

From Vrittis to Emotional Fields: Re-examining Human Emotion through Indian Knowledge Systems and Reflective Inquiry

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Abstract

The scientific study of emotions in psychology and neuroscience continues to remain conceptually fractured, despite the wealth of literature that exists today. In the dominant psychological paradigm prevailing within the Western world, emotion is described as a form of affective state resulting from the interaction between physiological process, neural process, cognitive process, and sociocultural environment. This conceptualization of emotion is responsible for many of the advances we have made in the area of emotional regulation, emotional behavior, and psychological well-being; but this model tends to conceive of emotions as specific psychological events occurring within the individual organism as distinct entities. Such definitions have proven helpful in developing empirical knowledge about emotions but do not capture their complexity.

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) provide another conceptual platform on which one may understand emotional experience. In the classical Indian schools of Yoga, Vedanta, and Ayurveda, the mind itself is conceptualized as a field of consciousness, or chitta. Vrittis are fluctuations of the mind, or mental and emotional activities that occur within the field of consciousness, affecting our perception, our cognition, and the way we relate to the world. Emotional tendencies are also influenced by our deeper impressions or samskaras formed as a result.

This paper seeks to reconsider emotions as fields of consciousness in dynamic processes. Through the integration of knowledge from Indian systems and psychological research, this study defines emotional fields – enduring emotional orientations that influence cognition and behavioral actions within relationships over extended periods of time. These fields can be formed via repetitive experience, reflective thought and relational interactions.

The study employs a reflective case inquiry based on the lived experience of a psychotherapist and researcher on consciousness who has extensive experience with children, family and development interventions. This case inquiry focuses on the formation of a deep maternal emotional field which is not biologically oriented. While biological factors and maternal hormonal activity as well as attachment theory have been used to explain the experience of maternal emotion, lived experience and cultural perspectives demonstrate that the state of maternal emotion can be attained in other ways through relational activity.

In the Indian tradition, the notion of Matrutva or maternal consciousness encompasses the wider idea of motherhood and goes beyond the physiological concept of maternity. Matrutva implies a particular generative principle expressed in caring, protecting, feeding, and nourishing other

beings with a view to helping them develop and thrive. The maternal emotional orientation is common to various cultural archetypes and religious practices where maternal presence implies not only the power of procreation but a nurturing force that helps sustain life.

This paper offers an analysis of the emergence of a maternal emotional orientation as a result of extensive work done with children and teenagers during years of professional practice. For many years of engaging in educational and therapeutic practice, including working in the context of cognitive development initiatives and youth development programs, an emotional pattern based on the ideas of protection, development, and nurturing was revealed. It was not linked to any biological characteristics but rather helped make decisions and pursue certain scientific and social projects dedicated to helping young people develop their cognitive functions and personality.

This particular emotional field led me to reflect on the nature of maternal emotions themselves. The emotional states in question seemed not merely to function as a result of biological triggers but as a generative field of consciousness, which was influencing my perception and relating style as well as my creative actions in the world. Through reflective observation, difficult emotions resulting from my lack of biological motherhood were being increasingly connected with an understanding of the fact that maternal emotions could also express themselves through other ways of nurturing and development.

In terms of Indian Knowledge Systems, such an experience could be considered a case of stabilization of specific emotional *vrittis* as a result of relational interaction and intentionality. Repeated engagement with the children, coupled with reflective observation and socially beneficial activities, might result in organizing certain emotional dispositions into relatively stable forms which would serve as an orientation in my everyday life actions. Thus, maternal emotions become transformed from biological to conscious and generative processes.

In doing so, there is much to be gained by examining how emotions can affect other realms of human existence, such as creativity, morality, leadership, and transformation. Emotional fields have the potential to explain many of the areas of inquiry that are usually studied in the context of contemplative approaches, such as dreams, intuition, and transformations in one's life direction that occur via emotional introspection.

Additionally, conceptualizing emotions as fields, rather than discrete states, opens up avenues for exploring innovative approaches to emotional education and therapy. Emotional practices inspired by Indian Knowledge Systems, which include reflection, relationships, and emotional orientation, may serve as a pathway for attaining emotionally transformative experiences that enhance psychological well-being and social contribution.

Based on these insights gained through the reflective inquiry, it is possible to think about applying models of emotional field cultivation in contexts like psychotherapy, education, and leadership development. These models may assist people in understanding the impacts of prolonged emotional states on perception, imagination, and decision making at various developmental stages in life.

Unlike offering a theory, this paper introduces a conceptual framework to understand emotions as transformative fields in human consciousness. Through combining reflective inquiry with philosophical insights from Indian Knowledge Systems, the paper offers an opportunity for a broader inter-disciplinary discussion on the subject matter. This will pave the way for more studies seeking practical strategies to cultivate constructive emotional fields to facilitate personal transformation.

“This framework paves the way for further studies that seek to formulate practical frameworks to cultivate constructive emotional fields in psychotherapy, education, and consciousness studies.”

“Sometimes reality teaches us that profound emotions do not occur only because of biological occurrences, but they arise as generative forces in consciousness.”

Keywords: Emotional Fields, Vrittis, Indian Knowledge Systems, Triguna, Matrutva, Consciousness Studies, Reflective Case Inquiry, Emotional Transformation

1. Introduction

The science of emotions has a fundamental place in psychology, neuroscience, and behavioral sciences related to human beings. Emotions affect cognitive processes, decision-making, interpersonal interactions, and mental wellbeing. Nevertheless, despite significant research effort in this area, there is still a lack of comprehensive theories about emotions. In contemporary western theories of emotions, emotions are described as affective conditions that arise out of the interaction between physiological and neural processes, and the cognitive assessment of external stimuli. Although these theories have contributed immensely to our understanding of emotions, they tend to view emotions as quantifiable phenomena, limiting their ability to account for transformative aspects of emotions.

On the other hand, IKS provides a more holistic approach to the science of emotions. For instance, the classical schools of Yoga and Vedanta in India describe emotions as vrittis, which refer to fluctuating processes occurring within consciousness (chitta). These vrittis influence perception, identity, and behavioral predispositions, among others, and are shaped by unconscious psychological constructs referred to as samskaras.

This paper suggests that the perception of emotions should move away from seeing them as distinct states towards seeing them as emotional fields: dynamic, continuous, and productive orientations in consciousness that impact cognition, actions, and interactions over time. This paper will attempt to combine Western psychology perspectives with the knowledge systems of India in an effort to broaden the theoretical horizons of emotional studies.

In addition, the proposed concept will be explored in this paper using reflective case inquiry based on lived experiences in psychotherapy and child developmental counseling practices. In particular, this paper discusses the development of an emotionally-oriented orientation towards

motherhood (Matrutva) without being biologically associated with one's offspring, providing an intriguing insight into how emotions could be generative forces in their own right.

Through the combination of theoretical and practical approaches used in this paper, the author attempts to contribute to a more holistic understanding of emotions and their potential for personal growth and consciousness development.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Western Theories of Emotion

Western psychological inquiry into emotions has evolved through multiple theoretical paradigms, each attempting to explain the origins, structure, and function of emotional experience.

Early physiological theories, such as the James–Lange theory, proposed that emotions arise as a result of bodily changes in response to external stimuli. According to this view, the perception of physiological reactions—such as increased heart rate or muscle tension—constitutes the experience of emotion. In contrast, the Cannon–Bard theory argued that emotional experience and physiological responses occur simultaneously through brain-mediated processes, emphasizing the central role of the thalamus and neural pathways.

Subsequent developments introduced cognitive dimensions into emotional theory. Cognitive appraisal theories proposed that emotions are not direct responses to stimuli but arise through an individual's interpretation and evaluation of situations. These models emphasized the role of meaning-making, beliefs, and expectations in shaping emotional experience.

More recently, affective neuroscience has explored the neural correlates of emotions, identifying brain structures such as the amygdala, prefrontal cortex, and limbic system as key components in emotional processing. Constructivist theories further suggest that emotions are not fixed entities but are constructed through interactions between physiological states, conceptual knowledge, and socio-cultural influences.

While these frameworks have contributed significantly to empirical research, they share certain limitations. Emotions are often treated as discrete categories—such as happiness, fear, anger, and sadness—leading to a reductionist understanding of complex human experiences. Additionally, the role of consciousness, subjective awareness, and deeper psychological conditioning is often underexplored.

2.2 Indian Knowledge Systems and Emotional Understanding

The Indian Knowledge Systems have developed a radically distinct way of approaching emotions because their basis for the exploration lies in the study of consciousness rather than psychology.

From the yogic philosophical viewpoint, the mind is represented as the chitta, the field of consciousness, where different types of modification of consciousness (vrittis) take place. These modifications comprise thoughts, perceptions, memories, and emotions. Instead of perceiving emotions as reactions to environmental factors as Western science does, the yogic theory regards them as inner modifications of consciousness.

The process of creating emotional patterns is based on the notion of samskaras that refer to the imprints formed by previous life experiences and conditioning the current behavior of individuals.

The next important concept is that of Triguna-sattva, rajas, and tamas—that defines the basic qualities regulating mental and emotional states:

Sattva: purity, harmony, balance

Rajas: passion, dynamism, distraction

Tamas: ignorance, chaos, darkness

Emotions are not classified here into positive and negative types; rather, they are seen as an expression of the presence of these gunas within us. The emotions are constantly changing depending on the interactions between these forces.

Furthermore, the concept of Rasa in Indian aesthetics considers emotions to be a more refined experience that can even be developed. Emotions in this context are not just a reaction but can also grow into something else.

2.3 Gap Analysis

An analysis comparison between the western perspective and the Indian knowledge systems highlights the absence of an important element regarding the understanding of emotions. While the western perspective stresses measurement, classification, and bio-mechanisms, Indian Knowledge Systems stress the role of consciousness and transformation.

Unfortunately, there is little interaction between the two perspectives. Indeed,

- The western perspective has no concept of transformation
- The Indian perspective lacks scientific articulation
- Little attention is paid to emotions as fields as opposed to states

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Emotional Fields Theory: A Conceptual Reframing of Emotions

Psychological theories of emotion have largely regarded emotions as discrete affective experiences generated by various physiological, cognitive, and environmental factors. Although

such explanations have enhanced empirical understanding, they tend to ignore the continuity, evolution, and creativity of some emotions that transcend their mere occurrence as reactions.

This paper suggests an alternative approach to viewing emotions – that of “emotions as fields.” Emotion field refers to the evolving, continuous, and creative pattern of consciousness that affects cognition, perception, action, and relationships. Unlike ephemeral emotions, emotions-as-fields maintain continuity, coherence, and directionality and hence shape the way people perceive and act upon their environments.

The theory of emotions as fields is grounded in Indian knowledge systems and the concepts of chitta (field of consciousness) and vrittis (modifications of the field). In this paradigm, emotions are not individual experiences, but coherent patterns of activity within consciousness. When particular vrittis are triggered repeatedly through experience, contemplation, and deliberate practice, they can settle into permanent structures and be referred to as emotions-as-fields.

In turn, these realms are affected by the samskaras or stored latent impressions, which lend coherence to these realms via the constant strengthening of emotional dispositions. Hence, these emotional fields cannot be understood as static entities but rather dynamic systems that have developed out of the interaction between previous impressions, current experience, and context.

The notion of emotional fields can thus contribute to a more thorough analysis of such processes as emotional dispositions over time, identity formation and change, among others. It can also serve as a link between personal experience and theoretical thinking.

3.2 Triguna Integration: Dynamic Qualities of Emotional Fields

Triguna, which consists of sattva, rajas, and tamas, provides the basic theoretical construct for the study of emotional field quality in Indian Knowledge Systems. Emotions are not classified into static or distinct forms; instead, emotions are considered as a dynamic interaction of essential qualities that influence the construction and manifestation of consciousness.

- Sattva is characterized by clarity, harmony, balance, and enlightenment. Sattvic emotional fields are marked by compassion, stability, knowledge, and productive relational involvement.
- Rajas refers to energy, passion, dynamism, and restlessness. Rajasic emotional fields are identified by ambitions, attachments, disturbances, and externalization.
- Tamas relates to inertia, ignorance, rigidity, and introversion. Tamasic emotional fields are typified by confusions, stasis, emotional weightiness, and non-participation.

In the context of emotional fields, the three qualities do not act separately but work together continuously, influencing the formation, stabilization, and development of emotional orientations. The initial emergence of an emotional field may result from the activity of rajasic energy, its stabilization can be achieved through sattvic refinement, or it may be hindered by tamasic dominance.

Such a dynamical model enables the possibility of considering the emotional transformation process as a form of qualitative re-organization in consciousness. Emotional difficulties or inner conflicts could also mean that there are transitions between the various states of gunic constitution rather than disruptions. On the other hand, increasing consciousness and intentional participation may lead to the process of shifting towards a sattvic predominance.

The application of triguna in emotional field theory offers an approach that is non-dualistic in nature and process oriented. This means that instead of categorizing emotions as either good or bad, they are regarded as evolving expressions of the deeper qualities which can be refined.

3.3 Matrutva as an Emotional Field: A Generative Principle of Consciousness

The phenomenon of Matrutva (generative or protective consciousness of motherhood), which belongs to the Indian philosophical and spiritual tradition, is considered to be a significant emotion and existential notion in its own right, transcending the physical dimension of reproductive motherhood in its broadest sense. Whereas Western notions of maternal emotion focus on physiological aspects of child birth, hormones, and the bonding process, Matrutva describes the notion of maternal experience within a wider generative sphere of consciousness.

The notion of Matrutva is defined as an emotionally driven field characterized by:

- Developmentally focused nurture
- Protectorial and developmental involvement
- Generative care
- Intuitive and sensitive relationship

While biological determinism implies the notion of maternal roles as being predetermined by nature, Matrutva as an emotional field can be cultivated and developed through sustained interactive experience, reflection, and intentional social engagement. Matrutva can be viewed as a conscious generative energy organizing individual cognitive, behavioral, and personal dimensions based on the principle of nurture.

From the point of view of Indian Knowledge Systems, a certain field of emotions represents the consolidation of certain vrittis due to the accumulated effect of repeated experiences and samskara-based patterns.

However, it is crucial to point out that Matrutva as an emotional force is not confined to either the male or female gender or to the biological process itself. On the contrary, it stands for an aspect of the universal consciousness of creation, care, and transformation. Thus, it can be regarded as an excellent illustration of the role of emotions as structuring factors.

4. Methodology

4.1 Reflective Case Inquiry: An Integrative Methodological Approach

For this research, a method of reflective case inquiry will be used in order to understand the emergence and evolution of emotional fields through lived experiences. Reflective case inquiry is an innovative qualitative methodological approach which is based on systematic reflections, observations and theorization about experiences. Reflective case inquiry approach is more effective in studying psychological and consciousness phenomena.

While classical case study methodologies involve observation of behaviors or therapeutic outcomes, reflective case inquiry stresses the importance of first person experiences and treats them as sources of knowledge, at the same time, remaining analytical in its approach.

The approach is based on the following principles:

1. Experiential Validity – taking lived experiences as the main source of knowledge about emotional and consciousness phenomena.
2. Reflexivity – making reflexions on our own experiences and trying to find patterns and meanings in them.
3. Theoretical Integration – applying a certain theoretical framework to interpret lived experiences, especially Indian Knowledge System theories.

4.2 Research Design and Analytical Process

This research project is designed as a reflective case study based on an author's reflections on their personal experiences in professional and personal environments. The method includes:

- Long-term observations of emotional patterns over an extended period of professional practice
- Reflections on experiences associated with emotional reactions, relationship dynamics, and inner cognitive processes
- Thematic analysis that reveals patterns and emotional orientations
- Mapping of these patterns to IKS theories like vrittis, samskaras, and triguna

For the purposes of academic integrity, reflection will be considered an objective form of experiential data analyzed under the same theoretical perspective.

4.3 Justification of Methodology

The rationale for reflective case inquiry as an appropriate methodology stems from the inherent characteristics of the research problem, which is geared toward exploring intense, profound, and transformational experiences, which are inherently difficult to measure using conventional quantitative approaches.

Secondly, the Indian Knowledge System itself recognizes anubhava (experience-based investigation) as one of the legitimate modes of acquiring knowledge. The incorporation of reflective methodology into IKS would, therefore, ensure consistency between methodology and epistemology.

5. Case Study: Author-Based Reflective Inquiry of Maternal Emotional Field

5.1 Context of the Case

This particular case arises out of consistent professional involvement in psychotherapy, consciousness studies, and developmental counseling for children and adolescents. In this respect, the researcher has been active in projects concerning cognitive, affective, and career development of children. Specifically, various projects have been developed and implemented to assist children to discover their purposeful life paths.

A consistent emotional orientation in terms of nurturing, protection, and developmental concerns towards children arose during extensive professional activity. This orientation affected both professional choices and areas of research interest.

5.2 Emergence of Emotional Conflict and Reflection

Concurrently, the emotional aspects involved in not being able to become a biological mother were also present. From the perspective of traditional sociology and psychology, becoming a mother can be viewed as an integral part of personal identification and emotional satisfaction.

This situation enabled the researcher to think more deeply about the very nature of maternal emotions. Instead of viewing it only in terms of lack, the emotional aspect slowly unfolded in a manner that highlighted the nurturing nature of the relationship towards children.

5.3 Transformation into Matrutva Emotional Field

By means of prolonged introspection, observation, and immersion in Indian philosophy, this emotion was redefined as an example of Matrutva as an emotional field. The mothering instinct that had been defined in terms of biological maternity was seen as a much more dynamic force in shaping cognitive processes, relationship formation, and goal-directed activity.

This development may be considered as moving away from thinking about emotion as a reaction and towards seeing it as a formative force in consciousness.

5.4 Analytical Interpretation

According to the theory of emotional fields, the present case study demonstrates how consistent engagement in relationships, in combination with reflective insight, may result in the establishment of certain emotional patterns. Sustained by samskaras and influenced by the triguna dynamics, these patterns gradually develop into emotional fields that direct our actions.

It is also shown in the current case study that deep emotional states are not always caused by biological factors and can rather become generating forces in our conscious experience.

6. Emotional Field Formation Framework (EFF Framework)

6.1 Conceptual Overview

In order to understand the emergence of emotional fields in an organized manner, this paper suggests a model called the Emotional Field Formation (EFF) Framework, which is a theoretical construct that has been developed with the help of reflective inquiry, inspired from Indian Knowledge Systems.

According to the EFF Framework, emotions arise out of fluctuations in consciousness (vrittis), which, when repeated and reinforced, become structured formations guided by samskaras and conditioned by the three gunas, namely sattva, rajas, and tamas.

6.2 Structural Components of the Framework

The EF formation process can be outlined through the following five interconnected steps:

(1) Chitta (Consciousness Field)

At its core, there is the chitta, which is considered the consciousness field with all its cognitive and affective potentials. In this field, experience is perceived, processed, and registered.

(2) Vrittis (Fluctuations of Emotion-Cognition)

Initially, emotions manifest themselves in the form of vrittis, which are brief fluctuations of consciousness field. These are reactions to external and internal stimuli, including those arising from the process of interaction.

(3) Samskara Creation (Encoding)

Repeated exposure to similar experiences leads to the creation of samskaras or imprints in the subconscious structure of consciousness, creating certain patterns. They determine further affective behavior.

(4) Triguna Modification (Structuring)

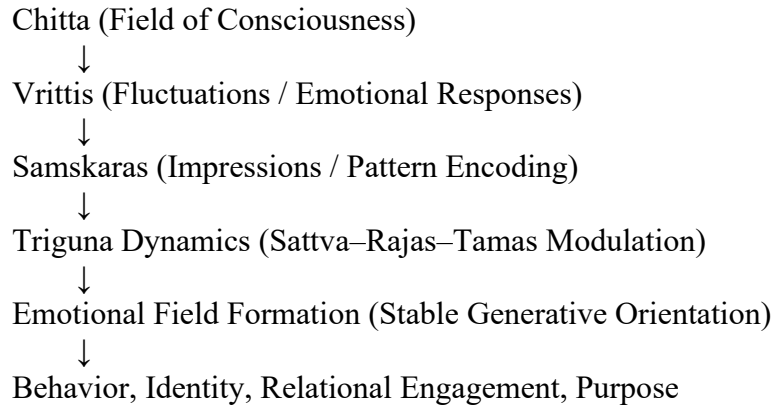
The expression and development of such patterns occur with the participation of sattva, rajas, and tamas gunas, determining the qualitative structuring of the emotion field:

- Sattva ↔ coherence, constructive orientation
- Rajas ↔ activation, desire
- Tamas ↔ resistance

(5) Emotional Field Establishment

Under the influence of repeated experience, awareness, and relation, the developed patterns establish themselves as an emotional field.

6.3 Conceptual Diagram (Textual Representation)



6.4 Interpretation of the Framework

In the context of the EFF Framework, emotions are perceived as processes rather than events, illustrating that:

- Emotions are not individual events, but are part of an ongoing feedback loop
- Through conscious perception, the direction of emotions can be changed
- Emotional change is possible by restructuring emotions

In this framework, the example of the emotional field of *Matrutva* represents a stable pattern of *vrittis* that focus on nurturing, strengthened by interaction and purified by *sattvic* dominance.

7. Discussion

7.1 Reframing Emotions: From States to Fields

The results of the current investigation are contrary to the existing perception of emotions as unique states. Through the introduction of the notion of emotional fields, the article shows that emotions may act as generative systems in consciousness. This approach has profound theoretical consequences. Namely, emotions cannot be reduced to the mere reaction of an organism to a particular stimulus. Rather, they depend on more sophisticated dynamics of consciousness development that have been studied in process and constructivist approaches to psychology.

7.2 Contribution of Indian Knowledge Systems

IKS is a good model to understand complex emotions as it provides ideas like vrittis, samskaras, and triguna to analyze emotional events in a more layered way, which includes cognitive processes, memories, and qualities experienced.

Where Western approaches try to quantify emotions and classify them, IKS focuses on transformation, realization, and experiential analysis. The synthesis of ideas proposed here proves that IKS can be expressed in modern academic terms.

7.3 Emotional Fields and Identity Formation

Among other important conclusions that could be drawn from this research is that emotional fields may have a significant impact on the formation of identities. The example of Matrutva shows how the continuous presence of certain emotional attitudes could affect not only people's actions but their very identity, their sense of purpose and direction in life.

In such a way, the concept of identity becomes enriched by introducing an additional dimension into its understanding – emotional patterns.

7.4 Beyond Biological Determinism

The reflective case questions the notion that some types of emotional experiences like maternal emotion have a direct correlation with physiology. The development of Matrutva as an emotional space apart from physiological maternal emotions indicates that there is room for emotions to evolve through processes other than physiology.

Such an observation will provide possibilities for studying other types of emotional experiences that may be beyond psychology, such as caring, creating, and social responsibilities.

7.5 Limitations and Future Research

While the study provides a novel conceptual framework, it is based on a single reflective case inquiry. Future research may:

- Explore emotional fields across diverse populations
- Develop empirical tools to study emotional field formation
- Integrate neuroscientific methods with consciousness-based frameworks

8. Applications

8.1 Psychotherapy and Emotional Transformation

In terms of therapeutic intervention, the idea of the emotional field opens up an alternative way of dealing with psychological issues by moving beyond symptom-based treatment toward pattern transformation.

Here therapists will be able to help individuals realize what their dominant emotional fields are, and transform them. This process can be applied in both cognitive and contemplative therapy.

8.2 Education and Child Development

In educational settings, being aware of the presence of emotional fields may help promote holistic learning. Teachers can nurture positive emotional perspectives like curiosity, empathy, and accountability through persistent participation instead of sporadic approaches.

Curriculum designs that emphasize cognitive and emotional growth can use this knowledge to promote meaningful learning experiences for children.

8.3 Consciousness Design and Leadership

The model has repercussions for leadership and consciousness design, wherein emotional fields could affect decision making, organizational culture, and societal impact. Leaders who are working out of balanced sattvic emotional fields are capable of showing more clarity, ethics, and foresight.

8.4 Toward Applied Emotional Field Models

This study presents the scope for the development of models such as:

- Emotional Field Mapping Tools
- Emotional Assessment Models Based on Triguna
- Conscious Emotional Cultivation Models

The above-mentioned models will serve to enrich the disciplines of psychology, education, and human development.

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