

Emotional Intelligence and the Bhagavad Gita: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue between Ancient Wisdom and Modern Psychology

Dr. Chhaya Singh ¹ and Dr. Pragati Shukla ²

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Sciences and Humanities, Rajkiya Engineering College, Kannauj (Affiliated to AKTU), Kannauj, Uttar Pradesh, 209732, India.

²Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Sciences and Humanities, Institute of Engineering & Technology (A Constituent Institute of AKTU) Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, 226021, India

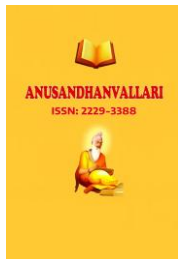
Abstract

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is an important skill that helps people to understand themselves, manage their emotions, work well with others, and helps them to become good leaders. In modern psychology, EI is mainly linked to scholars like Daniel Goleman, Peter Salovey, and John Mayer. This concept was popularized by Daniel Goleman through his book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* in 1995. Emotional Intelligence is usually explained through five main abilities- self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Although EI is often seen as a modern idea developed in the twentieth century, its basic principles can be found much earlier in ancient Indian philosophy, especially in *the Bhagavad Gītā*. This paper studies Emotional Intelligence through the teachings of *the Bhagavad Gītā* by combining ideas from Sanskrit texts, modern psychology, and philosophy. By closely examining important verses particularly Arjuna's emotional breakdown on the battlefield and Krishna's guidance, the study shows that *the Bhagavad Gītā* presents a clear and well-organized system of emotional understanding and control. This system existed more than two thousand years before modern EI theories. The paper also explains that *the Bhagavad Gītā* goes beyond modern EI by connecting emotional control with moral duty, spiritual awareness, and responsibility toward society. The study concludes that *the Bhagavad Gītā* is still very useful today for teaching Emotional Intelligence in areas such as psychology, leadership, education, and mental health.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Indian Psychology, Self-Regulation, Empathy, Yoga, Leadership

Introduction

Modern life has become very difficult. Due to the rapid technological changes, pressure at the workplace, ethical problems, and conflicts in relationships, emotional balance has become more important than ever. Because of this, researchers and psychologists are now focusing on Emotional Intelligence (EI) as an essential life skill rather than IQ for long-term success, effective leadership, and good mental health (Goleman, 1995; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008). As a result, EI is now widely used in areas such as business leadership, the military, medical education, psychotherapy, and organizational management. Although emotional intelligence is often seen as a modern idea, its roots are much older. Many ancient cultures reflected deeply on human emotions, self-control, motivation, empathy, and moral behavior. Among these traditions, Indian philosophy is especially rich in its understanding of the inner world of human beings. One of the most important



texts in this tradition is the *Bhagavad Gītā*, a philosophical dialogue of 700 verses that appears in the Indian epic *Mahābhārata*. *The Bhagavad Gītā* offers deep insights into emotional struggle and personal transformation.

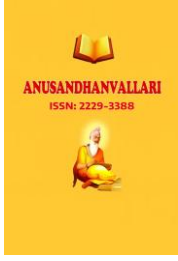
The Bhagavad Gītā is set on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. Here, the warrior Arjuna faces a serious emotional and moral crisis. He is filled with fear, sorrow, confusion, and attachment, and he becomes unable to act at the moment when action is most required. This emotional breakdown leads to a long conversation with Krishna, who guides Arjuna step by step. In this dialogue, Krishna acts not only as a spiritual teacher but also as a guide in emotional control, ethical thinking, and mental strength. Today, many scholars see *the Bhagavad Gītā* as a powerful psychological text. Sharma (2018) describes it as “a guide for resolving inner conflicts through balanced thinking and emotional discipline.” Instead of teaching people to suppress emotions, *the Bhagavad Gītā* focuses on understanding emotions, controlling them wisely, finding purpose in action, showing empathy toward others, and acting responsibly in society. These ideas closely match the main principles of modern Emotional Intelligence.

This paper argues that *the Bhagavad Gītā* presents a complete and integrated model of Emotional Intelligence. It not only explains the same five components described by Daniel Goleman such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills but also adds spiritual and ethical depth to them. By connecting ancient wisdom with modern psychology, this study shows that the teachings of *the Bhagavad Gītā* are still highly significant for understanding emotions and facing psychological challenges in today's world.

The term Emotional Intelligence (EI) was first introduced by psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer in 1990. They described EI as the ability to understand emotions, control them, and use them in a positive and useful way. Later, the idea became very popular after Daniel Goleman published his book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* in 1995. According to Goleman, Emotional Intelligence has five main parts:

1. Self-awareness – understanding your own emotions and feelings
2. Self-regulation – controlling your emotions and impulses
3. Motivation – staying focused and working with inner purpose
4. Empathy – understanding the feelings of other people
5. Social skills – building and managing healthy relationships

Many studies have shown that Emotional Intelligence plays an important role in success at work, leadership ability, emotional strength, and mental health (Brackett et al., 2013; Boyatzis, 2009). Because of this, EI is now taught and used in many areas such as education, business management, counseling, and healthcare. Modern EI training programs frequently include practices like mindfulness, thinking differently about problems naming emotions clearly, and developing empathy. Interestingly, many of these methods are similar to practices found in ancient Indian traditions, especially yoga and meditation. However, most modern Emotional Intelligence models focus mainly on personal success and practical results. They usually do not talk much about moral values, ethical responsibility, or the deeper meaning of emotional control in life. This is where *the Bhagavad Gītā* becomes very important. *The Bhagavad Gītā* adds an ethical and spiritual aspect to Emotional Intelligence, showing how emotional control should be guided by duty, values, and responsibility toward society.



Self-Awareness (Ātma–Bodha): Understanding one’s Inner World

Self-awareness is the most important part of Emotional Intelligence. Psychologists explain that if a person cannot clearly understand and name their own emotions, then skills like emotional control, empathy, and good relationships cannot develop properly (Goleman, 1995; Mayer & Salovey, 1997). *The Bhagavad Gītā* explains self-awareness in a very practical and real way. It does not talk about emotions only as ideas. Instead, it shows how self-awareness appears naturally during moments of deep emotional and moral crisis. *The Bhagavad Gītā* teaches that true self-knowledge often begins when a person faces confusion, fear, or inner conflict. The battlefield of Kurukṣetra is not only a physical battlefield; it symbolically represents the human mind under pressure, where hidden emotions suddenly come to the surface. In the first chapter of *the Bhagavad Gītā*, called Arjuna ‘Viṣāda Yoga’ (the Yoga of Sorrow), Arjuna openly describes his emotional and physical condition. He does not hide his feelings or pretend to be strong.

दृष्ट्वेमं स्वजनं कृष्ण युयुत्सुं समुपस्थितम्।

सीदन्ति मम गात्राणि मुखं च परिशुष्यति॥

वेपथुश्च शरीरे मे रोमहर्षश्च जायते॥

(*Bhagavad Gītā* 1.28–29)

(Drishtvaimam swajanam Krishna yuyutsun samupasthitam,

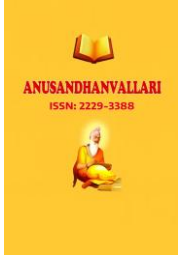
seedanti mama gatrani mukham cha parishushyati,

vepathushcha sharire me romaharshashcha jayate)

Arjuna says that when he sees his own relatives ready for war, his body becomes weak, his mouth dries up, his body trembles, and his hair stands on end. This is important because Arjuna talks not only about emotions like fear and sadness, but also about physical signs of stress, such as shaking, weakness, and dryness of mouth. Today, psychology calls this interoceptive awareness, which means being aware of what is happening inside the body.

Modern brain research supports this idea. Studies show that when people clearly name their emotions, the thinking part of the brain becomes active and helps calm emotional reactions (Lieberman et al., 2007). So, Arjuna’s honest expression of his condition is not weakness—it is the first step toward emotional control. *The Bhagavad Gītā* clearly shows that expressing emotions is not shameful. In fact, emotional honesty is shown as necessary for growth. This challenges the common belief that strong people never express emotions, especially in leadership or warrior roles. Moreover, Arjuna does not say only one emotion like “I am scared.” Instead, he describes many connected emotions—fear, attachment, sorrow, confusion, and physical collapse. This ability to recognize different emotions clearly is called emotional granularity in modern psychology. Research shows that people with good emotional understanding, experience, less stress, better decision-making, stronger mental resilience, better emotional control (Kashdan et al., 2015). *The Bhagavad Gītā* teaches this idea thousands of years ago. It shows that naming emotions clearly helps the mind think better. Arjuna’s honest expression of fear, sorrow, and confusion shows that clearly naming and understanding one’s emotions is the first step toward emotional clarity, self-control, and wise decision-making.. Arjuna’s honesty prepares him to understand deeper truths later in *the Bhagavad Gītā*.

In *the Bhagavad Gītā*, Arjuna’s problem is not only emotional—it is also moral. He is confused about what is right and wrong. His emotions arise because of the conflict between Dharma (duty), Moha (attachment) and Karuṇā (compassion). Arjuna’s questions are deeper than “How do I feel?” They are actually: Is this war



right or wrong? What will be the result of my actions? What kind of person will I become? This shows that self-awareness in *the Bhagavad Gītā* includes ethical thinking, not just emotional awareness. This is different from some modern EI models that focus only on personal success without discussing moral responsibility. Moreover, Kṛiṣṇa does not immediately tell Arjuna what to do. First, he asks a question: “From where has this confusion come to you at this difficult moment?”

“कुतस्त्वाकश्मलमिदं विषमे समुपस्थितम्”।

(*Bhagavad Gītā* 2.2)

(**Kutastvā kaśmalamidam viṣame samupasthitam**)

This question helps Arjuna think about his own emotions instead of being controlled by them. In psychology, this is called metacognition, which means thinking about one’s thoughts and feelings (Beck, 1976). Here, Kṛiṣṇa acts like a counselor or guide, not a ruler. He helps Arjuna understand himself. *The Gītā* teaches that emotional intelligence develops through self-reflection, not force. Moreover self-awareness leads to transformation. When a person honestly recognizes and accepts their inner confusion and emotions, it becomes the starting point for personal growth, wisdom, and meaningful change. *The Gītā* clearly shows that understanding emotions comes before controlling them. Arjuna’s breakdown is not a failure. It is the beginning of wisdom. Another important verse supports this idea: “One should raise oneself by one’s own self; one should not lower oneself. For the self alone is the friend of oneself, and the self alone is the enemy of oneself.” A person should uplift himself through self-awareness and not allow himself to fall down.

उद्धरेदात्मनाऽत्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत्।

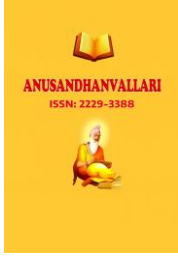
(*Bhagavad Gītā* 6.5)

(**Uddhared ātmanātmānaṁ nātmānam avasādayet**)

Only after Arjuna accepts his confusion, ‘Does he become ready to learn about discipline, devotion, and right action’. This teaches an important EI lesson: Trying to control emotions without understanding them leads to suppression and confusion. *The Gītā* teaches that emotional discomfort, when accepted consciously, becomes a path to growth. *The Bhagavad Gītā* presents self-awareness in a way that is still relevant today. It includes awareness of the body and emotions, involves clear naming of feelings, it connects emotions with moral values and leads to personal transformation. By placing self-awareness at the very beginning of its teachings, *the Gītā* confirms an important psychological truth accepted today: Emotional Intelligence begins not with control, but with honest self-understanding.

Self-Regulation (Dama): Controlling Emotional Impulses

Self-regulation is the second important part of Emotional Intelligence. It means the ability to control emotions, stop impulsive reactions, and stay mentally balanced during stress, anger, or difficult situations. In psychology, self-regulation is linked with self-control, emotional strength, and good decision-making (Goleman, 1995; Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). If a person is aware of emotions but cannot control them, emotions can become overwhelming and harmful. Therefore, self-awareness must be followed by self-regulation to develop true emotional intelligence. *The Bhagavad Gītā* gives a very deep explanation of self-regulation. Instead of teaching people to suppress emotions, *The Gītā* teaches **Dama**, which means conscious control of the mind.



Emotions are not treated as enemies; they are natural mental movements that need guidance and discipline. The Cognitive–Emotional Chain: How Emotions Become Destructive: When a person keeps thinking again and again about objects or desires, attachment develops. From attachment comes desire, from desire comes anger. Anger leads to confusion, confusion destroys memory, loss of memory destroys thinking power, and finally the person is ruined.

ध्यायतो विषयान्पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते।

सङ्गात्संजायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥

क्रोधाद्भवति संमोहः संमोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः।

स्मृतिभ्रंशाद् बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति ॥

(Bhagavad Gītā 2.62–63)

(Dhyāyato viṣayān puṁsaḥ saṅgas teṣūpajāyate |

Saṅgāt sañjāyate kāmaḥ kāmāt krodho 'bhijāyate ||

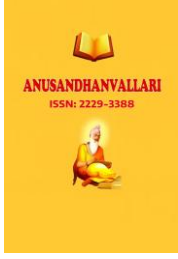
Krodhād bhavati saṁmohaḥ saṁmohāt smṛti-vibhramaḥ |

Smṛti-bhraṁśād buddhi-nāśo buddhi-nāśāt praṇaśyati)

The above shloka that emotional breakdown does not happen suddenly. It happens **step by step**:

1. Dhyāna – repeatedly thinking about something
2. Saṅga – becoming emotionally attached
3. Kāma – strong desire
4. Krodha – anger when desire is blocked
5. Sammohā – confusion
6. Smṛti-bhraṁśa – loss of right memory and values
7. Buddhi-nāśa – loss of judgment
8. Praṇaśyati – personal and moral destruction

The Bhagavad Gītā clearly teaches that the problem begins with uncontrolled thinking, not with emotions themselves. This idea is very similar to modern psychology. In Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), psychologist Aaron T. Beck explains that emotional problems are caused by negative thinking patterns, not by situations alone (Beck, 1976). *The Gītā* explained this truth thousands of years ago. *The Bhagavad Gītā* talks about Controlled emotion Not Suppression of Emotions. *The Bhagavad Gītā* never asks Arjuna to kill his emotions. Instead, Kṛiṣṇa teaches him to understand and guide emotions wisely. Another important verse says: “The senses, mind, and intellect must be properly controlled for a balanced life”.



इन्द्रियाणि मनो बुद्धिरस्याधिष्ठानमुच्यते।

(Bhagavad Gītā 3.42)

(Indriyāṇi mano buddhirasyādhiṣṭhānamucyate)

Modern psychology also supports this idea. Studies show that suppressing emotions increases stress, while understanding and regulating emotions leads to mental stability (Gross, 1998). So, *The Bhagavad Gītā* teaches emotional intelligence, not emotional denial. *The Gita* also gives two tools for Emotional Control: practice and detachment. Kṛiṣṇa gives two clear methods for controlling emotions: The restless mind can be controlled through regular practice and detachment.

अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृहीयते॥

(Bhagavad Gītā 6.35)

(Abhyāseṇa tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gr̥hyate)

Abhyāsa means repeated practice. This includes: Practicing calm thinking, Training attention and developing good habits. Modern brain science shows that regular mental practice strengthens the brain areas responsible for self-control and emotional balance. Mindfulness and meditation work on the same principle. *The Gītā* clearly teaches that emotional intelligence can be learned and developed, not something people are simply born with. *The Gītā* also talks about Vairāgya (Detachment from Results). *Vairāgya* does not mean running away from life. It means **not** becoming emotionally dependent on outcomes. Another verse supports this concept to treat happiness and sorrow, gain and loss, victory and defeat equally.

सुखदुःखे समे कृत्वा लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ।

(Bhagavad Gītā 2.38)

(Sukha-duḥkhe same kṛtvā lābhālābhau jayājayau)

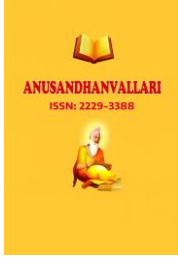
Modern psychology calls this cognitive distancing (Beck, 1976). where a person observes emotions instead of being controlled by them. This helps reduce stress and improves decision-making. Another technique *The Bhagavad Gītā* talks about is Sthitaprajña: The Emotionally Balanced Person. *The Bhagavad Gītā* describes the ideal emotionally intelligent person as a Sthitaprajña (person of steady wisdom). A wise person is not disturbed by sorrow and does not become attached to happiness.

दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः।

(Bhagavad Gītā 2.56)

(Dukheshvanudvignamanah sukheshu vigatasprīhah)

Such a person remains calm in difficult situations, does not overreact emotionally, acts wisely and ethically. Psychological studies show that emotionally stable individuals make better leaders and handle stress more effectively (Mayer et al., 2008). Moreover, *The Bhagavad Gītā* connects emotional control with Dharma (moral duty). Emotional discipline is not only for personal peace, but also for doing the right thing in society. As *The Gita* says: Perform your duties with balance and without attachment.



योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि संगं त्यक्त्वा धनंजय।

(Bhagavad Gītā 2.48)

(Yogasthah kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṁ tyaktvā dhanañjaya)

This ethical approach is often missing in modern EI models, but *The Bhagavad Gītā* teaches that emotional intelligence should serve justice, responsibility, and social harmony. As a result, *The Bhagavad Gītā* explains self-regulation in a very practical way: Emotional problems start with uncontrolled thinking. Emotions should be guided, not suppressed. Regular practice builds emotional strength. Detachment prevents emotional imbalance and Emotional control must support **ethical living**. Thus, *the Gītā* teaches that self-regulation is not about force, but about mastery of the mind, leading to wisdom, balance, and responsible action.

Motivation (Udyoga): Working with Purpose, Not Attachment

In Emotional Intelligence, motivation means the inner strength that helps a person continue working toward goals with dedication, patience, and hope. It does not depend only on rewards, praise, or fear of failure (Goleman, 1995). Emotionally intelligent people remain motivated even during difficulties because their motivation comes from inner purpose, not external pressure. Modern psychology agrees that the strongest and healthiest form of motivation is intrinsic motivation, which means doing work because it is meaningful and satisfying, not just for money, marks, or success. *The Bhagavad Gītā* gives a very deep and practical understanding of motivation. Instead of encouraging ambition based on rewards or competition, *the Gītā* teaches purposeful action without attachment to results. This type of motivation creates emotional balance, moral clarity, and long-term resilience. The most famous motivational teaching of *the Bhagavad Gītā* is: Niṣkāma Karma: Motivation without Attachment to Results. You have control only over your actions, not over the results of those actions.

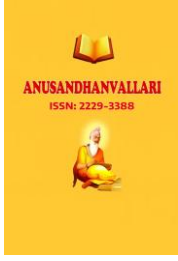
कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।

(Bhagavad Gītā 2.47)

(Karmanye Vadhikaraste Ma Phaleshu Kadachana)

This verse teaches ‘**Niṣkāma karma**’, which means performing one’s duty sincerely without worrying about success or failure. From a psychological point of view, this is very important because motivation based only on results often leads to anxiety, fear of failure, burnout, and emotional ups and downs. When effort is separated from reward, work itself becomes meaningful. Modern psychology supports this idea through Self-Determination Theory, developed by Ryan and Deci (2000). According to this theory, intrinsic motivation leads to better mental health, higher creativity, greater persistence and lower stress. *The Gītā* teaches this idea thousands of years earlier. By asking Arjuna to focus on action rather than outcome, Kṛiṣṇa removes the emotional stress caused by expectations.

This shows that detachment does not mean laziness. *The Gītā* encourages full effort but without emotional dependence on results. This freedom reduces fear and increases confidence—key qualities of emotionally intelligent motivation. When people focus too much on results—such as marks, promotions, or recognition—they often experience stress and anxiety. Psychology shows that constant worry about outcomes reduces concentration and long-term motivation. *The Gītā* solves this problem by shifting attention from what we cannot control (results) to what we can control (effort). This helps stabilize emotions. From an Emotional Intelligence perspective, Niṣkāma karma also acts as emotional regulation. By working with duty instead of



desire, a person avoids emotional swings between hope and disappointment. This is especially useful in high-pressure situations like exams, jobs, leadership roles, and personal struggles. Another important motivational idea in *the Bhagavad Gītā* is **Svadharmā**, which means one's own duty or natural role. It is better to follow your own duty imperfectly than to follow someone else's duty perfectly.

स्वधर्मं निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः।

(*Bhagavad Gītā* 3.35)

(Svadharme nidhanam shreyah paradharmo bhayavahah)

This teaching explains why many people feel unhappy even when they succeed—because they are chasing goals that do not match their true nature. Modern psychology confirms that when work matches a person's values, abilities, and identity, motivation and happiness increase. When there is a mismatch, people feel stress, confusion, and emotional exhaustion. Arjuna's problem arises because he wants to escape his role as a warrior due to emotional attachment. Kṛiṣṇa restores his motivation by reminding him of his true responsibility, not by promising rewards. *The Bhagavad Gītā* also warns against motivation driven by ego (*Ahāṅkāra*). Ego-based motivation focuses on comparison, competition, and personal glory, which often leads to pride, anxiety, and disappointment. Instead, *the Gītā* promotes motivation based on service and collective welfare (*Lokasaṅgraha*). A person should act for the good of society.

लोकसंग्रहमेवापि संपश्यन्कर्तुमर्हसि।

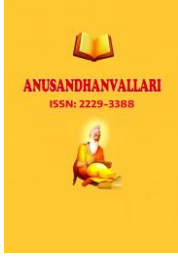
(*Bhagavad Gītā* 3.20)

(Lokasangrahamēvāpi sampaśyankartum arhasi)

From an EI point of view, this kind of motivation: Reduces selfishness, Improves empathy, Encourages ethical leadership, Strengthens social harmony. Such motivation is healthier and more sustainable than motivation based only on personal success. When motivation is based on duty (*niṣkāma karma*) and identity (*svadharmā*), failure does not break a person emotionally. Instead of feeling destroyed, a person learns and grows. This shows that emotionally intelligent people remain motivated not because success is guaranteed, but because their work has meaning. Such motivation creates emotional resilience, patience, and long-term commitment. Thus, *The Bhagavad Gītā* teaches motivation in a deeply practical way that true motivation comes from inner purpose, not rewards. Detachment from results reduces stress and anxiety. Following one's **Svadharmā** prevents confusion and burnout. Ego-free motivation improves ethics and leadership, and purpose-driven work builds emotional resilience. By connecting motivation with self-awareness, emotional balance, and moral duty, *The Gītā* offers a powerful model of emotionally intelligent living that is still relevant today.

Empathy (Karunā): Expanding Emotional Consciousness

Empathy is one of the most important parts of Emotional Intelligence. In simple words, empathy means the ability to understand the feelings of others and respond with care and sensitivity. Modern psychology defines empathy as the ability to recognize, understand, and respond appropriately to other people's emotions (Goleman, 1995). Empathy helps in building good relationships, effective leadership, counseling, teamwork, and social harmony. People with high emotional intelligence are not only aware of their own emotions but are also sensitive to the feelings of others. *The Bhagavad Gītā* takes empathy to a deeper level. It does not see



empathy as only an emotional skill or social ability. Instead, it presents empathy as a way of seeing life, based on moral values, wisdom, and a sense of unity among all beings. This makes *the Bhagavad Gītā* understanding of empathy richer than many modern EI models, which often focus only on practical situations. The clearest teaching of empathy in *the Bhagavad Gītā* is the idea of Samadarśana, which means seeing everyone equally. A wise person sees all beings with equal vision.

पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः।

(*Bhagavad Gītā* 5.18)

(Paṇḍitāḥ samadarśinaḥ)

This verse teaches that a truly wise and empathetic person does not judge others based on caste, status, appearance, or role. Instead, they see the same inner value in everyone. This does not mean feeling emotional sympathy for everyone all the time. Rather, it means non-judgmental understanding. In psychology, this is called cognitive empathy—understanding others’ emotions without becoming emotionally overwhelmed. Cognitive empathy helps people to make fair decisions, act ethically and resolve conflicts wisely. This idea is very similar to Carl Rogers’ concept of *unconditional positive regard*, which means accepting others without judgment (Rogers, 2007). *The Bhagavad Gītā* teaches this idea long before modern psychology: A balanced person treats pain and pleasure, loss and gain equally.

समदुःखसुखः स्वस्थः समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः।

(*Bhagavad Gītā* 14.24)

(Samaduḥkhasukhaḥ svasthaḥ samaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ)

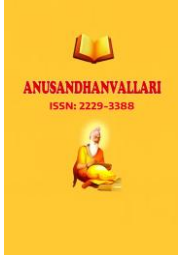
This balance protects empathetic people from emotional burnout, which can happen when one absorbs too much of others’ pain. *The Gītā* teaches empathy with inner balance (Samatva), making compassion sustainable. *The Bhagavad Gītā* also teaches that empathy must be guided by wisdom and ethics. Emotional sensitivity without clarity can create confusion and wrong decisions. Arjuna’s problem at the beginning of *the Bhagavad Gītā* is a good example. His empathy for his relatives makes him refuse to fight, but his empathy is mixed with attachment and fears, not clear understanding of duty (*dharma*). Kṛiṣṇa does not reject empathy. Instead, he refines it. He teaches Arjuna to rise from emotional attachment to principled compassion, which considers justice and the greater good (*lokasaṅgraha*). A significant verse says: No one can remain without action even for a moment.

न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत्।

(*Bhagavad Gītā* 3.5)

(Na hi kaścit kṣaṇamapi jātu tiṣṭhati akarmakṛt)

This teaches that empathy should lead to responsible action, not emotional paralysis. Modern leadership studies also warn that leaders with empathy but without boundaries may face stress, favoritism, or poor decision-making. *The Bhagavad Gītā* solves this problem by connecting empathy with Buddhi (discernment). Moreover, *The Bhagavad Gītā* does not only explain empathy but it shows empathy in action. Kṛiṣṇa listens patiently to Arjuna’s fears, doubts, and pain before giving advice. He does not interrupt or



criticize. This is called empathetic listening, which modern counseling psychology considers a key skill in therapy, education, and conflict resolution. Empathetic listening includes: Giving full attention, not judging, allowing the other person to express feelings and helping meaning emerge naturally. Psychologist Carl Rogers explained that such listening creates emotional safety and helps people change from within (Rogers, 2007). *The Bhagavad Gītā* itself is structured as a response to a listened-to emotional crisis, not a lecture. This shows that empathy means deep understanding, not simply agreeing with emotions. *The Bhagavad Gītā* also connects empathy with leadership and social harmony. Emotional intelligence, according to *the Bhagavad Gītā*, is not only for personal relationships but also for society.

Modern organizational research confirms that empathetic leaders create healthier and more productive environments. *The Bhagavad Gītā* predicted this long ago by making empathy a foundation of ethical leadership. At the deepest level, the *Bhagavad Gītā* teaches empathy as a state of expanded awareness, not just a skill:

The wise person sees the same self in all beings and all beings in the self.

सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि।

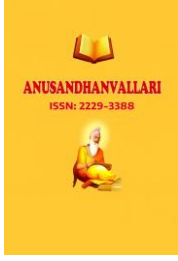
(*Bhagavad Gītā* 6.29)

(Sarvabhūtaṣṭhamātmānaṃ Sarvabhūtāni Cātmani)

When a person feels connected to others at this level, compassion becomes natural and effortless. Empathy flows from a sense of unity, not from obligation. This idea goes beyond many modern EI models, which train empathy as behavior but do not address the worldview behind it. *The Bhagavad Gītā* teaches empathy in a powerful and balanced way: Empathy is based on non-judgmental understanding (Samadarśana). It is guided by wisdom and ethics. It is practiced through deep listening. It supports ethical leadership and social harmony. At its highest level, empathy arises from a sense of unity with all beings. By combining empathy with balance, duty, and spiritual insight, *the Bhagavad Gītā* offers a complete and sustainable model of emotional intelligence that is still highly relevant today.

Social Skills and Ethical Leadership: Emotional Intelligence in Action

In Emotional Intelligence (EI), social skills show how well a person uses inner emotional abilities in real life. While self-awareness, self-control, motivation, and empathy develop inside a person, social skills help in dealing with people in a positive and responsible way. According to psychologists, emotionally intelligent people communicate clearly, solve conflicts peacefully, cooperate with others, and become effective leaders (Goleman, 1995). *The Bhagavad Gītā* gives a deep and ethical understanding of social skills. It does not see social intelligence as a technique to influence or control others. Instead, it teaches that social influence should be based on good character, moral values, and selfless action. According to *the Bhagavad Gītā* true social intelligence means guiding and uplifting society, not dominating people. *The Bhagavad Gītā* clearly explains that people learn more from examples than from words: Whatever a great person does, others naturally follow the same path.



यत् यत् आचरति श्रेष्ठः तत्तदेवेतरो जनः।

(Bhagavad Gītā 3.21)

(Yat yat ācarati śreṣṭhas tattaddevetaro janah)

This verse teaches that leaders influence others through their own behavior. People observe and copy what respected individuals do. Modern psychology supports this idea through social learning theory, which explains that people learn by watching role models (Bandura, 1977). *The Bhagavad Gītā* teaches this truth long before modern psychology. It shows that leadership is not about giving orders, but about living the values one wants others to follow.

This means people are always watching actions. Therefore, a leader's behavior has a strong influence on society. Thus, *the Bhagavad Gītā* strongly emphasizes moral authority, not power based on position or fear. Kṛiṣṇa does not force Arjuna to act. Instead, he guides him with calm reasoning, empathy, and wisdom. Kṛiṣṇa's leadership is based on wisdom (jñāna), emotional balance (samatva), moral duty (dharma). Modern leadership research also shows that leaders with emotional intelligence build trust, teamwork, and long-term success (Goleman, 1995). Transformational leadership theory explains that leaders inspire others by living their values, not by controlling them. *The Bhagavad Gītā* teaches that real leadership comes from character, not authority.

The Bhagavad Gītā itself is an example of emotionally intelligent communication. It is written as a dialogue, not a lecture. Kṛiṣṇa changes his way of speaking according to Arjuna's emotional state-sometimes logical, sometimes emotional, and sometimes philosophical. This shows that good communication requires: understanding emotions, adjusting messages according to the listener, speaking with empathy and purpose. Modern EI theory also emphasizes that effective communication depends on emotional awareness and contextual sensitivity. The battlefield setting of *the Bhagavad Gītā* reminds us that social skills are most important during conflict, not comfort. True emotional intelligence is tested when situations are stressful and morally complex. *The Bhagavad Gītā* also warns against the misuse of emotional intelligence. In today's world, emotional skills can sometimes be used for manipulation, selfish gain, or control. *The Gītā* prevents this misuse by connecting social skills with dharma (moral duty). The wise person does not act with ego or selfish desire.

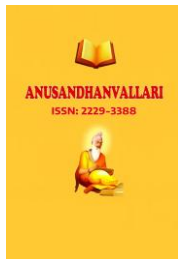
नाहं कर्ता न कर्माणि लोकस्य सृजामि प्रभुः।

(Bhagavad Gītā 5.14)

(Na kartṛitvaṃ na karmāṇi lokasya sṛijati prabhuḥ).

By asking leaders to give up ego (*ahankāra*) and attachment to rewards (*niṣkāma karma*), *the Bhagavad Gītā* ensures that emotional influence remains ethical and responsible. According to *the Bhagavad Gītā*, an emotionally intelligent leader leads through personal example, communicates with empathy and clarity, balances kindness with justice, works for social welfare, maintains emotional and moral balance. Psychological research confirms that leaders' emotional states affect team morale, decision-making, and work culture. *The Gītā* anticipated this idea by teaching that inner emotional balance creates outer social harmony

Such emotional balance makes leadership stable and trustworthy. *The Bhagavad Gītā* teaches social skills and leadership in a deeply ethical way that leadership is based on example, not force. Emotional intelligence must serve society, not ego, Communication should be empathetic and flexible, Ethics protects EI from misuse, and inner emotional balance creates social stability. By combining emotional intelligence with moral values and social responsibility, *the Bhagavad Gītā* offers a timeless leadership model. It reminds us that the best leaders uplift both individuals and society, making emotional intelligence a force for good.



This study aimed to understand Emotional Intelligence (EI) through the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gītā* and to challenge the common belief that EI is only a modern idea. The study clearly shows that the five main parts of Emotional Intelligence—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—are explained in *the Bhagavad Gītā* in a very clear and systematic way, more than two thousand years before modern psychology defined them. By focusing on Arjuna’s emotional crisis and Kṛiṣṇa’s guidance, *the Bhagavad Gītā* presents Emotional Intelligence as a real-life process of inner change, not just a theory.

Self-awareness is shown as an honest understanding of one’s emotions and moral responsibility, not emotional suppression. Self-regulation is explained as control over the mind through regular practice (*Abhyāsa*) and emotional detachment (*Vairāgya*), which is similar to modern mindfulness and cognitive therapy. Motivation is explained through *Niṣkāma karma* and *Svadharmā*, teaching action without attachment to results and work according to one’s true nature. Empathy is described through *Samadarśana*, meaning seeing everyone equally with wisdom and compassion. Social skills are shown through ethical leadership based on example, moral values, and concern for society (*Lokasaṅgraha*).

This framework is especially useful today, when people face stress, burnout, leadership problems, and moral confusion. *The Bhagavad Gītā* offers practical guidance for emotional balance without suppression, motivation without ego, empathy without exhaustion, and leadership without selfishness. Because of this, its teachings are useful in areas such as mental health, education, leadership training, organizational behavior, and conflict management. At the academic level, this study contributes to Indian Psychology by showing that ancient Indian texts are not only spiritual but also psychologically rich. *The Bhagavad Gītā* can be studied as an important psychological text that can improve and expand modern Emotional Intelligence theory.

In conclusion, *the Bhagavad Gītā* does more than predict modern Emotional Intelligence, it deepens and completes it. By combining emotional understanding, self-control, motivation, empathy, and social responsibility within an ethical and spiritual framework, the *Bhagavad Gītā* offers a timeless and universal model of emotionally intelligent living that is highly relevant even today.

Disclosure statement

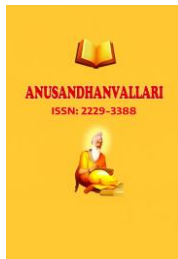
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