Understanding Emotions from an Indian perspective: implications for Wellbeing.

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Very often we feel what we are made to feel. There are cultural influences as well as early childhood experiences which often color our feelings. How do people react when you chirpily say “Hey, How’s life?” or “What’s up?” smilingly waiting for a positive response. Unfortunately it is perceived as a sign of neuroticism. “Why do you put up a smile?” “Why do you pretend to be happy?” Whether excitement is an indicator of happiness or distress? Or is it better to be calm than excited? I leave it for others to understand. Well it is up to us to feel good.

We all want to be happy. To a certain extent the feelings we want to feel are the ones we actually value. Though values are socio-culturally transmitted, but they are also acquired through various life experiences. Sometimes we suppress our emotions to accommodate others’ needs. This adjustment requires suspended action, having psycho physiological benefits. Is forgiveness an art? Is it a philosophy of life? Forgiveness is a powerful means to heal though it can be costly in terms of pride and immediate self interest. But it works wonders. Gandhi, the father of our nation, has instilled the feelings of forgiveness in the heart of every Indian. Forgiveness is divine. It not only relieves us of the inner tension, frustration, grief, anger but replaces it with a state of calmness and relaxation. That every soul deserves forgiveness as there is no one who has not sinned. Though it is not easy to
forgive those who have harmed us or threaten our wellbeing. This art comes through practice of meditation and yoga. Hence a yogi very rarely demonstrates any facial or verbal expressions of emotions. They have developed an ability to endure pain as well as happiness, being elevated to a higher level of consciousness. They deal with the events in the world as mere facts without any emotional component.

Should we emote according to social norms or personal concerns? Would you let other’s cognitions, expectations or actions mold your feelings? You live once, and you better live well. I believe in living a meaningful life which is pleasurable, happy and satisfied. To make a little difference in lives of those around us because sometimes a little difference makes a BIG difference.

**Richness of Emotional Experience:**

We are emotional beings. We feel happy when we are with our loved ones; sad if we lose someone near; guilty if we hurt someone unknowingly; and angry if things do not happen as we had planned. Hence there is never a moment when we do not emote. What are we without our emotions? We would be mere machines working like a robot. Emotions color our life experiences. They inform us as to who we are, and our relationship with others around us, and how we must act. Emotions give meaning to our existence and the events that we experience. Without emotions, these experiences would be mere pieces of information.

Even within a culture, different people may not necessarily understand or experience emotion in exactly the same way. India is a country which has a rich cultural heritage. There are people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Despite differences in language,
customs, and traditions there is unity. People work together, share their experiences, celebrate their festivals, form relationships, there is mutual respect for one another, and freedom to expression. There is cultural bonding despite diversity. Sometimes the same event may be experienced differently by people of the same culture. For example death among Indians may be perceived as a liberation from material bondage and reunification with God (according to those who strongly believe in the Hindu Sanatan Dharma), while those who believe in the Aryasamaj sect (reformation of the Hinduism of that period, as proposed by Swami Dayanand Saraswati) may believe in the cycle of Karma, and take it in a factual way, as something inevitable. According to Rabindranath Tagore, the great Indian poet and Nobel laureate, death is not an extinguishing of the lamp but brightness of the day born. As taught by the famous Indian religious book “The Bhagvad Gita”, the soul never dies, it only changes its clothing by adopting another body. Hence our consciousness, intellect, wisdom, deeds are always passed on from one generation to the next. The enlightened ones never feel upset by any failures nor happy at success. The key to human functioning is work “Karma”. To do what is to be done. The emphasis is on hard work without a focus on the reward. Just to keep moving towards the path in search of a destination. This motivation overwhelsms any emotional experience and expression which might be a hindrance towards progress. “Ahamkar”, or pride or anger “krodh” are the two most important negative emotions which must be concealed for the benefit of oneself and those around us. They only function as mere obstacles in our work. Anger, also diminishes cognitive processes, the ability to reason, think, analyze, decide all suffer. Vinash kalya viprit buddhi. The one who is mislead in life, cannot think coherently and correctly will lead to destruction of
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goodness and life. Hence it is very important to introspect into oneself time and again to make sure that our emotions can be used intelligently. When the time is bad, every thing goes wrong. It is for us to understand the importance of wellbeing above emotions. Hence the perception, experience and interpretation of an event vary according to what value systems we evolve. This has important implications on our emotional wellbeing.

Two instances of an emotion can look and feel very different from one another, even when they have been categorized in the same category. In a study by Khosla (2009) students from India, Mongolia, Sri Lanka and Vietnam were presented photographs depicting fear, anger, sadness, happiness, surprise and guilt, their experience of emotion was significantly different when anger, fear and surprise photographs of Indian men and women were shown. There was a variation in the intensity and recognition of these emotions particularly. For example the photographs depicting fear and surprise were often interpreted with ambiguity and more time was taken to recognize these emotions.

In another study (Khosla,2008) found that when pictures of basic emotions were shown to Indian college students, there was a significant difference in the reaction time with respect to the recognition of emotion when the poser was Indian or American. The reaction time to recognize the expressions of the Indian posers was much less compared to when the posers were American participants. This could be explained by the in-group bias or the identification with the poser by the judgers.

**Yoga-Sutra and Affect**
Yoga –Sutra mentions various affects from our life. It talks about positive and negative affect. Positive affective states as Ananda (joy), Hlada (delight), Samtosha (contentment), Sukha (pleasure), Mudita (gladness), Karuna (compassion), Aparigraha (greedlessness), Upeksha (equanimity) and many more positive states. Negative affective states as Daurmanasya (depression), Dukha (Pain or suffering), Krodha (anger), Lobha (greed), Paritapa (distress) and Vaira (enemity or hostility). Both these affective states reflect the immediate reactions to the pleasant and unpleasant conditions of our life. The intensity and frequency of the experienced affect and its cognitions has important implications for our life. In Indian culture, which is a collectivistic culture we value our relationships more than anything else. Lot of emphasis is given to the group to which we belong, maybe our family and extended family, our friends, or colleagues at the workplace etc. The social bonding is very strong. There is a sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of the members of your group than yourself. The individual self comes much later than the group members. Where social expectations mold our desires, where social obligations are the root of our existence. The emphasis is on others’ well being rather than on personal wellbeing. There is a feeling of sharing, bonding and reciprocity which is unique. A deep sense of humanity which prevails which fosters mutual growth. Unlike in Western cultures, emphasis is on “we” than “me”. This humane perspective makes our lives more meaningful, and hence more morally responsible. This in turn influences our moral emotions. These strong bonds of relationships provide a sense of security and safety which makes possible to overcome any obstacle in life with ease. Moreover these personal groups also become a source of inspiration, celebration, as well as mourning.
Effect of Enculturation on Emotion Expression

Do we express what we really want to express? Or do we take care to see if we are not hurting someone’s feelings in the process? For example if we are eating at someone’s place and the food is just not of our taste, we would still eat it smilingly, appreciating it too, just to make the person who has cooked the meal happy, with a sense of regard and respect and acknowledgement of his or her affection.

Hence despite having people from so many diverse backgrounds there is some amount of cultural unity which is innate or culture specific, is something which is debatable. Agreeing with Darwin’s theory of evolution (1872), that we are born with the basic set of emotions and the universality studies (Ekman & Friesen, 1969) which point to the notion of universal emotions across cultures. There is still much to be deciphered. If emotional expression, experience and perception are innate and genetically transmitted then how do we account for the cultural differences which have been observed? Whether emotions play a more dominant role in our actions, thoughts, decisions, planning, reasoning or is it cognition which initiates these processes is still not very clear (Khosla, 2001). To what extent culture mediates in between emotion and cognition is something which must be elaborated and researched upon.

In a study (Khosla, 1994) when emotional film scenes were shown to the Indian students of Delhi University, there were remarkable gender differences in the expression of emotions, particularly grief. The students were shown a tragic death scene, where a young woman is trapped on the railway tracks, and her sister is trying to save her from a
train approaching her, but in vain. This young woman is standing in front of her sisters’ pyre and quietly crying. Soon her blind old mother comes asking for the younger daughter. When she comes near her and realizes what must have happened and dies in shock. The scene ends with the young girl crying bitterly, loudly amidst the two pyres.

When the men were shown this scene they reported experiencing very little negative affect, as compared to women who reported extreme negative affect. However, when their autonomic arousal levels were compared there were no significant gender differences, that are men too had displayed extremely high heart rate, blood pressure, skin conductance and respiration rates as women participants. These findings could be interpreted in light of the cognitive appraisal theory (Lazarus, 1991). Though men were able to consciously restrain their subjective expression of emotion but not their autonomic responses. Hence this can also be attributed to the social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) which emphasizes on the differences in social upbringing and expectation in emotional expression. The gender bias, that men are not supposed to cry, men are supposed to be emotionally strong and mature unlike women where such behavior is justified. Another reason could be that the media characters were women, so in group bias could be there in emotional expression among men while women seemed to identify with the portrayal of emotion depicted by the women characters in the scene.

In another study (Khosla, 2003) an aggressive scene was shown to men and women Indian participants third year of their college. The scene involved a man fighting with a few other goons in an attempt to save the life of a young girl. This scene evoked similar emotions in both men and women on the experienced affect, particularly negative affect.
Though the autonomic arousal was higher among men than women, men somehow rated the scene as more enjoyable and active while women found it justifiable and aggressive.

Patanjali deals with affect via the fundamental categories of attachment and aversion. Attachment rests on pleasure and aversion rests on pain and suffering. Though neither pleasure nor pain is deemed worthy of development. The emphasis is to promote a mental state in which pleasant and unpleasant affect transcends in favor of a condition in which mental activity is controlled (niruddha). These differences in attachment systems among men and women may also contribute to variations in emotional expression. Though people who practice Yoga or meditation may be able to restrain their attachments and experience a state of neutrality towards emotional stimulation. However, this is possible after one has attained a higher level of consciousness through these yogic practices, whereby there is always a state of bliss. In order to achieve a yogic state it is important to exercise control at three levels: First involves the control of the fluctuations through the process of meditation (vritti-nirodha). Secondly, it is important to control the higher ideation (pratyaya-nirodha) in the state of ecstasy through the cultivation of formless or supra-conscious ecstasy (asamprajnata-samadhi) . Thirdly, the indigenous theory of emotions may help gain deeper insights into the functioning of affective processes. In this context the framework of panch koshas, Sri Aurobindo’s reformulation in terms of physical, vital, mental, psychic, and supra mental (spiritual) may provide an answer.
The traditional Indian thought was never independent of metaphysics. Hindu psychology was first surveyed by Sinha (1933). Much of his survey on emotions revealed that introspection and observation were the two key components. It was not empirical or experimental but based on metaphysics. The nature of emotions was discussed in light of various schools of Indian philosophy like Buddhism, Jainism, Nyaya, Mimamsa, Sankhya, and Vedanta. Attempts have been made to understand emotions by deriving ideas from the Bhagavad-Gita by anchoring them in desire. The model posits that emotions derive significance when examined in the context of human desires, and starting with perception and volition, cognition emerges when a desire crystallizes. Desires lead to behaviors, and the achievement or non-achievement of a desire causes positive or negative emotions. Through the practice of karmayoga, contemplation and self-reflection, we can manage our desires and thus manage emotions in a healthy way. This is a very significant contribution which helps to understand the role of desire in understanding and predicting emotion and behavior. This model is an example of how indigenous psychologies can contribute to universal psychologies (Bhawuk, 2008).

**Indigenous theory of emotions**

Paranjpe (1998) has delineated the notion of enjoyer (bhokta) and has elaborated the notion and types of (bhakti) devotion to God in detail. Depicting the role of bhakti in the transformation of emotions, whereby one engages in a world state of equanimity, while continuously experiencing a great love for all aspects of creation, rooted in one’s devotion to the DIVINE. Self-observation of emotional states can lead to self understanding and insight into emotional problems and facilitate wellness. Sorrow rooted
in a conception of limited self, the emergence of the quality of restless mobility or *rajoguna*, dependence on external objects as sources of *sukha*(happiness). When there is fear of the separation from the *sukha* it leads to restlessness. Internal control is more important for happiness than eternal satisfaction of need. Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras and Yogavasitha support the notion further the path leading to positive or negative emotions. Positive emotion (*Raga*) is generated by happiness and (*dvesa*) or hostility or negative emotion is generated by unhappiness. Hence, when desires are fulfilled we are happy and have positive emotions, which then lead us to seek such desires (Bhawuk, 2008). When desires are not fulfilled, we become angry, unhappy and hostile.

Misra (2005) analyzed emotions within the framework of (*bhava*) basic emotions or *rasa*. The experience of *bhava* takes place by a combination of emotions (*sthayibhava*), transitory emotions (*vyabhicaribhava*), eliciting condition (*vibhava*), consequences (*anubhava*) and the organic manifestations of emotions (*sattvikabhava*). Rasa means the sap or juice of plants, and it implies the essence of anything. It refers to the component of feeling. The eight rasas are (*sringar*) love, (*vira*) heroism, (*bibhatsa*) disgust, (*raudra*) anger or fury, (*hasya*) mirth, (*bhayanaka*) terror, (*karuna*) pity, and (*adhbuta*) wonder. The other two rasas added to the list are (santi) tranquility or contentment, and (*Vatsalya*) paternal fondness. *Bhava* are of two types: primary (*sthayin*) or subordinate (*vyabhicaribhava*). The experience of *rasa* as a supraphysical consciousness requires the position of a witness who has the quality of (*saradayata*) being together.
The emotional experience involves activities that are subjective, situational, and collaborative. It has been observed that the expression of emotions varies in the presence of other people. In one such study (Khosla, 2008) presented women participants with depressive, happy and neutral scenes. When the participant viewed the emotional scenes all alone the intensity of the emotions expressed subjectively and physiologically were very intense, while the neutral documentary was perceived as neutral yet informative. However, when the participant viewed the scenes in the presence of other participants who were watching her or him, the emotions were expressed very differently. This indicates that the effect of socialization processes on the display of emotions. The participants became more conscious, sat still, tried not to display sad expressions, and also restrain laughter.

Meditation helps to deal with negative emotions and discover better ways of living a pleasant life, helps to control and moderate negative affect. Mindfulness meditation helps to enhance mental awareness. This enables one to recognize various emotions and other mental events. However it inhibits any intense emotional reaction. Therefore meditation is preventative mental work, where one learns to control emotions, where unpleasant emotions are in evitable.

The ultimate goal of life is to realize the true nature of the self (*satchitanand*). In India, religion plays an important role in our lives with principles of dharma, and karma which play a significant role. Religion and wellbeing were negatively correlated with aggression and positively correlated with mental health. In another study (Khosla & Aarthi, 2010) alcoholic addicted patients from Delhi were asked to reason what motivated them to change their drinking behaviors. The findings revealed that there was no correlation
between their religious thoughts and beliefs and readiness to change. Moreover their wellbeing did improve following their decision to control their drinking behaviors as there was a significant improvement in positive affect, life satisfaction, and reduced negative affect. This study reveals that cognitive processes play a more significant role in enhancing change in alcoholic behavior. Moreover, affect also motivated readiness to change alcoholic behavior patterns.

As Paranjpe (1998) suggests that Indians manifest *anaskh* without being aware of it. Increasing *anaskh*, or detachment, was associated with reduced state anxiety, better recovery rate, optimism, and quality of life. In a study on breast cancer patients suffering form PTSD and those not suffering from PTSD, there was a significant difference in the expressions of emotions. Those with PTSD were more depressive, pessimistic, inactive and had no hope, while those without PTSD felt more active, energetic, less sad and aggressive and more optimistic (Khosla & Makkar, 2007).

Importance is given to *Karta* or doer and relinquishes the sense of completing a task. Also belief in omnipresent God, avoiding materialistic pleasures also helps enhance wellbeing, and health. It appears that work itself gives a sense of accomplishment rather than means of earning money or status. It reflects a kind of *Nishkam – Karma*. Do what you must do with full devotion and hard work, not desiring any returns or fruits of action. The Karma theory (Bhagwad Gita) that what has to be done must be done, believing in work performance despite all odds with full perseverance.

Happy people have strong belief in higher power, thinking of future, that people are good, being trustworthy, in control of life, health. In one such study (Khosla & Dokania,
2010) examined the influence of happiness on experienced affect, emotion regulation and emotional intelligence. Happy (n=100) and unhappy (n=100) participants (mean age= 21 years) completed measures assessing affect (PANAS-R), emotional intelligence (WLEIS) and emotion regulation strategies (ERQ). A 2x2 (gender x group) ANOVA revealed that happy participants as compared to unhappy participants reported significantly greater positive affect and emotional intelligence. Happy as compared to unhappy men had significantly greater emotional intelligence. While happy women were found to be more emotionally intelligent than unhappy women. There were significant group and gender differences in the use of reappraisal strategies but not suppression strategies. The findings reveal the significance of happiness in promoting emotional intelligence. Hence happiness causes an emotional transformation. Indeed a happy person tries to view life events optimistically, and is seldom inhibited by adversities if life. This transformation is similar to changes one undergoes in bhakti, which leads to deeper changes in character, one lives life through the DIVINE. The awakening of the soul. So somewhere deep inside these feelings are learned as a result of socialization, by participating in various religious activities, listening to sermons, and reading the scriptures. The Bagvad-Gita is an epitome of knowledge, the Ultimate Truth as recited by Lord Krisna Himself. It helps to understand the root of all emotions lies in the desires (icha), which are controlled by our various sense organs(vritti) which can be consciously controlled by the mind(mana).This mind is the intellect or cognition to perceive the reality as it exists, devoid of any emotional attachments. 

_Buddhi_(intelligence) is a processes of knowledge, mental perception and thinking which mediates feelings. _Sattva_ means enthusiasm of feelings that causes pleasure (euphoria).
Corresponds with physiognomic sphere of consciousness (forehead and eyebrows) where is projected on top of a forehead, but correlates with physiognomic sphere of feelings and consequently has a direct projection to a upper lip, and also correlates with physiognomic sphere of individuality and is projected on top of nose bridge. In sphere of consciousness the \textit{sattva} means spirituality of ideas and opportunities of figurative thinking. In sphere of individuality the \textit{sattva} means participation to mankind as to unity of many individualities. In sphere of feelings the \textit{sattva} means emotional association and sympathy to people. Rajas mean excitation of feelings that causes uneasiness. Corresponds with physiognomic sphere of individuality (nose) where is projected on middle of nose bridge, but correlates with physiognomic sphere of feelings and consequently has a direct projection to a lower lip, and also correlates with physiognomic sphere of consciousness and is projected on middle of a forehead. In sphere of consciousness the \textit{rajas} means discrepancy or inconsistency of thinking. In sphere of individuality the \textit{rajas} means self-affirmation or opposition of the man and a society. In sphere of feelings the \textit{rajas} means confrontation of desires if there is a conflict of the man and a society.

\textit{Tamas} means catalepsy of feelings that causes indifference. Corresponds with physiognomic sphere of feelings (lips and chin) and is directly projected on a chin, but also correlates with physiognomic spheres of individuality and consciousness and consequently is projected on a nose-tip and a level of eyebrows. In sphere of consciousness, \textit{tamas} means the burdened thinking by numerous facts of the isolated information. In sphere of individuality \textit{tamas} means denying another's individualities. In
sphere of feelings it means emotional isolation of the man. *Buddhi, mahat* and *manas* which are levels of consciousness; the second triad includes *brahman, atman* and *prakriti* which are levels of individuality; the third triad includes *sattva, rajas* and *tamas* which indicates levels of feelings.

**Emotional Expression- Evolutionary Perspective**

One current theory, for example, posits that evolution has endowed the human brain with a set of basic emotions, each of which produces a distinctive facial expression—at least when people aren't trying to hide their feelings. A contrasting view holds that emotions and facial displays are social communication tools, which take shape from cultural forces.

The development of emotions as *Raga* (or positive emotions) and *Dvesa* (or hostility or negative emotions) has a developmental aspect. All happy moments act as positive reinforcers while negative experiences act as negative reinforcers. Childhood and other socialization experiences play a very important role here. We may be trained to react positively to the fulfillment of desires and negatively to the unfulfilment of desires. Sometimes even the fulfillment of desires ultimately leads to unhappiness (Patanjali’s Yoga-Sutras) Swami Prabhavaanada(2005)

The terrain of emotional development contains many uncharted areas. For instance, researchers have yet to decipher how children attain a sense of when to be angry, how to express anger, or what to do in situations perceived as scary. For example, when a young child was approached by the experimenter with an attempt to say “hello”, the child did not reply, rather she quickly hugged her mother, stared at the participant, and started swinging her legs briskly. The participant thought that the child was getting scared of her
so she moved back, reassuring her smilingly. However, the child’s mother corrected her by saying that the child was interested to make friends with her because she was swinging her legs briskly. Hence sometimes the emotional expression shown by the infants is not very clear, till validated by the parents or near ones. When the parent was asked to clarify this expression, the mother replied that she has always been so, no one taught her (Khosla, 2009). However, very often the children do demonstrate the facial expressions similar to that of their parents or siblings or even grand parents. This could be explained on the basis of the joint family system which is very much prevalent in Indian society. Where the child is brought up by all the members of the family with love, affection and warmth. Children are also taught basic ways of expressing emotions, such as smiling whenever greeting another person, to control crying when hurt (specially in boys), to nod when they like something hence reinforcing more positive actions and reducing the negative ones by withdrawing the fringe benefits as going out or playing with the favorite toy etc. When children (aged 10-12 years) were presented with photos of basic emotions posed by Indian participants of their parents age they were able to recognize the emotion depicted by elaborating on the portrayal of the expression rather than labeling it in one word. When similar pictures were presented with varying background colors it was seen that, teenagers (aged 13-15 years) were easily categorizing the emotion if the emotion depicted was correlated with the background color rather than a contrast. For example, it was easy to recognize anger against a red background than white; fear against a black background than blue; happiness against a green background than red. When asked to recall the total number of pictures shown to them they overestimated the number, with more negative than positive ones. The same stimuli were
presented to old aged participants (60-65 years) and interestingly it was seen that color was immaterial to the recognition of emotional pictures (Khosla, 2010b). However, what was more important was the repetition of the same emotional expression. There was a tendency to spend more time on pictures depicting fear, surprise and anger while recognition of sadness, happiness was immediate. These studies tend to show how developmental changes cause a variation in the perception, experience and recognition of emotion. Though more work is required to get a further in depth insight into the evolutionary process. As to how emotions evolve over the life span.

In another study participants of young children(12-13 years), young adults(38-44 years) and old age(65-74 years) were asked to pose for the basic emotional expressions(Khosla, 2010,c). It was seen that the children posed for the specific emotions were able to follow the instructions to feel the specific emotions with more elaborate facial expressions as compared to the adults. There is a possibility that children show spontaneous emotions while with an increase in age the display of emotions becomes more complicated. This could be due to social biases, expectations, upbringing, rules and norms.

Attempts to untangle a few cross-cultural similarities and differences in emotional development (Saarni, 1984) have been done across Chinese, U, Japanese, Canadian infants to study the emotional responses to the expressionless face of a parent or stranger, fear induction in laboratory, children raised in either Hindu or Buddhist ethnic groups respond emotionally to challenging social situations. Main aim was to understand if emotions are unique to specific belief systems. To study the rich variability of emotional
experience in individuals and across societies, there is a need to be flexible to our conceptual categories for describing emotional development.

The role of culture:

The meaning of emotions to people and behavior: All the differences in the concept and meaning of emotion point to the differences in the ways different cultures attribute meanings to emotional experiences. Cultures differ in the role and meaning of emotions. There is a need to understand the social construction of emotion in a country as India due to such diverse cultures. Emphasis has been more on inner subjective feelings and introspection. It is important to understand emotions from a social and cultural perspective.

The social constructionist approach to emotion, where emotions are responses that are formed by interactions with surrounding people, also accounts for variability in emotion, particularly at the cultural level. Activity theory maintains that the cultural characteristics, development and functions of psychological phenomena are shaped by social activities and cultural concepts. There is a relation of biological to cultural factors in shaping the characteristics and development of emotions. Biological processes—hormones, neurotransmitters, autonomic reactions—underlie (mediate) but do not determine emotional qualities and expressions. Particular qualities and expressions are determined by cultural processes and factors.
A final approach to understanding the variety in emotional life is found in psychological constructionist approaches to emotion. Psychological constructionist models are united in the assumption that the psychological events called “anger”, “sadness”, and “fear” are not basic, elemental building blocks or “atoms” of emotion, but instead are mental events that result from the interplay of more basic psychological ingredients that are themselves the result of evolution. And emotion involves making meaning out of sensory cues. William James proposed one of the first psychological constructionist approaches to emotion. In The Principles of Psychology, James(1890) wrote: emotions are states of mind that are assembled from more basic, general causes. These causes can be combined in a myriad of ways to produce a myriad of outcomes that neither look nor feel the same even when named by the same word. Second, because they are highly variable mental states, emotion categories are not psychic entities.

During the late nineteenth century many psychological constructionist models of emotion were proposed, all of them inspired by the observation of variability in emotional responding and the failure of basic emotion approaches to account for this variability. This meaning analysis might be instinctual (e.g., James, 1890) or the result of some other process (e.g. Russell, 2003), but it is largely assumed to proceed automatically. Psychological constructionist models attempt to understand emotion as the meaning of internal bodily sensations or its corresponding mental feeling (affect).

Most psychological constructionist models also posit a more cognitive or ideational ingredient. As we will see, in at least one psychological constructionist approach to
emotion, the psychological ingredients of emotion combine and constrain one another like ingredients in a recipe to produce a variety of emergent states (e.g., Barrett, 2006b), consistent with the now widely accepted view that emotions are emergent mental phenomena (Clore & Ortony, 2008). They suggest that what people come to know about emotion via socialization and acculturation practices influences might influence what they actually feel, so that cultural differences in emotion language might be formative for cultural differences in feeling.

**Giving value to emotions**

There has been little systematic work aimed at explaining how the contents of value structures arise? is it genetic or cultural? We define culture in terms of its relation to a transmission process often called social learning. In social learning, a mental state in one person causally contributes to the formation of a mental state in another person, where the latter mental state resembles the former. Social learning is important because it can lead to the transmission of information such as beliefs, values and skills between individuals and across generations. We think it is plausible to suppose that social learning contributes significantly to the formation of peoples’ value structures, so value structures are intimately connected with culture.

Culture understood in this way can be usefully viewed as an inheritance system. The cultural inheritance system can best be explained by analogy with the more familiar genetic inheritance system. A mental state of a cultural parent causally facilitates the formation of a type-similar mental state in a cultural child. For example, on average, the
religious practices of Hindu children resemble those of their Hindu parents, while the
practices of Christian children resemble those of their Christian parents. The cumulative
and directed nature of the cultural inheritance system makes it an enormously powerful
tool for generating innovations that have enabled humans to adapt to environmental
change and to survive in a wider variety of environments than any other animal species.

It is important to keep in mind that “cultural parents” need not be biological
related to (nor older than) their “cultural children.” Moreover, with respect to a given
trait, a cultural child may have one, several or many cultural parents. Contents of
value structures arise and studying how contributions from each might independently
fail, we can gain a deeper understanding of how value structures for a single
individual, or for a population of individuals in a community, can come to have
maladaptive elements, leading to emotions which are (in our sense) irrational.

Because culture is both cumulative and directed, culture has a unique ability to produce
highly complex adaptations to local conditions in relatively short periods of time. By
facilitating specialization, the cultural system certainly does promote adaptiveness.

**Culture and the Antecedents of Emotion**

There are cross-cultural differences in the appraisal or evaluation of events? Is the same
emotion evoked by a give stimulus or situation or do cultural groups differ in this respect,
and to what extent? The emotional appraisal of antecedent events for universal emotions
is quite similar for people in different cultures. Whether culture specific antecedent
categories are necessary to code the data is not very clear. Similarities across cultures
have bee found in the relative frequency with which each of the antecedent events elicits
emotions. For example, the most frequent elicitors of happiness across cultures have been “relationships with near ones”, “temporary meetings with friends,” and “achievement situations”. The most frequent elicitors of anger have been “relationships” and “injustice”. The most frequent elicitors of sadness have been “relationships” and “death” (Scherer, & Brosch, 2009; Khosla & Dokania, 2010). These findings supported the view that emotion antecedents are similar across cultures.

**Cultural Differences in Emotion Antecedents**

Research has provided considerable support for cultural differences in emotion antecedents. Scherer and associates found many cultural differences (and similarities) in the relative frequency of the various antecedents reported by their respondents. Cultural events, the birth of a new family member, body centered “basic pleasures”. Problems in relationships produced more sadness for the Japanese than for Americans and Europeans. Same types of situations or events will not necessarily trigger the same emotion in people across the globe.

**Cultural Similarities in Emotion Appraisal**

Emotional appraisal can be defined a process by which people evaluate the events, situations, or occurrences that lead to their having emotions. Basic questions about the nature of the appraisal process in relation to culture remain. How do people of different cultures think about or evaluate the events that trigger their emotions? Do emotions and their eliciting situations show commonalities across cultures? Or do people of different cultures think about emotion antecedents differently?
In the past decade, a number of important and interesting studies have found that many appraisal processes appear to be consistent across cultures, suggesting the possible universality of these processes in eliciting emotions. There is evidence of universality in emotion appraisal process. Roseman, Dhawan, Rettek, Nadidu, and Thapa (1995) used a different method to study the appraisal process in sadness, anger and fear in American and Indian participants. They showed respondents a facial expression corresponding with one of these emotions and asked them to label the emotion portrayed, describe what had happened to cause the person to feel that emotion, and evaluate that event. They found that, for both Americans and Indians, appraisals of powerlessness characterized incidents eliciting anger and also fear, whereas appraisals of relative power differences brought forth anger. Also in both the cultures, appraisals that an event was caused by someone else elicited anger, but not sadness or fear, whereas events caused by circumstances elicited sadness or fear but not anger. These findings provide further support for cultural similarities in emotion appraisal processes.

Scherer’s (1997a, 1997b) study on emotional appraisal is the largest cross-cultural research involving 2921 Ss from 37 countries. In their study were asked to describe an event or situation in which they experienced one of seven emotions: anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, shame, and guilt. He found that emotion appraisal processes were more similar than different across cultures. The appraisal processes found to be associated with the seven emotions as: Happiness, fear, anger, sadness, disgust, shame, and guilt.
Understanding Emotions

Hence suggesting that we are all born with the same capacity to experience, express, and perceive the same basic set of emotions. What the universality of emotion does suggest is that basic emotions provide the cultures with the base from which the molding and shaping can start. This perspective is important to keep in mind as we examine the research on cultural differences in emotion.

Cultural Differences in Facial Expression

Display Rules: Even though it is well known that facial expression of emotions may be universal, it is sometimes difficult to interpret the expression of someone from a different cultural background. Sometimes we are not sure that our own facial expressions are interpreted in the way we intend. Although we see emotional expressions that are similar to ours in people from very diverse backgrounds, still we do find some differences.

Ekman introduced the notion of display rules, i.e., norms regarding the expected management of facial appearance (Ekman, 1973). Within each culture there are rules about what face to put up on certain occasions and whether one should or should not show certain emotions. These rules are learned early, and they dictate how the universal emotional expression should be modified according to the social situation. By adulthood these rules are automatic having been practiced well.

Hence we can say that facial expression of emotions is under the dual influence of universal, biologically innate factors and culturally specific, learned display rules. Depending upon the social circumstances, however, the display rules may act to
neutralize, amplify, or mask the universal expression. To understand how culture exerts its influence in molding our emotional worlds, resulting in cultural differences as well as similarities. The integration of both universality and cultural differences is the challenge that faces cross-cultural work on human emotions. Nowhere is this variability more apparent than in the experience and perception of emotion.

We express emotions in the faces in exactly the same way, around the world, regardless of race and culture. In order to understand the emotional expressions of people across cultures, then, we must understand, first, what universal bases underlie those expressions and what kinds of cultural display rules are operating when we interact with them. Still there are many gaps in knowledge which need to be fulfilled. For future research will need to examine how people of different cultures learn their various display rules, and what those display rules are. Also there is a need to examine further how and why cultures produce differences in emotional behavior, incorporating dimensions other than individualism versus collectivism, such as power or status differentiation.

**Well being**

It is important to understand that expressive component is relatively independent from other aspects of emotion process. Though it is frequently argued that inhibiting emotional expression does not necessarily diminish its intensity, because the expression of emotion does not coincide with inner experience. It is felt that expression of emotion has its own function. Those emotions must be expressed in one way or the other. This is so because the suppression of emotion may lead to negative mental health. However, the notion of catharsis, must be understood, not only as a short term impulse release, but a renewed
confrontation is required to see the situation in terms of what it really means to the person. There is an intrinsic link between expression and emotional experience. How it may affect in long term is yet to be explored. Expressing an emotion intensifies the negative experience at times as it may allow for a renewed confrontation with the stimulus situation, open up the possibility for cognitive change (as in reliving a traumatic event) and thereby influencing negative mental health. To what extent crying prevents one from engaging in positive activities, triggering negative thoughts and making one feel miserable, is an area which needs more attention. In fact should there be preference for non-expression because of these factors involved? Research indicates short term effects of expression, giving free reign to anger or sadness may instate a self-reinforcing cycle, where the expression of the emotion intensifies the negative experience (Gargya & Khosla, 2010). Psychological research techniques have given access to the intricate functioning of affect at neurological, cognitive, social, and behavioral functioning and beyond. Yet much remains unknown. We need to explore the structure and mechanisms underlying affect through a link between emotion and cognition in an earnest effort to understand how it contributes to wellbeing. Taking a holistic view of health, emotions are integrated with a particular emphasis on Indian tradition of thought, the theory of Karma. Thus intention is to stimulate a novel way to look at feelings and improve our understanding of emotional responses.

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