to progress through these four levels and master most of them faster than others with lower EI. The four branches each, were further subdivided into four sets of skills, as follows:

**a) Perception, Appraisal and Expression of Emotion:** This is an ability to identify emotions in oneself, in others, express them accurately and further discriminate between honest and dishonest expressions of feelings.

**b) Emotional Facilitation of Thinking:** This sharpens the thought process as emotions direct attention towards important information and the emotions can be used to classify the information for better judgment and memory. Emotionality helps people to have multiple perspectives. A happy mood leads to optimistic views and a bad mood to pessimistic thoughts. An awareness of these mood swings assists a person in approaching a problem in specific ways with better reasoning and creativity.

**c) Understanding and Analysing emotions:** It is based on employing emotional knowledge: to identify the subtle relationships and differences between similar emotions – eg. Loving and liking, and also interpret the meanings of those emotions. The person also has the ability to identify complex emotions occurring simultaneously (love and hate, fear
and surprise, etc.) and also perceive the transition from one emotion to another (when anger turns to satisfaction or anger leading to shame).

d) Reflective Regulation of Emotions to Promote Emotional and Intellectual Growth:
It is an ability to be open to emotions, good or bad, and thus have the power to voluntarily attach or detach from an emotion. The person also has the competence to reflect on his own and others’ emotions and thus be able to manage emotions in himself and others.

2.1.3.2 TESTING AND VALIDATION OF THE ‘ABILITY MODEL’
To test whether emotional intelligence meets the standard criteria to be accepted as scientifically legitimate, Mayer et. al. (1999) proposed the Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale (MEIS) and proved that there exists good evidence and possibility that emotional intelligence is a distinct form of intelligence. The MEIS used a 12 subscale ability test to assess the emotional intelligence of the participants (503 adults and 229 adolescents). Twelve tasks measured the different abilities classified under the following four branches:

- emotional perception – identify emotions in faces, music, designs and stories
- emotional facilitation of thinking – describe emotional sensations and asked to simulate situations where any specific emotion is predominant
- emotional understanding – recognize when two emotions blend (surprise and joy, etc.) and when one emotion progresses into another (anger becoming hatred, etc.)
- emotional management – given imaginary situations and asked how they would act.

The answers were analysed based on the consensus (the group), the expert and the target scoring. The results showed that emotional intelligence could be operationalised as a set of abilities; was distinct from the existing theories of intelligence, and still showed a correlation to verbal intelligence (part of general intelligence) and was also proved that emotional intelligence develops with age. The most important question raised against MEIS was pertaining to the validity of the correct answers. Robert et. al., (2001), Perez et. al. (2005) questioned on how accurate would be the ‘correctness’ of the right answers. Mayer
and his colleagues (Mayer et. al., 2001; Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004) accepting the legitimacy of the doubt raised, argued that MEIS was but a maiden attempt to operationalise EI, and the model was in the process of striving for a test that would successfully evaluate the EI of a person. The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) proposed in 2003, further addressed and successfully resolved the issue whether there are correct answers to the tasks given. It improved on the MEIS by bringing in twenty one ‘emotions experts’ as per Legree (1995) who stated that ‘aggregation of experts beyond two is necessary to achieve a reliable identification of answers’. The reliability of the test was seen to be good, and the correlation and factorial structure showed that all the tasks given were positively intercorrelated (Mayer et. al., 2003). As Emmerling and Goleman (2003) point out, (quoting Van Rooy and Visweswaran in press) MEIS and its successor MSCEIT show correlation with traditional measures of intelligence which is a prerogative in identifying any new construct as an ‘intelligence’. Discussing further on the legitimacy of the ‘ability model’ over other models of EI, Mayer et. al. (2004; 2008) posit that much of the concern stems from the exaggerated claims of certain mixed models and also the inclusion of personality and non-intellective elements as a part of emotional intelligence construct. Also, as Day and Carroll (2008) feel, unlike the mixed models, the ability based model is less susceptible to faking. Compared to the mixed ability model, the ability model proposes a ‘purer’ approach to the theory strictly adhering to a ‘cooperative combination’ (Robert et. al., 2001) of emotions and intelligence. An analysis by Van Rooy, Visweswaran and Pluta (2005) also support the claim that the ability model over the mixed ability models helps in distinguishing EI as distinct from IQ and other personality models. Their study found that while self-report measures showed high correlation to personality measures, the MSCEIT ‘did not correlate highly with either personality or cognitive ability’. Nevertheless, doubts regarding the validity and reliability of operationalising the ability model remains. Although the ability model appears to be the most promising one of all EI measures (Conte, 2005), as Mayer and Salovey (2003) themselves propose, ‘the applied use of EI tests must proceed with great caution’. With a history of just twenty years, though much is unknown of emotional intelligence, EI remains a promising area of study, but with ‘significant gaps in knowledge’ (Mayer et. al. 2008).
Before moving on to conclude the literature review, some of the ‘gaps’ are deliberated in the following paragraphs.

2.2 ARE WOMEN EMOTIONALLY MORE INTELLIGENT THAN MEN?

The foremost questions that arises as one contemplates emotional intelligence is – is there any difference between men and women in their emotionality; are women emotionally more intelligent than men; is it true that men are more logical as women are emotional. Traditionally it has been believed that women experience the positive and the negative emotions more intensely than men. Be it social factors or biological ones, women are considered to be more emotional than men. The biological explanation contends that a woman’s biochemistry is equipped better to deal with one’s own and others’ emotions as certain areas in the brain, which decide the emotionality of a person can be larger in women when compared to men (Baron-Cohen 2002; 2003), and that there is a marked difference in the cerebral processing of emotions between men and women (Craig et. al. 2009). Baron-Cohen (2002) also argues that the brains of men and women are structurally different. As a woman’s brain is structured to empathize, a man’s brain inclines towards understanding and constructing systems. On the other hand the social explanation argues that women are traditionally educated to handle emotions without any inhibitions whereas men are tuned to minimize their emotional responses (Sánchez, Fernández-Berrocal, Montañés, & Latorre, 2008). Women are also associated with the role of sustaining smooth interpersonal relationships within the family or in the society and thus naturally inclined to be more emotionally intelligent than men (Dunn, 2002; Nolen-Hoeksema & Jackson, 2001; Tapia, 1999). Even as empirical evidence (Hall & Mast, 2008; Ciarrochi, Hynes, & Crittenden, 2005; Brody & Hall, 2000) support the idea that women are emotionally more intelligent than men, specific studies pertaining to gender and emotions remain divided about the popular belief.

Though studies based on ability tests like MSCEIT that include gender in their analysis conclude that women are emotionally more intelligent than men (Extremera, Fernández-Berrocal, & Salovey, 2006; Palmer et al., 2005; Kafetsios, 2004), they are divided and vary on what aspects of EI do women score better. While some studies show women to be
superior in the experiential aspects like emotional perception and emotional facilitation (Castro-Schilo & Kee, 2010; Farrelly & Austin, 2007, Study 1; Livingstone & Day, 2005), yet other studies have shown them better in emotional understanding and emotional management (Farrelly & Austin, 2007, Study 2; Goldenberg, Matheson, & Mantler, 2006). Fernandez-Berrocal, et. al. (2012) have found that women scored better in emotional facilitating, understanding and managing. Some maintain that women are better in all the aspects of EI (Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2009; Extremera et al., 2006; Lumley, Gustavson, Partridge, & Labouvie-Vief, 2005; Palmer et al., 2005). Also, the magnitude of their superiority varies from study to study. Some studies report them as marginally better than men (Livingstone & Day, 2005; Day & Carroll, 2004), some conclude that the difference is medium (Farrelly & Austin, 2007; Palmer et al., 2005), while others maintain that there is a strong, marked difference in the emotionality of men and women (Joseph & Newman, 2010). Thus, research remains forked over gender playing a significant role in emotional intelligence. The challenges before emotional intelligence do not stop here, but expands as it strives to prove itself beyond doubt. Some of them have been briefed in the next subsection.

2.3 SOME CHALLENGES BEFORE THE THEORY OF ‘EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE’

The theory of emotional intelligence promises to predict and improve the life skills of individuals. The proponents of the theory believe that in understanding, analyzing, and managing emotions in themselves and others, lies the key to an improved quality of life. As the operationalisation of the theory is the crucial factor which validates their claim, the first and foremost challenge that faces the theorists is to design an instrument or improve upon existing measures which will accurately evaluate and assess the emotional skills of an individual. This will also set to rest the other fundamental question whether emotional intelligence is a distinct form of intelligence or simply old wine in new bottle.

Another challenge that faces the theory is that there are too many definitions and approaches which is though vital and a healthy sign for any new theory, many a times it leads to confusion among researchers as to which definition or approach has to be taken.
This has also led people to accuse the concept as mere hype, and ignoring or trashing the theory as non-existent. With too many definitions, it is often criticized as a vague idea with its validity coming under strong suspect (Robbins and Judge, 2009). But, as Cherniss et al. (2006) point out, even after hundred years of research, ‘there is still not a consensus about what IQ is or the best way to measure it’. To judge or criticize EI to a different standard definitely needs rethinking. Thus, in the existing scenario, it becomes imperative that the researchers should carefully consider the current status of the theory along with its pitfalls (Walter et. al., 2011) before carrying out their studies.

Also, the theorists have so far paid attention only to the positive effects of emotional intelligence, ignoring the potential ‘dark side’ of EI (Farrelly et. al., 2007; Austin et. al., 2007; Jordan, Ashkanasy,&Ascough, 2007; Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008; Kilduff et.al. 2010; Nagler et. al. 2014). EI is like any other intelligence and there is a fair chance of misusing or using it for personal and selfish ends. As Kilduff et. al. (2010) point out, individuals with high emotional intelligence when faced with stiff competition and scarce resources are likely to use their skills in their own interests even at the expense of others. The idea that EI can be manipulated gathers more importance when we realize that emotional intelligence is a practical concept. It does not focus on a problem which needs a solution on paper alone, but deals with an idea which real people apply in real life situations. The margin for error is very less and thus utmost care has to be taken that the theory is foolproof before it reaches the common man. As Wexler (2000) points out, “The emotional intelligence literature, in its rush to impress upon readers the utility of the concept, sidesteps the discussion (one I believe to be entirely necessary) between functional and dysfunctional affect management. The advocates of emotional intelligence would have us believe that emotional intelligence is only used wisely and well.” But,

- How do people tackle a person who is feigning his emotions?
- Are they prepared to encounter such a situation?
- How does one counter a situation where an individual is faking his emotional responses?
These are important questions which the theory is still to answer. Apart from these, the question of validation and measurement still remains an open field with various players contending for a legitimate place for their constructs. But the fact remains that in spite of all these challenges and imperfections, the theory continues to encourage, inspire, motivate and excite researchers in applying the concept in various fields.

2.4 THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN PERCEIVING AND ASSESSING EMOTIONS

On a positive note, as more research and findings in the theory accumulate, there is a distinct recognition for a broader framework for emotional intelligence which would enhance the applied utility of the theory (Ashkanasy and Daus (2005) as cited in Emmerling and Boyatzis, 2012). As cited by the authors, it has been seen that ‘mixed models’ are able to predict the performance across a wide range of occupations better when compared to the ‘ability model’. It becomes clear that a comprehensive outlook of the theory taking all the models into account, and maybe, devise a model which incorporates the skills as advised by all these models would be more fruitful and effective. Further research should include the role of culture in defining an emotionally intelligent person, as it is a known fact that culture has a major role to play in influencing an individual’s psychological and cognitive responses.

As a fresh concept with only twenty years of history, the theoretical models have not concentrated much on the cross-cultural aspect of emotions (Sharma et. al., 2009). Culture plays a significant role in deciding a person’s response to any given situation and it has been recognized that basic psychological processes depend on socio-cultural practices and meanings (Triandis, 2000). Broadly speaking, culture can be distinguished under two branches – the collectivist and the individualist (Srivastava, et. al., 2008). In a collectivist culture, individuals see themselves as interdependent with their groups (family, friends, society, tribe, country, etc.), giving priority to the interests and goals of the ‘collective’ over their own personal goals (Triandis, 2002). In an individualist culture, people are independent and give more importance to personal goals and personal needs (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). The Asian countries generally fall under the collectivist culture, and North
America, Australia, and New Zealand, to name a few, are categorized under the individualist culture. Explicit expression of strong feelings like anger, love, frustration, etc. are considered as uncouth and are restrained in public in collectivistic cultures, but the same is considered essential in individualistic cultures. The way people perceive and exhibit emotions varies according to their cultural background. What applies to one culture will be an anomaly to the other. Thus, it becomes imperative to study the concept of EI from the perspective of different cultures of the world and see whether it can be applied universally.

The following segment will discuss the theory from the perspective of Indian culture as the focus of this research is an understanding of emotional intelligence through the characters of Mahabharata. An insight into the Indian way of life and its philosophy will provide the reader with the knowledge needed to understand and appreciate the work better.

2.4.1 ‘EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE’ AS UNDERSTOOD IN THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

Following the previous section that discussed the theory of EI in the western context, this section studies the concept of controlling one’s emotions against the Indian background. Desires are like fire, the more one tries to satisfy them, the more it burns brightly. As Ayyappa Dikshita in his treatise ‘Kuvalayananda Karikah’ says,

\[
Girirmahaan girerabdhirmaaanabdherabho mahat
nabhaso.pi mahadbrahmaa tatopyaashaa gariyasi \quad (In \text{ Sanskrit})
\]

A mountain is huge, an ocean is bigger than the mountain, the sky is bigger than the ocean, Brahma is bigger than the sky and DESIRE is even bigger than him (Brahma).

Bhartruhari’s Vairagya Satakam says,

\[
Bhoga na bhukta vayameva bhuktah, tapo na taptaa vayameva taptah
kalo na yato vayameva yatah, trishna na jirna vayameva jirnah \quad (In \text{ Sanskrit})
\]

Pleasures aren’t satisfied, only we are consumed by our pleasures; when penance isn’t done, we are ‘done’; time doesn’t pass, only we do; thirst is not ‘over’, only we are.
Closer to this research, the Bhagavad-Gita, which is a part of the Mahabharata says,

\[
\text{Yam hi na vyathayanthyethe purusham purusharshabha} \\
\text{Samadhukha sukham dheeram somruthathvaya kalpathe} \quad \text{(In Sanskrit)}
\]

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

\text{(Bhagavad-Gita, Ch. II, verse 15)}

A person who is calm and unperturbed even in the face of adversities, treating pain and pleasure on the same scale, is the one who attains immortality, says this sloka from the Bhagavad-Gita – the song celestial. Is it the same that the theorists of emotional intelligence are looking for, as they reiterate the importance of keeping a check on one’s emotions for a peaceful and successful life? The following discussion throws light on the striking similarities between an emotionally intelligent person and the ‘Sthithapragnya’, as Lord Krishna calls him in the Bhagavad Gita.

\textit{“… Horror and doubt distract} \\
\textit{His troubled thoughts, and from the bottom stir} \\
\textit{The hell within him; for within him Hell} \\
\textit{He brings, and round about him, nor from Hell} \\
\textit{One step, no more than from Himself, can fly} \\
\textit{By change of place….”}

\quad \text{(Milton, 1975)}

As Satan flies out of hell to avenge himself, one wonders how he could fly away from hell. When God had banished him away from heaven, how could he come back? But does Satan escape Hell? Milton explains Satan’s curse beautifully – “The Hell within him; for within him Hell…” The real hell is within him, in his mind, his thoughts. Where can he fly away from himself? Unless the change, the repentance comes from within, there is no escape. As
Milton subtly points out to the power of mind over body, Krishna in Bhagavad-Gita is open about his thoughts on the same.

The Bhagavad-Gita (the divine song), a part of ‘Mahabharata’ is the teachings of Lord Krishna (God incarnate) to Arjuna (the Pandava prince) on the battle field, in the form of a conversation. It is considered to be the essence of the four Vedas (Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva) (Robinson, 2005; Easwaran, 1985). The Vedas are Hindu religious texts which include hymns, incantations, religious rituals and sacrificial rites (Goodall, 1996). The Bhagavad-Gita gives the core message of the Vedas in a matter-of-fact manner, thus being a more practical document than the Vedas (Jeste and Vahia, 2008).

2.4.1.1 ‘EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE’ AS DISCUSSED IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

The background is the Kurukshetra war where the first cousins (the Pandavas and the Kauravas) stand against each other when Arjuna, the warrior non-pareil loses his nerve and refuses to fight. His mind is a cauldron of emotions gripped with the emotional, moral dilemma of to do or not to do. Even as Arjuna struggles to accept the fact that he has to fight his own kith and kin, his guru and his childhood friends, Krishna admonishes his lack of mental strength and points out to the supremacy of the people who have absolute control over their mind and are unperturbed by neither pain nor pleasure.

Yam hi na vyathayanthyethe purusham purusharshabha
Samadhukha sukham dheeram somruthathvaya kalpathe  (In Sanskrit)
That calm man who is the same in pain and pleasure, whom these cannot disturb, alone is able, O great amongst men, to attain to immortality. (Swami Swarupananda, 1996)
(Bhagavad-Gita, Ch. II, Sloka 15)

The setting is perfect to bring out the significance of emotional intelligence. It is the Kurukshetra war, the fight for supremacy between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. The Pandavas having been stripped of their wealth and kingdom through guile and deceit are left with no option but to fight their own brothers and grandsire. The Pandava army rests its hopes on the valour of worthy Arjuna, whose military skills have no match. The war is
about to begin and Arjuna asks Krishna (his divine charioteer) to take the chariot to a place from where he can see all those assembled against him in war. As he sees his gurus Drona and Kripa, his beloved grandsire Bhishma and his brothers the Kauravas, he falters and is gripped with misery. He refuses to fight, saying he did not see any gain or happiness in the kingdom he gains by killing his own kith and kin. The Kurukshetra war is synonymous with the complex circumstances a person faces in his life. The fear, anxiety, misgiving, and desperation of the person is symbolized in Arjuna’s predicament. As Arjuna battles with his emotional turmoil, the reader gets an insight into an emotionally disturbed person’s struggle for clarity of thought and action. Krishna’s guidance to Arjuna gives a practical solution to emerge out of this struggle successfully. One can see striking similarities between Krishna’s emotionally stable person (Sthithapragnya) and Mayer and Salovey’s emotionally intelligent person. Mayer and Salovey identify four stages through which a person becomes emotionally intelligent. The first two stages are when a person identifies and becomes aware of his own and others’ emotions and the awareness leading to a better judgment of the situation he is in and its consequences. The Bhagavad-Gita does not speak of this fundamental requirement of emotional intelligence, but it stresses on the effectiveness of being able to control and manage emotions, (i.e.) the third and fourth stages. The reason is that Arjuna has already satisfied the preconditions as he was aware of his emotional turmoil and clearly spells out his predicament to Krishna. He perfectly understands his misgivings and seeks Krishna’s help to overcome them. The slokas (verses) four to eight of the second chapter of the Bhagavad-Gita bring out the anguish of Arjuna in his own words, in facing his kinsmen in the war.

Karpanyadosopatavahavah pracchami tvam dharmasamudhaceta
yacchreyah syanniscitam bruhi tanme sisyate ham sadhi mam tvam prapannam

(In Sanskrit)

With my nature overpowered by weak commiseration, with a mind in confusion about duty, I supplicate Thee. Say decidedly what is good for me. I am Thy disciple. Instruct me who have taken refuge in Thee.  

(Swami Swarupananda, 1996)
I do not see anything to remove this sorrow which blasts my senses, even were I to obtain unrivaled and flourishing dominion over the earth, and mastery over the gods.

(Swami Swarupananda, 1996)

(Bhagavad-Gita, Ch. II. Slokas 7, 8)

It is clearly seen that Arjuna has what we can call the fundamental requirements of an emotionally intelligent person – emotional perception and assimilation. The precise words chosen by him effectively convey his state of mind. He says that his nature is overpowered by ‘weak commiseration’. He commiserates with himself for being in a place where he has to fight his own dear ones. He feels pity for his cousins who have brought their entire clan to this sorrowful state. But he also realizes that this commiseration is a weak one, one that weakens and confuses him against doing or even deciding on what his duty is, and thus supplicates to Krishna to guide him, advise him on the right course of action. In response to his request, Krishna discusses at length the need for emotional management. It is interesting to note at this juncture that Krishna does not merely stress on effective emotional management, but first spells out the reasons that lead to emotional disturbances and then moves on to the ways of dealing with them. Krishna offers a systematic analysis of the problem at hand and a solution as well. Thus Krishna’s advice becomes more practical. The course of action that he advises Arjuna is one that can be followed by anyone at any place. The guidance is universal in nature and holds meaning even to present day life.

Tracing the root cause of all emotional turmoil, Krishna identifies desire and anger as the two vices that lead an individual to his downfall.

Thinking of objects, attachment to them is formed in a man. From attachment longing, and from longing anger grows.
From anger comes delusion, and from delusion loss of memory. From loss of memory comes the ruin of discrimination, and from the ruin of discrimination, he perishes.

(Swami Swarupananda, 1996).

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

It is the strong desire for and attachment to the worldly objects that drives an individual to his downfall. Desire when not satisfied leads to anger, which in turn leads to delusion. This further destroys the ability to discriminate which leads to complete ruin.

Examples of those who fell to disgrace because of their desire, abound – Dr. Faustus, Macbeth, Satan, Icarus, to name a few. Macbeth, a brave warrior charts his own doom as he is swayed by the desire of becoming the King. He has no compunctions in murdering the unsuspecting King, who visits his castle. Though he does ascend the throne, his accomplishment is one that is wrought with guilt and misgivings that at the end Macbeth is actually happy to die on the battlefield. He feels so relieved from the life of guilt. Dr. Faustus’ blunder is no less as he has willingly sold his soul to the devil for gaining fame. The terrible consequence of his act is not realized by him until the end. When the realization dawns, it is too late. Lucifer falls down to eternal doom as he is overcome by the desire to become God. Icarus’ fall (literal and metaphorical) is because of his desire to reach greater heights than he is actually capable of. All these lives, warn us against greed and lust.

The Indian literature equally focuses on the great heroes who fell to disgrace because of their attachment and desire which lead to ruinous anger. To take an example from the great epic ‘Ramayana’, Ravana the demon king was a great scholar and a great devotee of Lord Shiva. He was well versed in Vedas and also a great astrologer. His expertise in statecraft was recognized even by his opponents. Lord Rama instructs his brother Lakshmana to learn the art of statecraft from the dying emperor after the war. How could such an erudite, scholarly, wise emperor fail to defeat a motley army of monkeys? It was his lust and desire for Sita, Rama’s wife that leads him to his ruin. His desire blinded his wisdom. He lost his
power of discrimination. He failed to realize that abducting another man’s wife against her wishes was a great sin which would eventually destroy him and his kingdom. His power of reasoning vanishes as he is gripped with desire and lust. Thus, it becomes evident that desire leads a man to his ruin, however great he might be. The lessons that can be taken from the life of these heroes stress on the need for overcoming desire, lust and anger. The Bhagavad-Gita thus moves a step forward of the theory of EI and outlines what leads to a loss of discrimination, and cautions the individual. The following section discusses the ‘Sthitapragnya’, the emotionally intelligent person as described by Lord Krishna.

2.4.1.2 ‘STHITHAPRAGNYA’, THE EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT PERSON

The Bhagavad-Gita refers to the emotionally intelligent person as a ‘Sthitapragnya’ (the emotionally stable person). It also describes a ‘Sthitapragnya’. When Arjuna asks Krishna to describe who is a Sthitapragnya,

\[
\text{Sthitaprajnasya ka bhasa samadhisthayā kesava} \\
\text{Sthitadhih kim prabhaseta kīmasita vrajeta kim} \quad \text{(In Sanskrit)}
\]

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

(Swami Swarupananda, 1996)

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

Krishna answers him in twenty one slokas (55 – 72) discussing in detail the qualities of an emotionally stable person.

\[
\text{dukhhesvanudvignamanah sukhese vigatasprah} \\
\text{vitaragabhayakrodhah sthithadhirmunirucyate} \quad \text{(In Sanskrit)}
\]

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

\[
\text{yah sarvatranabhisne hastattatprapya subhasubham} \\
\text{nabhinandati na dvesti tasya prajna pratisthita} \quad \text{(In Sanskrit)}
\]

He who is everywhere unattached, not pleased at receiving good, nor vexed at evil, his wisdom is fixed.
When also, like the tortoise drawing its limbs, he can completely withdraw the senses from their objects, then his wisdom becomes steady.

(Swami Swarupananda, 1996)

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

A ‘Sthithapragnya’ according to Krishna is one who remains unperturbed in the face of calamity, and takes good or evil with equanimity. He is neither happy when something good happens, nor is he affected when things go against him. This does not mean that he does not feel anything. He has the ability to keep his emotions in check and the skill of withdrawing his feelings away from the object of pleasure or pain. Even as a tortoise withdraws its head and legs inside the protective cover of its shell whenever it faces danger, so does an emotionally stable person withdraws all his emotions and feelings within himself and remains unperturbed. He has the power to emotionally attach or detach from any situation, at his will. This is not far from what Mayer and Salovey list as the skills pertaining to the fourth branch of their ‘ability model’ (Salovey, Mayer & Caruso, 2002).

- Ability to be open to feelings, both pleasant and unpleasant
- Ability to monitor and reflect on emotions
- Ability to engage, prolong, or detach from an emotional state
- Ability to manage emotions in oneself, and the
- Ability to manage emotions in others

The difference between Krishna and the proponents of the theory of EI is that Krishna takes a more comprehensive view of the problem. He studies the cause, discusses the effect and also offers the means of encountering the problem successfully. Having identified the cause of all emotional distress, he identifies the qualities of an emotionally stable person and completes the circle by advocating the medicine for the ailment.
2.5 CAN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE BE TAUGHT?

One of the greatest challenges faces EI is whether it can be successfully imparted, and if so what would be the best method. Though there are innumerable training centers and courses which promise to enhance the emotional intelligence of an individual, the question that looms large is, are they really effective, and if so, are they universally applicable irrespective of time place and culture. On the other hand, Krishna’s answer to the problem is universal and is applicable to any individual of any place or culture. It is simple and practical.

2.5.1 ‘NISHKAMA KARMA’ – WORK WITHOUT LONGING FOR ITS FRUITS

To achieve emotional stability, Krishna shows the path of ‘Nishkama Karma’ – action with detachment to the outcome or result of the action. As it was seen earlier, emotional instability stems from attachment to and a longing for the desired object. So Krishna’s advice is to detach oneself from the fruits of one’s action. Through the following slokas, Krishna points out to the efficacy of ‘Nishkama Karma’ in attaining emotional stability.

\[
\text{karmanyevadhikaraste ma phalesu kadacana}
\]

\[
\text{ma karmaphalaheturbhuma te sango’stvakarmani} \quad \text{(In Sanskrit)}
\]

\text{Thy right is to work only; but never to the fruits thereof. Be thou not the producer of the fruits of (thy) actions; neither let thy attachment be towards inaction.}

\[
\text{yogastah kuru karmani sangam tyaktva dhananjaya}
\]

\[
\text{siddhyasiddhyoh samo bhutva samatvam yoga ucyate} \quad \text{(In Sanskrit)}
\]

\text{Being steadfast in Yoga, o Dhananjaya, perform actions, abandoning attachment, remaining unconcerned as regards success and failure. This evenness of mind (in regard to success and failure) is known as Yoga.}
durena hyavaram karma buddhiyagaddhananjaya
buddhau saramanviccha krpanah phalahetavah (In Sanskrit)
Work (with desire) is verily far inferior to that performed with the mind undisturbed by thoughts of results. O Dhananjaya, seek refuge in this evenness of mind. Wretched are they who act for results.

buddhiyukto jahatiha ubhe sukrtaduskrte
tasmadyogaya yuyasva yogah karmasu kausalam (In Sanskrit)
Endued with this evenness of mind, one frees oneself in this life, alike from vice and virtue. Devote thyself, therefore, to this Yoga. Yoga is the dexterity of work.

karmajam buddhiyukta hi phalam tyaktva manisinah
janmabandhinirmuktah padam gacchantyanamayam (In Sanskrit)
The wise, possessed of this evenness of mind, abandoning the fruits of their actions, freed for ever from the fetters of birth, go to that state which is beyond all evil.

(Swami Swarupananda, 1996)
(Bhagavad-Gita, Ch. II, Slokas 47-51)

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

\[ \text{prasade sarvaduhkhanam hanirasyopajayate} \]
\[ \text{prasannacetaso hyasu buddhih paryavatisthate} \quad \text{(In Sanskrit)} \]

*In tranquility, all sorrow is destroyed. For the intellect in him, who is tranquil minded is soon established in firmness.*  

(Swami Swarupananda, 1996)  
(Bhagavad-Gita, Ch.II, Sloka 65)

This is the desired end towards which the proponents of emotional intelligence are working.

Thus, it can be seen that Emotional Intelligence is a concept that is not new to the Indian reader. Though there is hardly any serious research on EI from the Indian perspective (Sharma, 2012), anyone who has read through the ancient Indian literature will be aware that EI is embedded in every text (Goparaj and Sharma, 2009). The Indian philosophical tradition stresses on the powerful nature of emotions, which have to be harnessed for a harmonious life. References to the description and functions of the human mind can be found in the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, and the texts of Ayurveda. Patanjali, who is considered to be the ‘Father of Indian Psychology’, had done a systematic, thorough research on the mysteries of the human mind, thousands of years ahead of the western study (Tattwamayananda, 1994). Though the Indian philosophy has a religious strain which focuses or guides an individual in turning his mind on the Supreme Being, a careful study will reveal the fact that it is perfectly attuned to the down-to-earth needs of the present world as well (Engardio and McGregor, 2006). Hinduism is more a way of life than a religion and combines in it the fundamental principles of social, political and economic life. These principles are advocated through innumerable stories which have been orally passed down to several generations. Mahabharata is one such epic story which has countless tales interwoven within the main plot which throw light on the various moral, ethical, social, and political doctrines. As mentioned earlier, this research aims at bringing the theory of emotional intelligence closer to the common man, by studying it through the select characters.
To summarize what has been discussed so far,

- Emotions are far from being disruptive if engaged and managed properly
- The theory of Emotional Intelligence stresses and proves the importance of reining in the emotions for success in life
- Emotional Intelligence is nothing new to the Indian reader as it is seen embedded in the ancient Indian literature – e.g. The Bhagavad-Gita

The theory of Emotional Intelligence has proved to be a path breaking, significant concept that holds the potential to change the lives of people, as extensive, inexhaustible research brings out the significant role played by EI in several facets of life – academics and psychological well-being (Fine et. al. 2003, Durlak, et. al. 2011; Rivers et. al. 2012), leadership (Walter, et. al. 2011; Cote, et. al. 2010; Boyatzis, et. al. 2012), organizational behavior (Slaski and Cawright, 2003; Groves, et. al. 2008; Kirk, et. al. 2011), social behavior (Nelis, et. al. 2011; stress management (Styhre et al., 2002), and above all the general well being and positive approach to life (Bar-On 2010) it promises. That EI is a theory which has touched and changed the way various fields, including psychology, psychiatry, medicine, sports, business, education are perceived is an irrefutable fact (Picard, Vyzas & Healey, 2001; Mayer et al., 2008; Arora et al., 2010; Crombie, Lombard & Noakes, 2009, 2011; Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2010; Joseph & Newman, 2010; Martins, Ramalho & Morin, 2010; Song et al., 2010; O'Boyle, Humphrey, Polack, Hawver, & Story, 2011; Kumar & Sharma, 2012). As Emotional Intelligence proves itself in having the potential to bring in a remarkable change in the lives of individuals, it also assumes the responsibility of coming closer to the common man. Thus far, the theory has been focusing on the elite and the select group, though it promises to touch the lives of every individual in the society – rich or poor, learned or ignorant. This particular study is a sincere attempt to bridge this gap between the theory and the common man.

2.6 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY

The latter half of the twentieth century saw the pendulum swing towards recognizing the positive role of emotions in a person’s life. This was in response to the extravagant credit
accrued on intellect which had led to a “lack of self understanding and impoverished shallow social relationships” (Mathews et. al. 2004). A person who had academic acclaim was envied, but at the same time was looked upon with derision. He was being ridiculed as a ‘nerd’ who lacked even the basic social skills and who was never in tune with reality (Zeidner and Mathews, 2000). A growing number of people were looking at the prospects of discounting the excessive importance attached to the intellect and gain a platform for other skills which were equally important but hitherto sidelined. ‘Emotional Intelligence’ comes at this juncture and the immense success of the theory is not only because of the novelty of the concept, but also due to growing antipathy towards the undue importance attached to IQ tests. More importantly, the instant popularity of this concept is also a testimony to the fact that people are looking out for ways of strengthening and regulating their emotional life. But how does one achieve emotional intelligence? Is it possible to learn and acquire emotional intelligence or is it an inborn talent? More importantly, how does an emotionally intelligent person conduct himself? Is it possible to identify him? Does the set of abilities proposed by the different proponents of the theory actually define an emotionally intelligent person? While the scientific community is striving towards finding an answer to these questions, this research aims to analyze the theory of emotional intelligence as proposed by Mayer and Salovey (the ability model) by studying select characters of the great Indian epic ‘The Mahabharata’.

Any finding is not complete unless it serves a purpose. As it propels researchers towards fresh ideas and newer avenues, it should bring in a positive change in the common man’s life as well. The theory of emotional intelligence promises both. This research in particular strives at bringing the theory closer to the common man. It helps him identify the emotionally intelligent person. Identifying an emotionally intelligent person in a professional setup is made possible by the various assessment tools proposed by the proponents of the different models. Recognizing the same in one’s day to day life becomes a challenge without a proper tool. It is impossible for a person to be using the assessment tools as proposed by the theorists, in daily life. As Zeidner et. al.(2009) accept, “… researchers have generally ignored the potential costs and practical complications in
applying EI in real life social situations.” The challenge can be overcome when the common man is given a figurehead, a role model, against whom he can compare and identify an emotionally intelligent person. The select characters of Mahabharata serve to this end, as the individual can simultaneously compare himself against these characters and find out where he stands as an emotionally intelligent person. Further, it is psychotherapeutic as it also serves him as a guiding force in tackling his everyday emotional challenges, as he studies the various ways in which these characters tackled their emotional turmoil, successfully or otherwise.

2.7 THE AIM AND FOCUS OF THIS STUDY

As Zeidner et. al. (2009) point out, “… we need a scientific account of how emotional intelligence is expressed in handling the problems and challenges of life. We need, for example, to know how it helps the person adapt to threats and opportunities. This process view is especially important if emotional intelligence, as claimed, is more malleable than IQ. In the absence of understanding the processes, interventions are likely to be futile at best, perhaps even dangerous.” For this, the theory has to be analyzed and studied against real life situations and real people as they conduct themselves in life. This may be a laborious exercise, but there is an alternative as these situations and people can be simulated. Literature comes in as a handy tool which presents us with diverse characters and situations and a study of these characters and situations can help us in understanding the theory better. This leads us to the natural question – is there such a work which replicates life in all its quirks and idiosyncrasies? The answer is a yes as the author of this study identifies the Mahabharata, which has the reputation that, “What is here is found elsewhere. What is not here is nowhere.” (as quoted. by Das, 2009). With this, it is possible to provide a replica of life which helps in assessing how people react in actual life situations. It also brings the theory closer to the common man as it studies the theory from the perspective of the common man.
Thus, the aim and focus of this study is to

- analyze the theory of emotional intelligence against the selected characters of Mahabharata
- inquire whether EI helps a person to manage stress, assists in problem solving and be successful in relationships
- provide a role model of an emotionally intelligent person for the common man, and
- discuss if there is a possibility that EI can be used negatively

Four characters – Duryodhana, Dhritharashtra, Yudhishtira, and Arjuna are selected for the study and discussed in the forthcoming chapters in the said order. The reason for the characters being studied in the aforesaid order is, from Duryodhana to Arjuna, these characters display the skills of emotional intelligence in varying degrees from the least to the highest. As mentioned earlier, the study chooses the ‘ability model’ of Salovey and Mayer.

2.8 THE RELEVANCE OF MAHABHARATA

The Mahabharata is an epic which has enamored millions with its brilliant portrayal of life in all its shades. There is no absolute goodness or absolute evil in any of the characters. Even the character of Krishna – who is supposed to be god-incarnate – has shades of gray. Every character can be easily identified and related to. The Mahabharata is not about life ‘as it should be’, rather life ‘as it is’ (Manikutty, 2012). Be it the character sketching or the challenges faced by them in their lives, it is a common and well acknowledged belief in India that what is not there in the Mahabharata, cannot be found anywhere in the Bharata (India). The Mahabharata thus offers a perfect setting to analyze the practical application of the emotional intelligence skills. The foremost aim of this study is to analyze the different characters and study the ways in which they deal with the challenges of life, against a background of the skills proclaimed to be the characteristics of an emotionally intelligent person. As Mayer and Salovey opine, the best way to educate people on
emotional intelligence would be through ‘engaging stories’ (1997). As the characters parley with diverse emotional turmoil, the readers observe, think, analyze, and learn from the mistakes of the characters. Complex stories stimulate complex emotional learning. To quote Mayer and Salovey (1997),

“The ways in which the feelings of characters motivate their actions, which in turn moves forward the plot, is a lesson in emotional perception for young adults as much as it is in plot construction. In fact, one cannot evaluate a plot without asking “What does this character, with his history and personal style, feel in this situation,” and then, “How reasonable is it that someone feeling this way would act as the character does?” Literature is probably the first home of the emotional intelligences.”

To further strengthen this perspective, one can bring to notice that generally liberal arts students tend to be more understanding and sympathetic towards the emotional responses in themselves and others. As Jensen et. al. (2007) point out, “… students graduating from universities with a strong liberal arts focus tend to score higher on measures of EI.” Thus, the basis of this research is strongly rooted in this sentiment that literature is probably one of the best schools in the teaching and training of life skills.

2.9 THE AIM OF THIS RESEARCH

In tune with the above mentioned thought, this research aims to theoretically analyze the theory of emotional intelligence against the selected characters of Mahabharata and questions 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
It would also be appropriate to mention here that though the entire research has been carried out keeping the Indian audience in particular, the outcome can be stretched out to benefit anybody who is familiar with ‘The Mahabharata’.

2.10 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

Thus, this study proposes to bring in the nuances of emotional intelligence closer to the common man as it studies the theory from a backdrop of characters who are an integral part of any Indian’s life. The four characters chosen for the study are Duryodhana, Dhritharashtra, Yudhishthira and Arjuna. As mentioned earlier, they have been chosen keeping in mind their varying emotional intelligence from the least to the highest. Of course, the Mahabharata is an epic in which each character is as strong and powerful as the other – Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Bhima, Vidura, and such – but to discuss every one of them remains a task beyond the scope of this research. Thus, two characters Duryodhana and Dhritharashtra are chosen from the Kauravas, Yudhishthira and Arjuna from the Pandavas. As Duryodhana and Dhritharashtra represent the negative approach to life, Yudhishthira and Arjuna stand on the positive side.

This study does not include any women characters in spite of their powerful presence in the epic as it would be branching off to a sub study of emotional intelligence where ongoing research strives to find whether gender has any effect on the emotional abilities of an individual. Also, it has been noted in the literature review of this study that research remains divided on the aspect of gender with some studies contending that there is a marked difference in the emotionalities of men and women and others reporting in the negative. Thus, this study restricts itself to male characters.

Moving on to the organization of this study, the first two chapters give the introduction and the literature review respectively, the third chapter gives the story of Mahabharata in a nutshell moving on to identify the relevance of choosing the Mahabharata for this study. The fourth, fifth, sixth, and the seventh chapters discuss and analyze the selected characters – Duryodhana, Dhritharashtra, Yudhishthira and Arjuna – in the said order. Every character is thoroughly analyzed against his conduct in life, the emotional challenges he faces and
how successfully he tackles them. Simultaneously, it is also studied whether the set of abilities as proposed by Mayer and Salovey in their ‘ability model’ actually helps a person to face life’s challenges in a better, organized manner. This is achieved by studying whether the characters have the said qualities and whether these qualities have assisted them to better life skills. The eighth chapter draws the conclusion and discusses the prospects for future study.