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Understanding Emotion

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Joy, sorrow, hope, happiness, anger, shame, guilt, and fear are very common experiences encountered in everyday life. They certainly make human lives rich and varied. Folk psychology holds the view that emotions make or break relationships and make life heaven or hell. Indeed, emotions constitute a basic aspect of human functioning but defining and classifying them poses a complex intellectual challenge. There are different words in different languages to refer to emotional experiences. For instance, the Greek term '*pathema*' and French and English term '*passion*' refer to mental events involving passivity. The Latin word '*affectus*' means event or experience one is affected by and the Sanskrit word '*bhava*' means 'something like a state of mind that becomes or that is one that movements flow from' (Shweder and Haidt 2000). Interestingly, all these terms imply that feeling is critical to the experience of emotion. In academic psychological discourse, however, scholars show a dominant tendency to consider emotional state as a complex organismic reaction involving a high level of activation and visceral changes, accompanied by strong feelings, or affective states.

A close perusal of psychological literature shows that there exist different views on conceptualizing emotion. Depending upon theoretical preferences, the accounts of emotion differ in emphasis on one component over the other but agree in assuming that emotions are personal experiences separate from thoughts or behaviours. They have positive or negative quality and invite cognitive appraisal (that is, are influenced by interpretation of the situation), involve bodily responses—may be internal (changes in heart rate, blood pressure, or respiration) or external responses (facial expressions)—and can vary in intensity. Indeed, emotion is a multifaceted and not a unitary phenomenon. Emotions have motivational property and are intimately related to the different levels of awareness. Since the feelings are verbalized, the words mediate the regulation of emotions. As Izard (2009) has pointed out, the symbolization of emotions and feelings plays a key role in emotion utilization in various kinds of social interactions.

For a long time, emotions were dubbed as pathological, irrational, and negative, and only recently, the positive emotions

could receive attention. In today's world, emotions are playing a crucial role in organizing our lives. They are increasingly being attached to objects than people. Also, marketing of and through feelings has become an important strategy of contemporary business (Mestrovic 1997). This chapter aims at offering an overview of the theoretical and empirical researches in the field of emotions in a historical and cultural context.

THE EXPERIENCE AND EXPRESSION OF EMOTIONS

As early as in 1872, Charles Darwin in his classic book, *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*, put forth the view that emotions evolved because they have an adaptive purpose of communication. He linked specific facial expressions to particular emotions and argued that its primary function is to inform others about one's internal state, which informs how the individual is likely to behave. The forms of non-verbal emotional expressions are integral to human communication.

Emotion theorists have hypothesized that there are few primary emotions or basic feeling states that have evolved because they are adaptive. The wide variety of emotions reported by people arises out of combinations of primary emotions. Plutchik (1982) put forth the view that emotions can be described in terms of: (a) subjective language; (b) behavioural language; and (c) function language. Plutchik's model is based on an emotion wheel made up of four pairs of opposites: joy and sadness, acceptance and disgust, fear and anger, and surprise and anticipation. Tomkins (1962) facial feedback theory suggests that the facial expression produces the emotion—for example, when you smile, you feel happy.

Learning and Emotional Experience

Even though theorists recognize that learning and experience play some role in expressions of emotions, they vary in the extent to which learning is involved. Plutchik (1982) emphasized the role of innate factors and biology in the expression of emotions and proposed that there is a basic set of emotions that all people experience. Emotions are a direct expression of the genetic possibilities of an individual, and the effect of learning is to either modify the relative frequency with which they are expressed (some people express anger more, while others may express sadness) or to modify the external signs of emotion, that is, different people may express emotions differently. Izard (2009) has noted that emotions are innate and are individualized by learning. Expression of emotion includes facial expression which communicates internal experience of emotion. Non-verbal emotional communication plays an important role in the development of attachment. For example, the facial expressions of infants indicate to the caregivers his/her emotional state, which makes them respond in an appropriate manner.

Universality of Emotional Expression

Are facial expressions of emotions universal? Research supports that some aspects of emotion, such as expression of smiling associated with positive emotions, appear to be universal, while others aspects are more culturally specific. Blind children also smile when happy and cry when distressed. Individuals in various cultures convey emotions in a similar manner. The universal facial expression of six basic emotions—anger, fear, disgust, sadness, happiness, and surprise—are documented by cross-cultural studies (Edwards *et al.* 2002). These studies have shown that people could identify these

emotions in members of their own culture and other cultures as exhibited in photographs/videotapes. Researchers have also shown universality in emotional experiences of fear, anger, joy, and sadness in people from thirty different countries. Findings show that sadness was associated with crying; and fear was associated with feeling cold and having a faster heartbeat (Scherer and Wallbott 1994).

Frijda (1988) pointed out that there are certain regularities in emotion experiences. Thus, they always arise in response to the meaning structures of given situation. They arise in response to important events. They are elicited by events appraised as real and by actual or expected changes in favourable/unfavourable conditions. The salience of change is subject to habituation and the standard of comparison. There is hedonic asymmetry because pleasure disappears with continuous satisfaction but pain persists under persisting adverse conditions. Emotional events retain their power indefinitely. Emotions tend to be closed to judgements of relativity of impact and to the requirements of goals other than their own. Every emotional impulse elicits a secondary impulse that tends to modify it in view of its possible consequences. Whenever a situation can be viewed alternatively, there is tendency to minimize negative emotional load and maximize emotional gain.

EXPERIENCE OF EMOTION: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

A number of theories provide different perspectives on the experience of emotions. Physiologically oriented theories focus on the role of cognition in emotions and that origin of emotion lies in physiological reaction to stimuli. James-Lange theory (1884-7) hypothesizes that physiological reaction to a

stimulus trigger emotions, not the other way around. The Canon-Bard theory states that we feel emotions first and then experience physiological reactions, that is, we must feel an emotion before we can have a reaction. The psycho-biological theory (Panksepp 1992) suggests that basic emotions (fear, rage, panic, and expectancy) are related to specific neural circuits, which are associated with a command system in the brain, and these four interact to produce other emotions. Cognitive theories suggest that cognition or thought has a primary role in generating and guiding emotion. Schachter and Singer's (1962) cognitive labelling theory proposes that emotions are a result of physiological arousal and a cognitive labelling. Cognitive appraisal theories focus on the role of cognitive factors such as thought, learning, memory, and perception in the experience of emotion.

Lazarus (1991) identifies three major components of emotion: cognitive appraisal, action impulses, and patterned somatic (bodily) reactions. Arnold (1960), too, emphasizes the role of cognitive appraisal in emotion. The psychoanalytic theory of Freud emphasizes on negative emotions like anger and anxiety, which, according to Freud, are typically because of some unconscious conflict, often resulting from early childhood experience. The social constructivists emphasize the importance of language and social experience in the structuring of emotions. Thus, emotions are intrinsically social phenomena and can only be appreciated and understood as part of the culture in which they have meaning. The organizing principles for most of the emotions are implicit beliefs or folk theories of emotions. The linguistic practices and moral judgements through which feelings are interpreted as emotions are culturally relative (Averill 1990). Cultural context influences individual behaviour through its influence

on the meanings and practices of self. This view makes out emotions as moral, historical, and cultural products than discrete internal and personal products.

As Williams has observed, emotions refer to ‘a complex multidimensional, multifaceted human compound, including irreducible biological and cultural components, which arise or emerge in various socio-relational contexts’ (Williams 2001: 132). The dissatisfaction with unitary model has led to development of multi-componential models. Thus, emotions are constituted by antecedent event, emotional experience, appraisal, physiological change, change in action readiness, behaviour, change in cognitive functioning and beliefs, and regulatory processes (Ekman 2003). Also, emotions influence and are influenced by other psychological processes like cognition, emotion, and decision making. It is held that the biologically based substrate of adaptive emotional functioning is influenced by learning, experience, and socialization.

Rasa and Bhava: An Eastern Theory of Emotion

Unlike Western theories, emotion discourse in Indian thought illustrates an approach that deals with poetic, dramaturgical, and aesthetic experiences with a direct bearing on the psychology of emotions (see Misra 2004; Shweder 1993). According to Paranjpe, ‘*rasa theory* is embedded in a holistic view of human condition in which emotional experience is viewed in relation to the human condition, and coping with its problem. The individual (*jiva*) is thought of as an experiencer (*bhokta*), whose positive as well as negative affect (*bhoga*) is taken as a whole—a universe in itself (*bhava-visva*)’ (Paranjpe 2009: 5).

The theory of *rasa* was proposed by Sage Bharata. His *Natya Shastra*, composed approximately in the third century AD, is the

basic treatise. Bharata assigned specific emotional values to musical notes (*svaras*) and melodic patterns (*jatis* or *ragas*), when they are used in stage presentation. In an expressive context such as musical sounds or elaborate language of hand gesture, glances, footwork, body movements in Indian dance, a *raga* can become the vehicle of a mood. Misra (2005) observes that the *rasas* are expressed in painting, sculptures, and poetic works. Emotion becomes the criterion or the subject matter of expression of these *rasas*. *Rasa* is a refined mental state to which the dancer/poet and spectator get transported to. It is a meta-emotion—a sui generis form of consciousness. The core of this view is *bhava* which means existence as well as mental state. It refers to being or existence and also, the ultimate meaning (*Bhavantiti bhavah; bhavayanti iti bhavah*). The theory suggests that it is through the *samyoga* (union) of *bhavas* that *rasa* becomes manifest (*vibhavanubhavasanchari samyoad rasa nishpattih*). There are four kinds of *bhavas*, that is, *sthayi bhava* (enduring, common, frequent), *vibhava* (the determining/eliciting conditions), *anubhava* (the consequences, such as somatic responses, action tendencies, and expressive modes), and *vyabhichari bhava* (the accompanying mental states).

The classification explicitly listed by Sage Bharata lists eight *rasas*: *shringar* (the mood of eros), *vira* (knightly mood), *karuna* (the mood of pathos), *raudra* (angry mood), *bhayanaka* (the mood of terror), *bibhasta* (the mood of revulsion), *hasya* (the mood of jocularly), and *adbhuta* (the mood of wonder). The influential commentary on *Natya Shastra* by Abhinavagupta derived a ninth *rasa*, *shanta* (the mood of total freedom), in which neither happiness nor unhappiness occurs. Since then, these nine *rasas* have been accepted as the fundamental units. There

are corresponding bhavas, namely, *rati*, *hasya*, *shoka*, *krodha*, *utsaha*, *phaya*, *jugupsa*, *vismaya*, and *saama*. Certain additions like *vatsalya* (love for child) and *bhakti* (love for God) were added by later writers and these also have some acceptance.

A bhava is manifest due to something, and to some extent, determined by the circumstances. Once such a condition of being appears (for example, enacted in a text or on a stage), the person (for example, the reader or spectator) starts behaving in certain ways (anubhava). There may be a dominant bhava amidst several ancillary emotions (*sanchari bhavas*). Each mental state is correlated with certain forms of physical demeanour and behaviour (*abhinaya*). The rasa experience involves these but is more than the sum of them and has its own quality. The experience of rasa is located in *samajika's chittavrittis* or *sthayi bhavas*. They get manifested in contact with pertinent experiences while viewing that enacted viewer's separate identity is merged with universal experience of rasa. Rasa provides *alaukika anand* or bliss and exists in *asvadan* or relish. The education in our feelings (*sadharanikara*) demands *sahridayata* or communion with aesthetic experience. Such a person has *rasikatva* or interest in poetry and its appreciation, ability to identify with the situation at the level of imagination, ability to identify with the hero, and attentiveness (*chrvana* or *bhavana*). Rasa has been spiritualized by Abhinavagupta who claimed that rasa is an experience of pure bliss.

In Indian tradition, there is considerable emphasis on emotion regulation. The automatically activated feelings are controlled or overridden by reason, cognition, or behaviours. Bhagavad Gita enumerates that attachment leads to all kinds of problems and encourages to act without hankering for fruit (*anasakta*).

EMOTIONS: WHY DO THEY MATTER?

Emotion has been a source of intense debate, discussion, and disagreement from the time of earliest philosophers to present-day thinkers and psychologists. According to a typical lay theory of emotion, the 'volcano theory', emotions are feelings and unless feelings are vented or discharged, they may accumulate and burst forth, impairing individuals' ability to reason and function adaptively. The other view is that emotion and reason are not mutually contradictory, rather emotional thought is considered as a part of, and contributor to, logical thought and to intelligence in general.

There is growing recognition that emotions are about significant things that are intrinsically emotional. They are always about something that matters for us. As Keltner and Haidt (1999) have shown, there are individual, dyadic, group, and cultural-level functions of emotions. At individual level, they *inform* the individual about specific social events or conditions needing to be acted upon and *prepare* the individual to respond to problems or opportunities. At dyadic level, emotional expressions help *knowing* others' emotions, beliefs, and intentions; *evoke* complementary and reciprocal emotions in others; and *serve* as incentives or deterrents for other individual's social behaviour. At group level, emotions help individuals *define* group boundaries and *identify* group members; help individuals define and *negotiate* group-related roles and statuses; and help group members negotiate group-related problems. At cultural level, emotions help in assuming cultural identities, help children learning norms and values of their culture, and reify and perpetuate cultural ideologies and power structures. Lawler (2006) has proposed that emotions are often interpreted in relational or group terms. They bear affective attachments to relations

or groups and contribute to social solidarity and order.

Elaborating the role of emotions in the interpersonal domain, Leary (2007) has argued that the experience of emotions by human beings is made complex by self-awareness. It permits human beings to imagine how they are perceived by other fellow beings. The experience of emotions like guilt, shame embarrassment, often labelled as self-conscious emotions, happens to be the reaction to the inferences regarding the evaluations performed by the significant others. Such evaluations are critical to social life in many ways. They guide and encourage people to follow social norms and standards, punishing misbehaviour, and promoting corrective actions following wrongdoings.

Emotions are viewed as signals that provide information, direct attention, and facilitate attainment of goals, and are viewed as organizing processes that enable people to think and behave adaptively. It is held that adaptive processing of emotionally relevant information is part of intelligence (Salovey and Mayer 1990). The importance of emotion has also been emphasized in the domain of rational thought, like effective decision making. It has been found that people who manage their own feelings well and deal effectively with others are more likely to be content in their lives, and are, therefore, more likely to retain information better and learn more effectively. These advances show that emotion and cognition (intelligence) complement each other, and this provided the basis for the development of the concept of emotional intelligence (EI).

THINKING INTELLIGENTLY ABOUT EMOTIONS: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE
Since emotions convey knowledge about a person's relationship with the world, certain

general rules and laws can be employed in recognizing and reasoning with feelings. The concept of EI primarily focuses on the complex, potentially intelligent tapestry of emotional reasoning in everyday life. According to Goleman (1995), EI is the ability to know and manage one's own emotions, recognize them in others, and to handle relationships. It includes abilities such as being able to motivate one and persist in the face of frustrations, to control impulse and delay gratification, to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think, to empathize, and to hope. Mayer and Salovey (1997: 4), in their notion of EI, combine emotion with intelligence, and consider it as 'reasoning that takes emotions into account'. They defined EI as 'the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth' (ibid.: 5).

A perusal of the various conceptualizations of EI shows that self-awareness or knowing one's emotions is the keystone of EI. Self-management or management of one's emotions is an ability that builds self-awareness. People who excel in it can bounce back more quickly from life's setbacks and upsets. Handling relationships is a skill, which helps in managing emotions in others. Thus, EI is the ability that motivates us to pursue our unique potential and purpose, and actuates our innermost values and aspirations transforming them from things we think about to what we live.

An Indian View of EI
Research shows that emotion is dependent on cognitive appraisals of experience as well it is a culturally grounded process. Hence, EI

in the Indian context, like the Western view, cannot be viewed as a homogenous trait, or a mental ability devoid of social concerns like respecting elders, concern for others, and fulfilling one's duties. These concerns, along with moral values of *ahimsa* (non-violence), kindness, and benevolence, provide the very basis for emotional expression and responsiveness in Indian context. In fact, they are built in ways an individual deals with situations, emotional, social, or otherwise. These culture-specific ways of behaving, therefore, are basic to the notion of EI. It is due to these reasons that individuals approach emotions differently—across cultures, subcultures, within societies, or families.

The Indian view of EI is rooted in the rich traditional, religious, and philosophical context focusing on the role of family and society in shaping one's emotions. Social concerns such as well-being of others and fulfilling one's duty constitute a dominant part of achievement goals, with social skills such as respecting elders or helping others constituting the salient means of achieving these goals (Dalal *et al.* 1988). Likewise, the concept of shared locus of control is more salient and accorded greater value in the non-Western cultural groups (Weisz *et al.* 1984). Also, Indians often treat individual inclination as consonant with social duty or *dharma*. The Indian view of self is characterized more as interdependent. In Indian thought, self is viewed as an experiencing subject, or an unchanging centre of awareness. Yoga and ways of meditation are considered means of discovering the true self. The Indian self is constructed around 'we', 'our', and 'us', in contrast to the Western 'I' and 'my', that is, always in relation to social context.

Emotional learning needs to be viewed as a lifelong process of personal exploration (looking inward) towards the discovery of

true self. This process is accompanied by concepts such as yoga, *karma* (deeds), *jitendriya* (person who is able to manage and regulate one's emotions), *dharma* (duty), *vratas* (ordinances), caring, and benevolence, and though these are not empirically tested, the existence of these cannot be denied since they have found expression in literature, folklore, popular songs, idioms, and other Indian expressions. In this way, culture-specific ways of behaving are, therefore, basic to the notion of EI (Sibia *et al.* 2003).

The construct of EI in the Indian socio-cultural context is to be viewed differently from the Western which lays emphasis on hierarchical acquisition of abilities, clearly distinguishable from traits such as warmth, sociability, etc. In the Indian context, certain action tendencies and affective states have also been considered to be of importance for an emotionally intelligent person (Sibia *et al.* 2004). Emotional intelligence test, an indigenous assessment scale (Sibia *et al.* 2005), incorporates the identified aspects of affective functioning in the Indian context—social sensitivity, prosocial behaviour, action tendencies, and affective states—with the four dimensions of EI: identifying, assimilating, understanding, and regulating the affective processes (Srivastava *et al.* 2008).

Emotional Competence

Emotional understanding predicts children's social competence. Emotional competence is the ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one's life in ways that enable the successful management of life. Emotion-eliciting social interaction is central to emotionally competent functioning. According to Saarni (1997), skills indicative of an emotionally competent person are: (a) be aware of one's own sometimes complex emotional

state; (b) able to discern other's emotional states; (c) able to state and communicate our emotions; (d) able to feel with and for others; (e) able to understand that we, and others, don't always show emotions accurately; (f) able to cope with different emotional communication when relating to others; (g) aware of emotional communications in interpersonal relationship; and (h) aware that one is in charge of one's feelings and may choose one's emotional response in a given situation. Emotional competence presumes emotional development; it is due to differences in emotion-related capacities or abilities that differences occur among individuals.

Emotional competence is inseparable from cultural context. Emotional responses can be assumed to have social meaning, as these responses are learned cultural messages about cultural values and norms, relationships, scripts regarding sex role, and even self-definitions.

CULTURE AND EMOTION

Emotional expression is guided by the cultural values, beliefs, and rules regarding appropriate expression. Research, too, has evidenced that expressed emotions vary across cultures and situations. Cultural norms vary regarding expression of emotions, for example, in China, women are encouraged to express grief and conceal happiness; in the United States (US), the reverse is true; the Latin American culture expects hugging and kissing friends while greeting or leaving; or crying at weddings is considered normal in some cultures and not in others. Cultural differences in recognition, experience, and display of emotions have shown that recognition of facial expressions is more accurate in people belonging to their own national, ethnic, and regional groups (see Mesquita and Walker 2003). Japanese report such emotions as *fureai* (feeling closely linked

to others) and *aimé* (an unpleasant feeling of indebtedness to others) (Ellsworth 1994). The emphasis in Japanese culture is on communal values and mutual obligations and hence, these emotions are more central to people's lives as compared to the people in the US.

Researches have also shown learned cultural differences in the intensity and frequency in expression of certain emotions. Cultural display rules are learned as part of socialization process. For example, in Asian cultures, the emphasis is on collective effort, social connections, and interdependence, and display of emotions such as sympathy, respect, and shame is more common and display of feelings or negative emotions that might disrupt peace among group members is avoided. Whereas Western cultures encourage individuality and people from these cultures display emotions openly, which are usually intense and prolonged.

Research evidence shows cultural differences in examples of signals/non-verbal cues of emotion. For example, in Chinese literature, clapping hands when worried or disappointed, sticking out one's tongue to express surprise, and scratching one's ears and cheeks to express happiness (Klineberg 1938) is considered normal, which people of other cultures would easily misunderstand.

SOCIAL EMOTIONS

All human relationships, whether articulated through voice, expressions, body movements, actions, or behaviours, are laden with emotion. Social emotions are emotions that are aroused by real, imagined, anticipated, or recalled encounters with others—emphasizing on the relational aspect as the common theme underlying all types of social emotions (Leary 2004).

Even though it is widely acknowledged that the primary function of emotion is

individual survival, it is also acknowledged that emotions have a major role to play in 'social survival', that is, building social bonds and overcoming social problems. According to Fischer and Manstead (2008), emotions are important in social survival as they help: (a) in forming and maintaining social relationships; and (b) to establish and maintain social position relative to others. The assumption is that emotions evolve in social context and are beneficial for social survival.

Emotions and their expression play an important role in helping individuals to accomplish their social roles as well as to communicate individual's needs and goals to others and to their own selves. Ethologist Eibesfeldt (1980) has argued that several expressions in human beings may serve to diffuse possible aggression in potentially aggressive encounters. Smiles may control aggression and facial display of aggression may warn others to be ready or avoid the confrontation. Thus, emotion functions as bodily reactions to survival-related problems.

Human relationship with others provides diversity in emotional experience and communication of that experience. Thus, relationships influence individual's emotions, and emotions reciprocally influence our relationships.

SELECT EMOTIONS

Happiness

Psychologists have focused mostly on understanding negative emotions such as fear, anger, and sadness, and neglected happiness, a primary human emotion. Brain research points to the prefrontal cortex as the prime locus for human happiness. Research suggests that positive emotions, including happiness, are associated with increased activity in the prefrontal cortex of the left cerebral hemi-

sphere, whereas negative emotions such as disgust are associated with increased activity in the right prefrontal cortex (Harmon-Jones and Sigelman 2001). Seligman (2003) notes that people who are happier tend to be more sociable, and not richer, or better looking, or even healthier, on the average, than less happy people.

Cultural Variations in Happiness

The conceptualization of happiness varies across culture. People in individualistic cultures have reported higher satisfaction and happiness with their lives than people in collectivistic cultures (Diener *et al.* 1995). In individualistic cultures, happiness is seen as personal achievement and the individualistic see themselves as autonomous beings and thus, individual needs, goals, and desires are considered more important. In contrast, people in collectivistic cultures view themselves as intertwined with other people (interdependent self) and emphasize on relationships with other. Behaviour and emotions in these cultures are dependent upon norms and duties of the group. Happiness in individualistic cultures is thus bound to be subjective, personal, or individual in scope, while it is more relational, intersubjective, and collective in scope in collectivistic societies (Kitayama and Markus 1994; Triandis 1994).

What Makes People Happy?

People, in general, across the world have reported material living conditions, happy family life, personal or family health, interesting job, and personal characteristics such as emotional stability, self-discipline, etc. (in order of priority), make them happy (see Easterlin 2004). David Lykken, a leading theorist of happiness, posited that people have a particular 'set point' for happiness, a level around which their general level

of happiness tends to settle (Wallis 2005); though not much evidence is there on how happiness set points are determined, evidence points to genetics playing an important role. Life satisfaction is not something permanent, it changes during the life course.

Indian researches on happiness are scarce and available literature suggests that Indians place stress on economic welfare as well as family and social welfare. Researches have shown that the concept of happy life among Indian farmers relates with immediate economic values, self-development, family welfare, and social goods to a great extent. Researches also show that happiness in Indian context is quite close to both affluence and poverty; economic conditions and welfare of children; and relationship of family with adults. The experience of happiness in school students relates to both social relationship and accomplishments.

Shame

Shame has been called the master emotion because it has many more social and psychological functions than other emotions. Highlighting the significant role of shame in human experience, in regulating the expression and the awareness of all other emotions, Cooley (1922) argues that emotions like anger, fear, grief, and love will not be expressed if one is ashamed of them. Shame is a powerful social emotion and for it to exist, the individual must develop self-awareness, which is an important capacity for the development of primary emotions. Shame is developed through the process of social learning and is tied to interpersonal relationships and attachment bonds.

According to mainstream emotion literature, people experience shame when they have done something 'wrong' or 'bad' in their own eyes or in the eyes of others. Shame is said to

arise in situations (real or imagined) which are threat to one's relationships. Shame is a feeling associated with being negatively evaluated by self or others because of not being able to meet standards and norms regarding what is good, right, appropriate, and desirable and is referred to as 'moral' emotion (Tangney *et al.* 2007). Shame is viewed as a key component of conscience, the moral sense, since it signals moral wrongdoing even without thoughts or words. Shame is also referred to as 'self-conscious' emotion because it requires a concept of the self, or an ability to see the self as an object of evaluation (Tracy and Robins 2004). According to Tomkins *et al.*, shame is 'the effect of indignity, of defeat, of transgression, and of alienation...[it] is felt as an inner torment, a sickness of the soul' (Tomkins *et al.* 1995: 133). Developmental research also suggests that shame emerges only after children are able to recognize themselves in the mirror.

Culture and Experience of Shame

Cultural specificity in experience of shame reflects a view of 'individual' self-construal (Markus and Kitayama 1991), that is, individualistic. Cultures rooted in collectivistic or 'interdependent' view of self-experience shame differently. There is evidence of shame as being positively viewed in collectivistic contexts such as Indian culture; a popular Hindu story describes how the deity Kali's shame saved the world (Menon and Shweder 1994).

Research suggests that of the three emotions—shame, happiness, and anger—Hindu Indians view shame more positively than their European–American counterparts. Research suggests that shame is a 'focal' emotion in collectivistic cultures, or an emotion that is salient and commonly experienced. *Lajja* is a positive emotion in India, though its nearest translations (embracement, shame,

shyness) could be considered as negative in the West (Hejmadi *et al.* 2000).

Lajja in Indian Context

Lajja (shame) in Indian context has a positive connotation. It means possessing the virtue of behaving in a civilized manner. To experience lajja is to experience sense of graceful submission and virtuous, courteous well-mannered self; in fact, it is equated with 'respectful restraint'. In Orissa, India, 'Bite your tongue' is an idiomatic expression for lajja, and is also the facial expression used by women as an iconic apology in face of failure to uphold social norms. According to Shweder *et al.* (2008), lajja is viewed as a salient ideal of South Asia because it is seen as helping preserve social harmony by helping woman swallow their rage.

Lajja illustrates the dependence of emotional experience on social and moral context. The ethics of 'autonomy', 'community', and 'divinity' and their importance across cultures affect their experience and expression of emotions along with the cultural conceptualizations of emotion. Also, emotions felt by those whose morality is based on ethic of autonomy, that is, focuses on individuals' striving to maximize their personal selves may not be the same as those whose morality is based on ethic of community where family is of main concern. Menon and Shweder (1994: 183) state: '*Lajja* will not be felt in a culture that sees hierarchy and exclusive prerogative of others as unjust than as powerful object of admiration and respect'.

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Emotion is a complex multifaceted process which has an emergent character. Its roots are found in biology as well as the cultural context. A complete study and explication of human emotion experiences is yet to be

undertaken. For instance, the status of the concept of 'core affect' is not clear. We do not know whether it is a natural category or not, and how on the different occasions it becomes part of the context or the self. In fact, the mental representation of emotion is insufficiently understood. Also, the specific links between affect and conceptual knowledge about emotion are not adequately understood. The domain of positive emotions and emotional creativity pose many interesting challenges for researchers (see Averill 2002). The current understanding does not offer unambiguous view of the process how neural activity instantiates specific emotional content. As Barrett *et al.* (2007) have noted, a scientific understanding of emotion experiences requires a multi-pronged strategy. It has to offer: (a) a rich, context-sensitive description of what is experienced; (b) a causal explanation of how experienced content is constituted by the human brain; and (c) an explanatory framework that neither reduces one to the other nor confounds the two. There are many nagging issues which will engage the researchers for quite some time. It's a growing field of research with immense potential for improving the quality of life of the people.

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