

TUNING THE SOUL: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE THROUGH THE LENS OF NORTH INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC

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Abstract

Indian classical music is not just an art form but, it's a rich practice in the development and expression of Emotional Intelligence (EI). In this paper, how musicians embody the five key components of EI, such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, through their craft is explored. When musicians are able to deeply feel their emotions during practice and in performance, self-awareness begins to emerge, increasing their creativity and their ability to bounce back. As the field of sadhana exemplifies where artists use their emotions to self-regulate certain emotions in order to keep harmony and play flawless matches it is all about self-regulation. The lives of maestros like Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and Pandit Ravi Shankar show that the relentless pursuit of siddhi (perfection). Social skills end finally in the ability to perform and reach out to the audience dynamically; by letting them understand and imitate their emotional state, musicians can make the audience they have an experience of spiritual transcendence. This paper serves as an illustration of the ways in which Indian classical music is much more than an artistic expression and is a catalyst for development of Emotional Intelligence.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Musicians, Rasa sidhi, Self-Awareness, Motivation, Empathy. **Methodology:** This study employs qualitative research using secondary sources.

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence (EI) is "the ability to recognize our feelings and those of others, to motivate ourselves, and to handle emotions properly both in ourselves and in our relationships," as cited by Daniel Goleman⁽²⁾, an eminent psychologist. Emotional intelligence is the most critical element in human interactions. Persons with higher EI can both manage their own emotions in an effective way as well as observe and respond to the emotions of others in an appropriate way. A high EI level has been associated with improved empathy, teamwork and communication skills, better stress management, organizational commitment, and leadership. The art of sound in time is what music is. One of music's most important functions is to express feelings. Ragas are the elements that form a particular tonic interval and have the ability to provoke different emotions. Music, which has a positive effect on cognitive function by lowering the level of stress and enhancing a normal degree of alertness plus a good mood, is also a stimulant for thinking. Academic success and emotional intelligence (EI) have been connected in various researches.

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Daniel Goleman's concept of the Emotional Intelligence (EI) in his famous book 'Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ'⁽¹⁾, consists of the following five elements that are crucial for our emotional and social well-being:

- **Self-Awareness:** The ability to identify and comprehend one's own emotions. It serves as a strong basis for self-improvement because the individuals can then acknowledge their emotional triggers.
- **Self-Regulation:** The ability to handle and channel emotions in a constructive manner. This is about remaining calm in the face of adversity and responding to people thoughtfully instead of in a crude manner.
- **Motivation:** The reason for staying focused on the goals that provide the energy and the will to see it through, massively supported by the internal fillings that do not need satisfying external rewards.
- **Empathy:** The technique of perceiving and comprehending the emotions of other people. The most important fact for it is trust and strong relationship between people.

- **Social Skills:** The act of effectively communicating, managing relationships, and motivating others to a common goal.

SELF-AWARENESS: DISCOVERING EMOTIONS

Self-awareness along with Emotional Intelligence (EI) which is the foundation stone, means recognizing and understanding one's own emotions, behaviors, and thoughts. Indian classical music offers a compelling way of promoting self-awareness because it inspires performers and listeners to travel into their own emotional worlds by way of the ragas, talas (the rhythmic cycles), and improvisation. The lives and teachings of the great masters of Indian classical music epitomize this deep connection between music and self-awareness.

Being emotionally intelligent begins with self-awareness. Self-awareness allows individuals to understand the what, why, and how of their decisions and actions. Self-awareness allows individuals to understand themselves and identify areas for improvement. Self-awareness is essential for maintaining good mental health. Our thoughts are influenced by our feelings, which shape how we respond to situations.

Self-Awareness from a Musician's Perspective:

Imagine you are at a live performance of a classical musician, and as they are performing the musician themselves may recognize a small hesitation or misplaced note in their own playing. A self-aware musician does not feel overwhelmed and instead goes the route of introspective analysis finding the cause of the error. Was it the nervousness? Not being prepared enough? Or maybe it was some emotional distraction? The musician is empowered by understanding the reason that is at the level of his mental process and thus he can adapt to the situation in real time, making it all but impossible for the performance to be disrupted. Understanding the process promotes introspection and self-evaluation. Reflecting on one's thoughts, feelings, and actions, i.e., focusing our attention on the inner self, allows us to self-evaluate our behavior. For example,

“Our tradition teaches us that sound is God- Nada Brahma. That is, musical sound and the musical experience are steps to the realization of the Self. We view music as a kind of spiritual discipline that raises one's inner being to divine peacefulness and bliss... Thus, through music, one can reach God.”⁽⁸⁾

- Pandit Ravi Shankar (Sitar Maestro)

Ustad Zakir Hussain, the worldly famous tabla maestro. He has always been talking about the importance of being "*in the moment*" during a performance. He claims, that for the perceiving of one's emotional and physical state, which is vital to rhythm maintenance and the connection with other performers and the audience, along with the proper playing technique, a musician should be able to know what is going on within him. Musicians practice this self-awareness so they can vertically channel their feelings, thus, instead of making what's thought to be a mistake, the occasion is turned to creating something new and unexpected⁽⁴⁾.

SELF-REGULATION: THE POWER OF SADHNA

It is the control of one's emotions, impulses and reactions so that one's focus and harmony in practicing and in performing is not disrupted. Typically for an Indian classical musician, self-regulation is intertwined in the discipline of sadhana (diligent practice), being bound to the framework of ragas and talas, and being able to bring emotional energy to creative expression. Each performance is an act of balancing freedom and constraint the art form requires emotional mastery because every raga is an improvisatory world newly imposed upon a balance of repression and release.

During practice and performance, it's vital to self-regulate emotions, discipline, adaptability. What if, during a performance, a tabla player encounters a slip in rhythm, self-regulation will help you keep calm, get back on track and flow seamlessly without letting the emotional response spoil the flow. This poise ensures the audience remains captivated and the performance maintains its intended energy.

Self-regulation from the greatest musician's perspective:

"Do riyaz as big as a mountain, then take a ball-sized portion and throw it at the audience. You'll have thrown a ball, but they will be hit by a mountain."

- Ustad Ahmed Jan Tirakhwa (Tabla Maestro)

"A voice is not just a ready-made gift from the gods. One has to earn it, polish it, and gain absolute command over it by Sangeet Sadhana"

-Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan (Eminent Vocalist)⁽⁶⁾

"Every note is a meditation. Your riyaz should be a dialogue with the divine. Only then can you truly touch hearts."

- Vidushi Kishori Amonkar (Eminent Vocalist)

The anecdote in relation to self-regulation in Emotional Intelligence (EI) as follows:

A self-regulating in life is an anecdote about a great maestro, Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, who had had a serious goiter operation. His doctor told him to take complete vocal and physical rest after the surgery. But 24 hours later, the maestro could not restrain himself and burst into a taan accompanied in three octaves. When the surgeon lovingly scolded him for defying medical advice, the maestro's childlike reply was: "*I had to check whether my voice has gone. If it's not there, then out of what use is my life?*".

The above lines express is the central idea of self-regulation, a major element of Emotional Intelligence. Self-regulation is being able to control your emotions, thinking, and actions in such a way that fosters a healthy growing personality. First, his grave connection to his art, his music, was so deep that his first thought was: had anything happened to his voice, his instrument, the instrument of his livelihood? Impulsive it might look, but his response tells us that he was extremely emotionally aware and able to work hard on what actually meant something to him. As a highly physical job, he knew he needed rest, but he prioritized his connection to music because when musicians are dedicated as they are to their art, there is no greater emotional regulation.

MOTIVATION: THE PURSUIT OF SIDDHI

Motivation, particularly intrinsic motivation, is a crucial aspect of emotional intelligence. It involves the drive to achieve goals for personal fulfillment rather than external rewards. In the context of Indian classical music, this intrinsic motivation is evident in the rigorous practice (or riyaz) that musicians undertake to master ragas. A central goal for musicians is to achieve Rasa siddhi—the ability to evoke the intended emotion of a raga in themselves and their audience. In the case of any Indian classical musician, sadhana (practice) is a daily example of motivation. This pursuit of artistic and emotional perfection reflects a deep internal drive, akin to the motivational aspects of EI. For example, a sitar player may well get up early every day, well before sunrise, to devote many hours at his riyaz (practice). They don't play for recognition rather motivated by the desire to improve their technique, to express them-selves further in raga, to stay grounded with their spiritual self.

Motivation from the great musician's perspective:

"My father was not patient. Most importantly, the student must be given time. But time is nothing without discipline. This means committing to *riyaz* every day, whether that is 30 minutes or many hours. Anybody should feel they can learn this music, but to reach the top level you have to start as early as possible"

Ustad Sahid Parwez (Sitar Maestro)⁽⁴⁾

"Music is to me more than my food. It is my only life and I cannot live without it. I would rather die with a song on my lips than live without music".

Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan (Eminent vocalist) ⁽⁶⁾

The aforementioned quotation captures the great maestro's deep commitment and internal drive. *'Music is more than my food to me,'* was his statement. *It is my only life...* This deep passion for music is what drives him to test the great potential of his voice, after a major surgery. In other words, this kind of emotional commitment is surely intrinsic motivation, in which the musician's aims are in them-selves self-fulfilling and expressive emotionally through music.

"A teacher doesn't teach, a student learns. A student must inspire the teacher to teach"

- Ustad Zakir Hussain Khan (Tabla Maestro) ⁽⁵⁾

The aforementioned quote rules out the intrinsic motivation, especially from the student's side. However, if the student is actively engaging with the material, and is enthusiastic about learning, it can inspire the teacher to get outside of the 'norm' and bring more excitement to the lesson than before. It strengthens this cycle of motivation, now the teacher is beyond inspired to inspire and thus both parties are motivated to grow.

EMPATHY

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others and the crucial role that it plays in emotional intelligence (EI) and musical performance is beyond doubt. In Indian classical music, this quality gives the musicians the opportunity to create a lasting bond with their audience and thus be able to change their performance to either imitate or amplify the emotional mood of the moment. The musician who possesses that skill is not only aware of the listeners' emotional mood but also uses that knowledge in order to develop their own expression and, therefore, make the whole experience more intensive. Some ragas when played can become vessels of emotional release that force one to confront what we never talk about.

Examples of Ragas and their emotions:

Bhoopali: In case of Bhoop, the absence of swaras Ma and Ni causes two vacuum zone where the healing is supposed to occur. Ma causes the vibration of the heart chakra resulting in a negative emotion. However, the absence of Ma reduces the negative emotions and provides a good mood with happiness to the listener. Swara Ni creates a vibration in the crown chakra thereby induces a feeling of surrender. The absence of Ni removes this feeling and the listener perceives a feeling of happiness, responsible, positive and self sufficient as well. Swaras Re, Ga, Pa and Dha of this Raga improves the functionality of Ovaries and eyes ⁽⁸⁾.

Darbari: This Raga is known to help relax and reduce the tension. This is a late-night Raga which is known to be composed by the famous musician Tansen for king Akbar to relieve his stress and tension.

Hamsadhwani: There is an absence of swara Ma and Dha in this Raga. Ma vibrates in the heart chakra and creates a feeling of love, peace and negative emotions. But the absence of swara Ma helps to detach from all the worldly pleasures and expectations. Swara Dha vibrates in brow chakra, induces supranormal powers. Absence of this swara helps to detach from such powers and mitigate them. Hence this Raga provides emotional control, stability and well as improves the intellectual ability of the individual.

Todi: This Raga normalizes the blood pressure in hypertensive subjects and also provides a solution to cold and headache ⁽¹¹⁾.

Bageshri: This Raga is responsible for a feeling of depth as well as calmness of mind. This is used to address the issues of hypertension as well as diabetes in subjects.

Empathy from the great musician's perspective-

- The anecdote's in relation to empathy in Emotional Intelligence (EI) as follows-

“When I happened to be seated on the bank of a river, or in a park, I see birds flying here and there. I see them darting and dancing around without a care in the world; they suddenly take to flight and having reached a certain height dive down to their resting places in some tree. I am fascinated by all this. I want to translate all their delightful movements into music and I try to do this by means of a suitable tana e.g. one which moves very fast from the Sa (tonic) to pancham (Pa, ‘G’) of the higher octave and then circles down like a bird in flight, to the middle Sa...”⁽⁶⁾

The above is an example of a musician’s empathy in life is an anecdote about a great maestro, Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, who realizes that the birds’ movements resemble certain patterns in the world about them and can imitate them using musical language knows the world inside out and can translate its influences on his art. This has an awareness in that external emotional experiences (birds’ flight) can inspire a matching emotional response in both the performer and the listener.

- Well, this immediately brings in the space of empathy in which can come under the domain of Pandit Jasraj’s creation of Jasrangi. A deep understanding of balance and interdependence in life underlies his approach, and into his music he translated. Ardhanareshwara is the concept of the fusion of masculine & feminine energies, an empathetic reflection to how opposites can live together and complement each other in perfect harmony. A perspective on unity colored by his emotionally intelligent dialogue with the Divine, which sought balance in music between the two opposing forces.

The empathy I refer here to is an understanding of the intrinsic workings of the duality of things (Shiva and Shakti, Radha and Krishna) and translating that into music. In Jasrangi, recognizing opposites as complementary, one went beyond the musical technicality by reaching emotions with deep empathy. He did not simply merge styles that are musical, he deeply connected to the emotional and spiritual ‘essence’ of the male energy to the emotional and spiritual ‘essence’ of the female energy, and produced a very deep, harmonious blend. From this perspective, his music communicated a tremendous empathy for both the musical elements within and the human predicament, the emotional and spiritual equilibrium of opposing forces, and the union of these things. This extremely sensitive touch reveals such empathy, as they express such sensitivity to emotions beyond the superficial act but the deeper bonds of which art can produce⁽⁷⁾.

SOCIAL SKILLS

Social skills, a major component of Emotional Intelligence (EI), are important tools for all musicians to cultivate as it relates to audience communication, and the ability to connect on the level of connection on an emotional level. Social skills are typical in Hindustani classical music, where the interaction between performer and listeners is a live one in all aspects.

Social skills from the great musician’s perspective-

“The magic happens only when the artist serves with love and the listener receives with the same spirit.”

Pt. Ravi Shankar (Sitar Maestro)⁽¹⁰⁾

During a performance Ravi Shankar was asked by Ken why he had spent such a long time tuning his sitar. “Well, Ken I wasn’t tuning my sitar, Ravi smiled, and replied. I was tuning the audience.” Ravi Shankar showed striking photographic ability of connecting to his people and preparing for the performance on an emotional level, thus giving this a profound statement. In layman’s terms, as presenters, this means engaging with and reading the audience, knowing when to pause and when to establish the right atmosphere for storytelling. Patience, understanding that responses are going to take a second, tailoring delivery so that the audience is always immersed, keeps them connected.⁽¹²⁾

This example, we are shown how great musicians make use of their social skills in order to take a deeper connection with their listeners, amplifying the whole experience.

Audience Engagement:

Before he started performing, Ravi Shankar knew the importance of being herself emotionally with the audience and making them receptive and synchronized to music mood.

Effective Communication:

What's most notable is his ability to create the right atmosphere — the right space between himself and the audience to establish a sense of a meaningful connection — a fundamental part of social interaction.

Adaptability:

Having the flexibility to sense the social dynamics of the situation and the audience's readiness in the course of focusing on the delivery and overcoming procrastination enabled Ravi Shankar to do something different than his band playing – to start his performance early.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between ragas and Emotional Intelligence shows the everlasting importance of Indian classical music in comprehending, managing human emotions and how Emotional Intelligence is put into play. Sadhana discipline helps to self-regulate while ragas power of emotion helps to be self-aware. Lifelong learning is motivated by the rasa siddhi, and empathy facilitates the reaching of the audience. Musicians need social skills, like adaptability and good, effective communication, to be able to create shared and emotional experiences in their live setting. Taken together, these points illustrate the intensifying connection between Indian classical music and EI because Emotional Intelligence to Indian classical music is what art itself is to artists who use art as a medium to transform themselves and those around them, to build emotional and spiritual power. While the world is embracing Emotional Intelligence at higher levels, the raga system is a culturally rooted, varied and profound system of emotional development, linking ancient artistic methodology with modern psychological science.

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