

Dimensions Of Human Intelligence

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Failure of Intelligence

“On October 6th, 2008, Karthik Rajaram killed his wife, three children and mother-in-law, before killing himself. In suicide note, he blamed his actions on financial hardships.”

Do you think this incident took place in a farmer’s house in some remote village of Andhra Pradesh or Uttar Pradesh, whose crops have been destroyed by bad monsoon and the moneylenders are making his life miserable?

Have a look at the profile of Karthik Rajaram 46 year old Karthik, B.Tech. from IIT Madras and MBA from University of California, Los Angeles, was former employee of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) and Sony Pictures. He is said to have got a perfect score in GMAT. In 2001, Daily Telegraph of London mentioned him as a ‘winner’ who made US\$ 1.2 million from a venture fund, he co-founded. Karthik’s former colleagues and friends were shocked by the incident, as they knew him as extremely bright person with keen business sense.

It is very intriguing to find a person, with such high academic intelligence, coupled with professional and financial success, taking the extreme step of committing suicide, besides killing own family members.

Yet there was another side to him. His close neighbours described him as “very high-strung, very intense man, very tightly wound”. His mentor in PWC described him as an emotionally unstable person, who had always been a bit flamboyant and reckless. He said Karthik was fired in 2004 because of erratic behavior¹.

What Lies Behind The Story

The above incident compels us to think, why ‘American odyssey ended in horror’ – as one of the newspapers described it – even when all the known ingredients for success were

present, including intelligence and financial success. We all spend more than quarter of our life in developing academic and professional intelligence. Did this intelligence stop Karthik from taking a reckless step, which no sane person will ever approve? Was there a need for different kind of intelligence, which could have helped Karthik to remain stable and to take a thoughtful course of action?

What made Oprah Winfrey to become the iconic host on television shows, when she was fired from the job of television reporter, because she was 'unfit for TV'? How did Steven Spielberg motivate himself to become one of the most successful movie directors, even when he was rejected from the University of Southern California School of Theater, Film and Television three times?

What was the secret behind Abraham Lincoln's perseverance to become president of USA, despite several electoral defeats, business failures, nervous breakdown and death of beloved? How could Stephen Hawking become legendary physicist and cosmologist, when he was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis at the age of 21 (which left him almost completely paralysed) and was told that he would not survive for more than 2-3 years?²

Do We Know The Answers?

Question arises whether our known success factors are sufficient enough to deliver a prosperous, happy and peaceful life. It also casts doubt on our understanding about intelligence. Do we really understand the concept of intelligence or we are living in a belief enforced on us by decades of conditioning?

In spite of large number of examples around us, we still get astonished when we see an intellectually brilliant youth not able to cope up with challenges of life. At the same time, we express our disbelief when we find the so called 'stupid, dumb, careless' boy grows up to become a successful businessman or sportsperson or musician or sales person.

We all have been made to believe that success in life is determined by high intellectual intelligence. This belief has gone so deep down within us that very much apparent incidences around us also do not make us raise questions about it. Another reason behind this conditioning is that our educational and social system does not support recognition and development of other intelligences. Thus we all remain unaware or least aware about the concept and importance of intelligences beyond intellectual abilities.

Oxford Dictionary defines intelligence as (a) *'the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills'*, (b) *'the collection of information of military or political value'*. It can be noted that intelligence is not only about acquiring knowledge and skills, but also about its application, which requires a lot more than academic success.

Multiple Faces of Intelligence

Daniel Goleman comments in his famous book 'Emotional Intelligence' that "At best, IQ (Intelligence Quotient) contributes about 20% to the factors that determine life success,

which leaves 80% to other forces.”³This brings us to explore the wider dimensions of human intelligence, which for a large majority is confined to the intellectual intelligence (includes knowledge, skills, cognition and learning capacity).

Dr. Howard Gardner, psychologist and professor at Harvard University, propounded the theory of multiple intelligence in 1983. He identified eight intelligences in human beings:

- Linguistic
- Logic-mathematical
- Musical
- Spatial / Visual
- Bodily/Kinesthetic
- Interpersonal
- Intrapersonal
- Naturalistic

Dr Gardner is the strong supporter of the fact that intelligence is multi-dimensional and not confined to logic-mathematical-analytical abilities⁴.

Six Dimensions of Human Intelligence

Even Dr Gardner’s model is also based on cognitive science model and gives little coverage to the role of emotions in the overall intelligence of a person⁵.

Taking a holistic view, the human intelligence can be broadly divided into six categories:

- a) **Intellectual Intelligence** : Consists of specialized knowledge, tacit knowledge & skills, cognitive complexity and learning capacity.
- b) **Emotional Intelligence** : Means ability to understand emotions and to manage them effectively. High emotional intelligence is demonstrated in the form of high self-confidence, courage, risk taking ability, resilience, motivation, etc.
- c) **Social Intelligence** : It is ability to create a bond with other person and includes qualities like trustworthiness, empathy, genuine care for others, ability to connect and an easy going personality. Person with high social intelligence has the ability to create a large and strong network of relationships.
- d) **Intrinsic Intelligence** : It is strength of inner personality, as a combination of values, attitude and belief system. It also includes interpersonal and intrapersonal communication. This intelligence is visible in the form of character, behavioural traits and language used in communication.
- e) **Health Intelligence** : It is the ability to lead a healthy life-style and maintaining physical and mental strength and vitality.
- f) **Spiritual Intelligence** : It is the ability of a person to connect with the deeper self as well as with the universe at large. This intelligence is demonstrated in the form of selfless acts and unperturbed personality, with high degree of resilience and positive energy.

Six Dimensions Exemplified

Let us take example of a student, to be called as Anand. He scores high grades in school and is termed intelligent and bright. It actually means high intellectual intelligence, generally expressed in terms of IQ. A few years later, Anand aspires to become an engineer, but fails to get admission in coveted Indian Institute of Technology. He is able to accept and learn from this failure, and takes the step forward without affecting his self-esteem and confidence. He has proved to be emotionally intelligent.

Anand completes his formal education and enters the hospitality industry. He develops a close bond with colleagues and is a trusted and reliable friend. This implies his high social intelligence. As he moves up on the responsibility ladder, he realizes that challenges thrown by life are getting bigger. He is able to maintain his integrity in all situations, while carrying the positive energy in every activity he performs. He is able to communicate effectively with people at different levels and is being respected for being a person with right attitude, values and humility. He has demonstrated high intrinsic intelligence.

As Anand grows in terms of age, he ensures a healthy diet, regular exercise and timely sleep and resting breaks. He listens to music and does gardening during free time, which relieve him from stress and revitalize him. He has high health intelligence.

With growth in all spheres of life, Anand also gets to understand himself better and deeper. As he is entering the fifth decade of his life, he realizes the higher purposes for his existence, which are beyond the circle of his individuality and family. He finds himself connected with the nature and overall universe. He introspects on the questions of life and death and feels a great sense of peace within. He is moving towards spiritual intelligence.

Importance of Non-Intellectual Intelligences

It is useful to understand different facets of intelligence, however, more important is to develop an appreciation about their contributions in our life. Further, as our belief system is still biased towards intellectual intelligence, it is very important to analyse the role of other intelligences as compared to intellectual abilities.

A study conducted on ninety-five Harvard students from the batch of 1940 revealed some startling facts. The study followed these students into their middle age to understand how well they are doing in life. To their surprise, the researchers found no correlation between their grades and the level of success (in terms of salary, productivity, status, life satisfaction, happiness and relationships).

A similar follow-up in middle age was conducted with 450 boys from less privileged background and again IQ had little relationship with how well they did at work or in life. But childhood abilities such as being able to handle frustrations, control emotions and get on with other people, made the greater difference⁶.

It is not surprising to find people with several academic failures, attaining high success later in their lives, while the consistent class topper finds himself struggling with life, after the initial success. The difference is brought in by the level of emotional, social, intrinsic and spiritual intelligence.

Emotional intelligence enables a person to cope up with unpleasant surprises posed by dynamic life situations. It provides him the strength to take the failures in stride and not to get overwhelmed by the situations. The behavior of person with high emotional intelligence attracts more respect and appreciation. These factors contribute to his overall success at work and in personal life.

The importance of relationships and networking was never underestimated at any stage of civilization (though no efforts have been made to develop this intelligence). It has become even more relevant in today's world, which is getting smaller with the advent of information technology and social networking. Building strong relationships is not only inherently satisfying, but also helps in personal and professional growth through increased opportunities, better team work and synergy.

While intrinsic intelligence integrates and strengthens the personality, spiritual intelligence elevates the personality to higher levels, where success comes naturally, along with joy and contentment.

Cost of Neglect

Whereas the holistic development of all intelligences brings success, happiness and peace, imbalanced development can prove to be very costly – financially, emotionally, physically or mentally. KarthikRajaram's case demonstrates the extreme consequences of focusing on one intelligence at the cost of others. However, there is no dearth of examples at milder levels. In its primary stage, this neglect shows up in the form of low productivity, irritation, lack of bonding, stress and irrational behavior.

With the increased level of competitiveness, impact is quite visible among corporate executives - anxiety attack, nervous breakdown and few cases of heart attack. And most of these are all young executives under thirty five. When Jaslok hospital started neuropsychiatry services, within two years it was among the three busiest clinics, with a thousand consultations per year. Corporate India has not yet forgotten the death of Sanjay Huku, aged thirty one, who suffered a sudden heart attack in the bowling alley in Mumbai⁷.

Lack of emotional, intrinsic and spiritual intelligence can cause serious damage to the personality and behaviour, irrespective of very high intellectual intelligence. Dominique Strauss-Kahn, head of International Monetary Fund (IMF) and a potential candidate for French Presidency, was arrested for attempted rape in a New York hotel. Strauss-Kahn, who is married, acknowledged an inappropriate sexual encounter but insisted there was no violence. He resigned from the IMF⁸.

The irrational emotional behavior of mob is not new to this country, which has faced a number of religious riots. However, in September, 2008, when Lalit Kishore Chaudhary, MD-cum-CEO of GrazianoTrasmissioni, was beaten to death by 200 workers in Noida, it became the worst instance of industrial violence in recent times. It also became the case for industrial psychology and emotional intelligence⁹.

Rising Awareness

While the cases like Sanjay Huku, KarthikRajaram and Lalit Kishore Chaudhary have sent alarms to the corporate houses and business schools, the increasing awareness about emotional, intrinsic and health intelligence have been making impacts in board rooms and HR policies. Though the developments are at early stage, professionals have started to understand and appreciate the importance of intelligences beyond IQ.

Engineers at Microsoft's Global Technical Support Centre in Bangalore not judged on how fast they solved problems or how high they were rated in customer satisfaction surveys. Rather, performance rating is linked to qualitative parameters such as readiness to ask colleagues for help, ability and willingness to learn from the problems, willingness to share knowledge and the doggedness and persistence in solving problems.

And Microsoft is not the only one to grab the change. Employees are increasingly being judged on their risk taking ability, quality of interactions, proclivity towards collaborative behaviour and knowledge sharing.

Need of the Hour

Though steps are being taken in the right direction, much is left to be completed, or rather to be started. The lack of awareness among parents and teachers is the biggest cause of one-dimensional approach towards intelligence. The belief, that high scores in board exams or IIT-JEE or CAT or GMAT are the guaranteed and only path to success, needs to change.

Further, there is need to bring development of emotional, social, intrinsic, health and spiritual intelligence within the ambit of mainstream education, at par with intellectual intelligence. It needs to be understood that these capabilities can be effectively developed only over a period of time, not just by one-two day workshops. Who will advocate teaching language or mathematics or sciences in a day or two or even in a week or a month?

There is no reason for giving a differential treatment to non-IQ intelligences, just because their effect is not immediately visible. A long sighted vision of providing holistic education to children will go a long way in creating balance among all facets of intelligence.

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