

# A Comprehensive Literature Review on Emotional Intelligence and Spirituality

Virat Chirania<sup>1</sup>, Sunil Kumar Dhal<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Sri Sri University, Cuttack, Odisha

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Sri Sri University, Cuttack, Odisha

**Abstract:** *The concept of 'intelligence' has evolved immensely over the last century. From a time where intelligence was primarily considered only an intellectual ability (IQ), to now where intelligence is also seen in perspectives of emotions (EI) and spirituality (SI). Emotional Intelligence surfaced way back in 1920 and today is considered significant in areas of management and leadership success. Spirituality, as a philosophy and a practice, is becoming more and more important in the fast-paced life today as organizations and individuals strive to de-stress and find purpose and peace in their lives. This article aims at looking at the existing literature on both EI and spirituality and understanding their impact on individuals. The article further looks at examining the methods to enhance EI via spiritual practices like meditation and yogic techniques. The authors find that based on existing research, it can be concluded that EI and Spirituality have some interconnections and spiritual methods like meditation and yogic practices which can enhance EI.*

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Spirituality, Meditation, Yogic Techniques

## 1. Introduction To Emotional Intelligence

From time immemorial, human beings have strived to understand and analyze the concept of 'intelligence', since human species is the most generously gifted by this aspect of life. Till the early twentieth century, it was believed that intelligence is only unidimensional and was best explained by the concept of "Intellectual Intelligence". This theory was rooted in the belief that intelligence is a function of rational logic.

Emotional Intelligence, in essence, can be traced all the way back to 1920, when Thorndike first spoke about the concept of 'social intelligence'. Taking that forward, the first attempt to measure 'social intelligence' in children was made by Edgar Doll in 1935. On similar but more advanced lines, in 1983, Gardner did some path breaking work and introduced the concept of 'multiple intelligence', which basically spoke about two different types of intelligences – the interpersonal intelligence and the intrapersonal intelligence. Gardner (1999) clarified the difference between what is known as inter-personal intelligence and intra-personal intelligence. It is believed that interpersonal skills focus on how one person deals with the behavior and desires of others, whereas intrapersonal intelligence means to understand our own internal behavioral attributes.

The term 'emotional intelligence' was used in literature prior to 1990 also, (Greenspan, 1989) but it is believed that the first proper definition of 'Emotional Intelligence' was made available by Mayer and Salovey in 1990.

However, in the mid 1990s, Daniel Goleman started popularizing a concept called "Emotional Intelligence" (and its corresponding measure called 'Emotional Quotient' or 'EQ') based on earlier work done by researchers John Mayer and Peter Salovey.

In 2004, The Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology suggested three different frameworks or models of EI. These are:

- (i) The Ability Model of Mayer and Salovey (1997)
- (ii) Daniel Goleman's Model (1998)
- (iii) Bar-On Model (1997b, 2000)

EQ or Emotional Intelligence is understood to be the capacity to recognise emotions as they occur and appear in oneself and also as they happen in others; and also the capacity to discriminate between different feelings and to give these feelings suitable names or labels; and to then use this learning to guide thoughts and behaviour patterns.[1].

According to Goleman (1998, p. 317), EI is to be seen as the power to recognise feelings within oneself and feelings within other people and then figuring out a way to manage these feelings and emotions within oneself and within others.

There are two primary schools of thought as far as EI is concerned. One school of thought which argues that emotional intelligence should be seen as an ability and another school of thought which professes that 'emotional intelligence' should be seen as a trait. Mayer and Salovey opine that EI should be seen as an ability. (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). However, an alternate proposal suggests and recommends that EI be seen in a broader framework including personality traits (e.g., Bar-On, 2000; Boyatzis, Goleman and Rhee, 2000; Goleman, 1995, 1998).

## 2. Literature Survey on Emotional Intelligence:

Sr. No	Year	Researcher	Contribution/Ideas Expressed
1	1920	Thordnike	Introduced the concept of 'Social Intelligence'
2	1935	Edgar Doll	Attempt was made to measure 'Social Intelligence'
3	1983	Gardner	introduced the concept of 'multiple intelligence', which basically spoke about two different types of intelligences – the interpersonal intelligence and the intrapersonal intelligence.
4	1990	Mayer and Salovey	Established a proper definition of the term 'Emotional Intelligence'.
5	1995	Daniel Goleman	Popularized and established the concept of 'Emotional Intelligence' and its corresponding measure called 'Emotional Quotient' or 'EQ'
6	2000	Bar-On	Reuven Bar-On suggested a new term called 'Emotional Social Intelligence (ESI)' since he believed that emotional intelligence is like a set of non-cognitive abilities unlike what Mayer and Salovey suggested in their theory in 1990. His model is tested with measures like Bar-On EQ-i.

### 3. Measurement Methods for Emotional Intelligence:

Sr. No	Name of the EI Measurement Tool/Test	Proposed by, In which year	Corresponding EI Model	Details of the Tool/Test	Paid or Free
1	MSCEIT (Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test)	John Mayer. Peter Salovey. David Caruso, 1997	Ability Model (Four Branch Model)	• 130 items	Paid
2	Bar-On EQ-i	Reuven Bar-on (1997,2000)	Mixed Model	• 133 questions • Self-Report format	Paid
3	Bar-On EQ-i YV (Youth Version)	Reuven Bar-On	Mixed Model	• Youth version of Bar-on EQ-i	Paid
4	ESCI (Emotional and Social Intelligence Inventory)	Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis	Goleman's Mixed Model	• Comes with a variant called ESCI-U especially for universities	Paid
5	ECI 360 (Emotional Competency Inventory)		Mixed Model		Paid
6	Genos EI Assessment Scale	Dr. Benjamin Palmer and Prof. Con Stough (Swinburne University)	Mixed Model	• 70 item, self report test • Also known as SUEIT. • Customized to work place performance. • 360-degree review.	Free
7	Schutte Self Report Inventory (SCRI)	Schutte (1998)	Ability Model (Mayer-Salovey)	• 33 item • Self-report	Free
8	TEIQue (Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire)	Petrides and Furnham (2006)	Trait Model	• Self-Report. • Developed in University College London (UCL)	Free
9	WEIS (Wong's Emotional Intelligence Scale)	Wong and Law (2007)	Ability Model		Free

### 4. Introduction to Spirituality and Spiritual

#### Intelligence

Intelligence as a concept has changed its shape and dimensions so many times. This term has expanded itself to include many more aspects from the time it is in existence. Initially, it was narrowly understood to imply only 'intellectual ability'. As it evolved, more was added to it and one such example is 'Emotional Intelligence'.

However, even proponents like Gardner did not include spirituality as an element when discussing intelligence. Gardner did speak of 'naturalistic' or 'existential' intelligence but spiritual intelligence was kept outside the purview of intelligence. The origin of the term 'Spiritual Intelligence' can be credited to Danah Zohar who introduced the term back in 1997 in her book called 'Re-wiring the Corporate Brain'. Later, she elaborated the concept in 2000 in her book called 'SQ – Ultimate Intelligence'.

Definitions of the term 'spirituality' are many and although this term was formally defined in the western literature in

the 1900s, this term has existed as an integral part of the orient lifestyle and literature since time immemorial. Some of the definitions of spirituality are by Benner who believes spirituality is the human response to a call by God for a relationship between God and man (Benner 1989: 20). Tart, on the other hand, took a wider approach and attempted to define spirituality by saying it is a realm of all possibilities and purposes and includes, apart from God, other dimensions like compassion and love (Tart 1983: 4)

In terms of intelligence, spirituality is understood as spiritual intelligence and measured as spiritual quotient (SQ). Spiritual Intelligence is nothing but a group of capabilities that essentially draw on spiritual values. Spirituality, on the other hand, is the search for a higher purpose in life and experiences of the transcendental and of the ultimate higher consciousness. Spiritual Intelligence would then intent to adapt these themes of spirituality into functional elements of life. (Emmons, 2000a). Emotional Intelligence is different from emotionality and in the same light, spiritual intelligence is not the same as spirituality. Some researchers have understood and described spiritual intelligence as the capability to apply spiritual principles and values into

everyday life to enhance the quality of life and overall wellbeing (Amram, 2007).

Drawing from experiences of people who were nominated for their application of spirituality in everyday life, a set of spiritual intelligence dimensions was identified by Amram in 2007. Some of these dimensions, which later lay the foundation of developing the ISIS scale (Integrated Spiritual Intelligence Scale), were a sense of purpose; intuitive abilities; mindfulness and knowledge of the self; refined states of consciousness; love; trust and faith; having a sense of not being bound by ego and living with a divine sacred alignment. The Integrated Spiritual Intelligence Scale – ISIS (Amram & Dryer, 2008), is an instrument to measure SI and contains 5 distinct domain scales and 22 sub scales.

King, 2008 offers another comprehensive take on spiritual intelligence and offers a framework which consists of four parts:

- Critical Existential Thinking
- Personal Meaning Production
- Transcendental Awareness
- Consciousness State Expansion

The first aspect, critical existential thinking, essentially translates into the individual's inquiry on the reason of his/her existence (King, 2008; Vaughn, 2002; Zohar & Marshall, 2000). The second aspect, which is personal meaning production, touches on the individual's knowledge or insight into the purpose and meaning of their life (King, 2008; Vaughn, 2002). The third dimension, transcendental awareness, discusses the individual's ability to transcend limited ego based identities and feel inspired and loved by experiencing the depth of the present moment. The fourth domain, consciousness state expansion, is the domain which deals with ability of the individual to have access to higher and profound states of our consciousness by meditation and controlled breathing techniques.

According to Emmons (2000b), Spiritual Intelligence can be aptly described as consisting of four different abilities:

- To solve problems using spiritual values and resources
- To enter higher states of consciousness
- To apply a spiritual sacred sense to look at everyday activities and relationships
- To transcend the physical and the material

Vaughan (2002) offers a slightly similar yet a slightly different model to understand SI. His model can be seen as comprising of the following three components:

- The ability to use an in-depth understanding of questions about our very existence to create a sense of meaning
- The awareness and the capability to use multiple levels of consciousness in problem solving
- Being aware that all beings are inter-connected to each other and are also connected to the transcendent.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, a world renowned spiritual leader, in his books and discourses has often said that Spirituality is like a banana and religion is like the banana skin. People today have thrown away the fruit and are left holding tightly to the skin. Emphasizing that Spirituality is a way of life, a

personalized attitude of relating with the world, one based on unity rather than diversity, on love and a sense of belongingness to everyone rather than anger and alienation.

Many thinkers have also shared their thoughts on the difference between religion and spirituality. Worthington (2001) shares that spirituality encompasses an individual's personal experience with the transcendental whereas religion is focused on rituals and beliefs within a more structured organization. If we take a look at the history of the human civilization, it is easy to notice that traditionally, religion and spirituality were considered more or less the same thing and there were no hard-lined distinctions between the two terms. But as religion became more institutionalized and also suffered misuse at the hands of a few select and the concept of secularism started making ground, these terms began to have clear distinctions (Turner et al. 1995). It is also noteworthy that in recent history, at least in the west, interest in spirituality is on the rise and confidence in religion is on the decline (Roof 1993; Turner et al. 1995).

## 5. Relationship between EI and Spirituality

After a comprehensive literature review on EI and Spirituality, Sodhi suggested that there was a relationship between EI and SI (Sodhi R, 2016). It was found that spirituality and emotional intelligence are associated with reduced stress levels and an overall better quality of emotional health. Existing research also reveals possible connections and relationship that spirituality has with a purpose in life, health and overall sense of well-being (George, Larson, Koenig, & McCullough., 2000; Kass, Friedman, Leserman, Zuttermeister, & Benson., 1991; Veach & Chappel, 1992). Another study revealed spirituality to be positively correlated with self-efficacy.

Research has also been carried out to examine whether mental health can be predicted by emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence and it was found that SI and EI can be considered as important elements in influencing and predicting mental health (Shabani et al., 2010). In another study, it was found that SI and EI prove to be very important factors in providing guidelines to enhancing achievement amongst students (Saidy et al., 2009). In another study done on Canadian adults, the findings suggested that there existed a significant association between SI and some measures of EI (King and DeCicco, 2009).

Sodhi (Sodhi R, 2016) suggests that modern day academic institutes and corporate organizations need to develop a combination of EI and Spirituality in their students and employees since the combination of EI and spirituality can have a long-lasting impact on the success and well-being of students and employees. Any individual who has a combination of both EI and SI shall be able to face life challenges better and shall develop a positive attitude towards life. For students especially, high levels of SI will help them overcome laziness and enthruse them to achieve more in their lives. A study done for school principals in Iran found that there is a meaningful relationship between SI/EI and Work Life Quality (WLQ) among the principals in the schools.



## 6. Methods to enhance EI by spiritual practices

Earlier in this article, we spoke about the difference between religion and spirituality. Naturally, spiritual practice then refers to tools and techniques which are meant to enhance the spiritual experience in an individual, without the restrictions of any organized religion.

It has been observed that meditation and meditative yogic and breathing techniques can influence the state of our mind which is directly connected to the spiritual experience one can have. Meditation and Yogic techniques can influence faculties which relate to emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence.

It has been found that meditation is positively and significantly correlated with emotional intelligence and further shown that regular practice of meditation can enhance aspects of EI such as mood regulation, appraisal of emotions and social skills (Chu, L. C. 2010). The study thus concluded that EI can be improved by practice of meditation. It has also been found that practitioners of mindfulness meditation are more likely to have higher EI scores than non-practitioners (Baer et al., 2006). It has also been noted that meditation can enhance empathy, which is an important aspect of Emotional Intelligence (Chu, L. C., 2010). Another study concluded that through meditation, participants (who were all men) were able to better recognize negative emotions and manage their emotions better and were able to handle stressful emotional situations better (Lomas, T., Edginton, T., Cartwright, T., & Ridge, D., 2014)

Frew (1974) found that practitioners of transcendental meditation reported greater job satisfaction and improved interpersonal relationships. Jonsson 1975 did a study in Sweden which concluded that meditators reported greater self-confidence, reduced irritability and improved cooperation when compared to non-meditators. Schmidt-Wilk, J., Alexander, C. N., & Swanson, G. C. (1996). All these aspects connect to emotional intelligence.

Studies done on practitioners of transcendental meditation also show that practitioners report greater contributions in their workplace, more creativity, better perception and better problem-solving abilities Schmidt-Wilk, J., Alexander, C. N., & Swanson, G. C. (1996). These positive changes can have a huge overall impact in the performance of the organization.

Research also reveals that leaders who are considered as world class performers are leaders who have experienced higher states of consciousness. The more we can thus expose our managers and leaders to higher states of consciousness, the more we shall be able to see world class performances as a norm rather than a rarity (Harung, H. S., Heato, D. P., & Alexander, C. N. (1995).

It is interesting to note the term 'higher states of consciousness'. Wallace (1993) explains that there are four states of consciousness. The waking state, the sleeping state, the dreaming state and the higher meditative pure state of consciousness. Most people are aware of the first three states

but are alien to the experience of the fourth state of consciousness. This theory of the four states and that the fourth state is a higher meditative state has its roots in the ancient Indian Vedic scriptures, which were propounded in the west by many Indian scholars and one such prominent name was Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

In today's era, the world recognizes Sri Sri Ravi Shankar as one of the world's leading spiritual leaders and he also confirms the same four states of consciousness, emphasizing that the fourth state is the higher state of consciousness which is essentially a spiritual state of meditative awareness.

## 7. Impact of Sudarshan Kriya on EI

Just like there is a lot of research which points out the positive effects that transcendental meditation (TM) has on emotional intelligence, there is some research done on 'Sudarshan Kriya Yoga' or SKY, which also suggest that practice of SKY can also influence EI.

Sudarshan Kriya, is a Sanskrit term, which when translated in English means 'proper vision by purifying action'. SKY is a set of activities spread over five different stages. The first and the second stage can be clubbed together into what can be referred to as 'pranayams'. The First pranayama is three stage pranayama done in a specific breath type called 'Ujjayi' breath. The second stage is called 'bhastrika' pranayama. The third stage is chanting the sound of 'Om'. The fourth stage is rhythmic breathing and the fifth stage is relaxation with 'yoga nidra'. The fourth stage consists of different cycles of breathing, moving from slow to medium to fast rounds of rhythmic, cyclic breathing.

There is a lot of research conducted on SKY and the results are very encouraging. SKY is believed to reduce stress levels and enhance attention spans and vigilance. SKY also is connected with emotional processing and results in practitioners of SKY show improved abilities to process emotional information and better social bonding. In research done at the University of Wisconsin, it was found that depression and perceived stress levels were significantly different after regular practice of SKY. It was also found that there were clear improvements in life satisfaction parameters for SKY practitioners. In a study done on young adults in University of California at Los Angeles, it was revealed that SKY can be instrumental in making the physical and emotional well-being better in young adults.

## 8. Summary

The modern academic and corporate scenarios demand an integration of tools and techniques which enhance the overall SI and EI of individuals, especially students and young professionals. What then emerges in front of modern day researches is the realization that meditative techniques, which can be learnt and developed, may have the power to have a positive impact on emotional intelligence quotients in people. Whereas it is difficult to increase IQ after a certain age, it seems to be evident that EI can be enhanced by certain spiritual practices like meditation and yoga, Sudarshan Kriya being one of the possible tools.

## 9. Future Scope

Unlike IQ, we know that EI can be increased even during youth or later in life. There is very little research that exists on the ways to enhance EI using spirituality as a methodology. It can be of immense value to explore whether EI, especially in the youth, can be enhanced by spiritual practices like meditation and yogic breathing techniques like Sudarshan Kriya.

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