

# Emotion Management and its Relevance Now a days

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## ABSTRACT

*The present paper aims at analyzing the importance of emotion management during the challenging period the world is going through. This analysis emphasizes the close connection between ancient Indian knowledge and the modern concept of emotion management, as a consequence of the intercultural dialogue between East and West. Since the beginning of the comparative studies between European and Indian cultures, in the 19th century, western scholars and researchers have continuously explored the vast and advanced Sanskrit heritage. The present study will focus mainly on the perspective of the Nalanda tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism and the collaboration between Tibetan Buddhism and modern science in the development of emotion management. This analysis is based on the Orient-Occident intercultural dialogue and makes use of the comparative method and hermeneutics, and sets an interdisciplinary approach to the current relevance of the ancient Indian philosophical and religious heritage.*

## INTRODUCTION

Humans, like all social animals, spend their lives mostly interacting with other fellow human beings. Thus, their actions are permeated by emotions, responses to the external and internal worlds. The complexity of emotions is remarkable, it does not consist only of feelings, it also implies physical and physiological reactions: "But the feeling component is only one aspect of an emotion; emotions also include physiological responses (heart rate may increase, sweating may occur, muscles may tense, etc.), brain activity, thoughts, expressions (facial, body gestures, etc.), and other elements" (Reevy 2010: 1). Emotions have a great impact on our lives: they can save or destroy us. Their occurrence is so vast: in our family, at work, in friendship, etc.

Although the linguistic representations of emotions are culturally dependent, their facial representations are universal among all people, as Paul Ekman noticed: "How emotions are represented in language is, of course, the product of culture rather than evolution. [...] Despite the translation problems, there has never been an instance in which the majority in two cultures ascribes a different emotion to the same expression" (Ekman 2003: 12). Thus, emotions and their management recently became a major point of interest for scientists working in different fields of research, though, these components of our inner world had been studied by people since ancient times.

In the present paper, the researcher shall explore the fascinating history of human emotions and their relevance for our time from multiple perspectives: historical, philosophical, religious and literary, in order to offer a holistic picture of some of the most important elements of human behaviour.

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## CONSTRUCTIVE AND DESTRUCTIVE EMOTIONS ACCORDING TO ANCIENT INDIAN THINKERS

The Ancient Indian philosophers had noticed the paramount importance of emotions in human existence. Through meditative practices (analytical and single-pointed), the ancient masters explored the diversity and the ambivalence of human emotions. They classified emotions into two categories: positive/constructive/healing and negative/destructive.

Among the positive emotions, they have included- tranquillity (*śamatha*), contentment, happiness, loving-kindness (*maitrī*) and compassion (*karuṇā*). All these give rise to virtuous actions which, in turn, leads to liberation. The other category, the negative emotions (*kleśa*), generates non-virtuous actions which lead to rebirth in lower realms:

“The category of *kleśa* subsumes under a single rubric habit of emotion, intentionality, and cognition, such as three fundamental unhealthy mindsets: concupiscence, animosity, and delusion (the *Dhātukāya*’s inventory includes five: the cravings of sense desire, craving for nonsensuous pleasure, craving for disembodied bliss, animosity, and doubt). The idea is found outside Buddhism (e.g., in the *Yogasūtras*) and constitutes a common assumption of religious, moral psychology in India: Unhealthy frames of mind are at the root of suffering; healthy mindsets are at the root of liberation” (Gomez 2004: 682).

The importance of positive emotions for teachers, as well as for every human, was emphasized and highly praised by all the Nalanda masters. Nāgārjuna stated that the constructive emotions combined with wisdom (*prajña*) should be the main features of a trustable guru/master/teacher:

“If you are taught by those knowing contentment,  
And having compassion and ethics,  
As well as wisdom that can drive out of your afflictive emotions,  
You should realize [what they teach] and respect them” (Nāgārjuna 2007: 24).

The root of all emotions is the mind (*citta*), it conceives thoughts that generate different types of emotions, either constructive or destructive, and all of them materialize into verbal and physical actions, thus, Śāntideva stressed the significance of compassionate speech for Buddhist practitioners and laypeople: “In a soft and gentle voice one should speak sincere, coherent words that have clear meaning and are agreeable, pleasant to the ear and rooted in compassion” (Śāntideva 1997: 56). Nāgārjuna, in Letter to a Friend (*Suhṛllekha*) advised the cultivation of healing emotions for higher rebirths:

“Constantly and perfectly reflect  
On love, compassion, joy, impartiality.  
And should you not attain the higher state,  
At least you will find bliss in Brahma’s world” (Nāgārjuna 2005: 43).

The core practice in Tibetan Buddhism (which is rooted in Mahāyāna Buddhism, Nalanda lineage) is the mantra of Chenrezig or Avalokiteśvara (the Bodhisattva of Compassion): Aum mani padme hum. This mantra describes the procedure to decrease the negative emotions (anger, hatred, greed, envy, etc.) by cultivating compassion (*karuṇā*) and wisdom (*prajña*), the last concept must be based on the realisation of *pratītyasamutpāda* (the dependent origination).

But irrespective of religion, every person can benefit from reflecting and cultivating constructive emotions due to their potential to create and maintain a state of balance in the inner and outer worlds. These ancient Indian teachings are so relevant in our contemporary society, during difficult periods when people are facing a

diversity of mental disturbances. The way that the Mahāyāna Buddhist masters taught the cultivation of positive emotions over mental afflictions is one of the best examples of emotion management.

## **TAMING THE MIND FOR A HEALTHY AND HAPPY LIFE**

Taming the mind is a process based on emotion management, or they could be considered equal/synonyms. Multum in parvo this procedure consists of becoming aware of one's own emotions, analyzing them, accepting their existence and cultivating their antagonists (the constructive emotions, if the previous ones were destructive).

Whenever one deals with a difficult situation he or she tends to develop negative emotions such as anger, hatred, fear, sadness or disappointment, and his / her actions will be negative as well. But these negative outputs do not harm only the so-called enemy, they have serious consequences on the individual himself/herself, on both mental and physical levels. Essentially destroying others, one destroys himself or herself because every negative action generates bad consequences for the doer.

Thus, it is crucial to practice mindfulness in order to be always aware of one's state of mind. This is the starting point in the analysis of one's mental processes and if he/she identifies any negative emotions, he or she must take action and develop the opposite emotion. Being aware that everything is impermanent is very helpful in this process because it makes us understand that even our destructive emotions are evanescent, as Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche explained in *The Hundred Verses of Advice of Padampa Sangye*:

"The wind blows through the sky and flies across continents without ever settling anywhere. It sweeps through space leaving no trace whatsoever. Let thoughts pass through your mind in the same way, leaving no karmic residue and never altering your realization of innate simplicity" (Khyentse 2004: 67-68).

Negative emotions are a part of our minds. We should observe them, accept their existence and replace them using constructive emotions. This is roughly the process of taming the mind. The previously mentioned mental actions should be implemented using meditation, both analytical and single-pointed. As a consequence, one will enormously benefit at physical and mental levels from this ancient practice or emotion management as it is called nowadays.

## **MAPPING EMOTIONS: BUDDHISM AND WESTERN SCIENCE**

The Nalanda masters and the Tibetan yogis and lamas dedicated their lives to the study of emotions, trying to transform their own negative feelings and thoughts into positive ones, making use of different types of meditation and tantric practices. The main purpose of the retreats that the contemporary Buddhist practitioners undertake is to deal with their mental processes and purify them, thus, they have to know exactly all the emotions, cultivate the good ones and try to eliminate the bad ones.

Modern western science started paying more and more attention to these aspects of human life and they even mapped the emotions, as His Holiness the Dalai Lama suggested many years ago. Paul Ekman, a friend of the Dalai Lama, created an atlas of human emotions according to the facial expression:

"Each emotion, Paul's research revealed, could be mapped in terms of the movements of underlying muscles – so accurately that the formula for a given emotion could be written in a precise notation. For the first time, scientists could accurately measure a person's emotions, simply by observing the moment-to-moment shifts in their facial muscles" (Goleman ed. 2003: 124).

From the fruitful dialogue between Buddhism (especially Tibetan Buddhism) and western science, the westerners can benefit by applying emotion management into their daily life. Susan David and Christina

Congleton emphasize the crucial importance of emotional agility in our contemporary busy society, especially for leaders, whose life is so stressful due to their many responsibilities:

“Effective leaders don’t buy into or try to suppress their inner experiences. Instead, they approach them in a mindful, values-driven, and productive way – developing what we call emotional agility. In our complex, fast-changing knowledge economy, this ability to manage one’s thoughts and feelings is essential to business success” (David & Congleton 2018: 122).

Thus, emotional agility could be considered as a complementary concept for emotional intelligence. The recognition of the emotions one is experiencing at a certain moment (mindfulness) is the starting point in the long but rewarding process of emotional transformation. This whole inner development journey is not possible without emotion management, and for this one can learn from the Buddhist tradition methods and ways to deal with his / her own inner “enemies”. As Buddha Śakyamuni advises in Kalama Sutta, we are our own masters, our happiness or sadness depends on our own thoughts / emotions and actions.

## CONCLUSION

Our hectic society brings about a lot of stress and suffering, strengthens our negative emotions and ultimately causes mental and physical illnesses. In order to tackle these destructive emotions, one should learn from the Indian ancient practices how to cultivate their opposites, in other terms emotion management. For instance, the Buddhist literature offers many pieces of advice in this respect, the spiritual path to happiness could be summed up as a constant awareness of one’s own thoughts, feelings and emotions (mindfulness) and a continuous replacement of the destructive ones with their constructive counterpart. The increasing interest in Buddhism in the West is due to the higher and higher number of mental problems humans face nowadays; emotion management (which benefits a lot from Indian philosophies) is of paramount importance for the achievement of happiness.

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