



IJAYUSH
International Journal of AYUSH
AYURVEDA, YOGA, UNANI, SIDDHA AND HOMEOPATHY
<http://internationaljournal.org.in/journal/index.php/ijayush/>

International Journal
Panacea
Research library
ISSN: 2349 7025

Review Article

Volume 11 Issue 02

March – April 2022

THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE SKILLS EMPLOYED IN PATANJALI YOGA SUTRA: A MINI REVIEW

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Abstract:

In this world every human being wants to live happy and successful life. Life skills play important role in the path of success and happiness. Life skills education empowers and strengthens the abilities to handle issues and problems commonly faced in day to day life efficiently. It plays a crucial role in professional and personal life too. Our academia is familiar with the educational theories and life skills thoughts which were developed by the Western countries. However, we have too little information about our own historical and cultural thoughts in relation to life skills. There are many life skills present in Indian philosophies. Indian classical texts like Yoga Sutra, Bhagwat Gita and Ramayana are such examples which are full of life skill education. The current theoretical attempt is carried out to focus on the interpretation of the certain yoga sutra which are significant to life skills education. The effort is also made to find out life skills education in yoga sutra and its role in the present scenario for successful life.

Keywords: Life Skills, Yoga Sutra, Yoga

Introduction: Life Skill

Everyone living on this earth planet wants to live a very happy life. For this, he or she needs to be very skilful and efficient. A person has to go through a lot of skills for smooth and happy life, he or she gains experience through his/her life. In fact, the whole life is a continuous learning process. From childhood to death a person has different experiences. But, sometimes he fails to face the current situation. This happens due to different societies have different traditions as well as different cultures. That's why, there is a difference in the number of skills that children have. It is only during recent years that a study of life skills has emerged as a subject of attraction. Being a branch of social psychology, the subject of life skills focuses on the social behavior of human beings in relation to various social situations. Life skills are a positive behavior and the ability to adjust very efficiently with the needs and challenges of everyday life. The strength of positive behavior depends on the depth of skills acquired by the individual. In fact, a total reflection of one's behavior is the sum of an appropriate combination of different skills. Scientifically, it is the psychological merit and continuity of the person concerned. To what extent a person has the desired skills and practice determines his overall level of development and helps to solve physical, psychological and social problems. Therefore, imparting life skills is a basic effort that has to be initiated to reinforce the behavior of our children as well as others. Acquiring basic skills changes our children's behavior. If a person is associating 'skill' with ability, he can do the activity better in general. Life skills are thus capabilities that motivate individuals to lead fruitful lives. In other words, life skills are competencies that help people work well in the environment in which they live(Rao, 2016).

Yoga Way of Life Skills

Yoga is not a physical activity, it is a combination of exercise, breathing & meditation. The combination of these three components of practicality in Yoga helps to meet the divine spirit(Mudra, 2006). Since 5000 years ago yoga has been used as traditional medicine, but when the technology era started, people in progress started to forget the science of yoga practice. Asana is one of the components of Yoga, adopted to make physical body conducive

for higher practice (Meenakshi & Bhavanani, 1993). Physical activities essential to gain the mental and emotional well-being. Regular practice of asana reduces the illness, improves the body strength and concentration of mind (Collins, 1998). The brain is only the medium through which we educate our minds. Yoga practice helps to calm down the mind. It also enhances concentration skills by increasing the circulation of blood to the brain (Streeter et al., 2007).

Yoga is an ancient and most popular way of developing self-awareness, creating well-being (A. Bhavanani, 2011). It not only enhances physical stamina and flexibility but also emotional stability, intellectual and creative talents. It builds multitudes of tools, concepts, attitudes, and skills through which we can overcome difficulties in life (A. B. Bhavanani, 2014). By yogic practices one can evolve towards divine self as well as perfection (Moksha) by destroying the kleshas of mind. Kleshas are the psychological afflictions that distort our vision of reality, which prevents us from realizing our potential divinity and reality of life. Our academia is familiar with the educational theories and life skills thoughts which were developed by the Western countries. However, we have too little information about our own historical and cultural thoughts in relation to life skills. There are many life skills present in Indian philosophies. Indian classical texts like Yoga Sutra, Bhagwat Gita, Ramayana are such examples which are full of life skill education (Salagame, 2014). Our great Rishis like Maharishi Patanjali have given us a clear road map to inculcate life skills for this evolutionary journey with vital clues towards understanding both the internal and external processes of Yoga. For the development of life skills, Yoga is one of the best interventional strategies to cope up the problems of life (Ankamreddy et al., 2020). In addition, it increases life purpose and satisfaction. The current effort is attempted to focus on the understanding of valuable insights in which new dimensions of life and its associated aspects are lying in Yoga. These aspects are designed by default mode to be adopted for development of life skills to achieve the life purpose and satisfaction, feelings of greater self-confidence and happiness in life.

Thus, yoga is a very effective tool if adopted into practice it increase life skills, especially for children. Moreover, children are as white paper we can write anything on it, and if we write

anything on it we cannot erase easily. The neat and clean mind of children need to be given fresh and life moulding practice like Yoga. So life skills must be taught in schools, because only a good child can become a good citizen.

Yoga Sutra and Its Need in Current Scenario

The Yoga Sutras were compiled in India by the sage Patanjali between 500 BCE and 400 CE, who synthesized and systematized knowledge of yoga from older traditions. It is also called 'Yoga Darshana', where Darshana means to see. So, the Yoga Darshana means 'a process of seeing through yoga, but not to see the outer world through open eyes. It means to see something beyond the senses, which is invisible in this mortal world, and through the mind to see spiritual insight. Maharishi Patanjali wrote 196 sutras, which are divided into four chapters (I) Samadhi Pada (II) Sadhana Pada (III) Vibhuti Pada (IV) Kaivalya Pada containing 51, 55, 56, and 34 verses respectively. All verses have deep meaning, that's why the reader requires thinking deeply to understand each and every single Sanskrit word (Swami-Satyananda-Saraswati, 2013). In Yoga Sutras, Maharishi Patanjali stated yoga and has defined as a technique used to still the mental fluctuations of the mind to reach the central reality of the true self. It outlines a skillful way of life that fosters moderation and harmony. In the second and third chapters, Maharishi prescribed eight limbs of yoga also known as Ashtangayoga which explains the philosophical concepts to improve the lifestyle and provide the idea in the decision making that prioritize things in order of preference what is complicated and what is non-complicated (Subrahmanyam, 1980). The eight limbs of yoga are divided into bahiranga (external) and antaranga (internal) yoga, known as Ashtanga Yoga. These eight limbs are yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, and pratyahara, known as bahiranga, and dharana, dhyana, samadhi known as antaranga. Yoga is not just we do on mat it is beyond that, Maharishi Patanjali explain two limbs before the yoga asana, that is yama and niyama. Yama and Niyama are the root of all limbs, and Maharishi Patanjali explain these two limbs for living a smooth and happy life, these two are the ways of right living. There are five yama and five niyama; these resemble the ten life skills (Swami-Satyananda-Saraswati, 2013).

The aim of the current theoretical scoping attempt is to explore the life skill related knowledge lying in Yoga Sutra of Patanjali and the practical applicability of those skills in life.

Research Methodology: The current understanding is based on the descriptive and interpretative nature of method which encompasses the various essential life skills, some life-style patterns mentioned in Yoga Sutra. After going through the various published literature on the subjects and classical texts, the theoretical concepts were formed to through wider aspect of life skills related perspective. One the life skills qualities are developed the inner strength and quality of life is improved which can face the challenges in day to day life. References have been taken from books, theoretical research papers, research articles and few websites from the internet.

Need of Study: Today youths are facing the tough and tiring competitions in every walk of life, lack of job security, financial bankruptcy, emotional fluctuation, environmental pollution etc. and as a result, they are caught in the rat race. Research suggests that life skill education will help youth to overcome such difficulties and dualities in life. In this regard Yoga plays very vital role to infuse the elixir of hope, strength, vitality and inner courage by coping up all depressive negativity in youths across the globe. Scientific research has exhibited that yogic practices are always contributory to overcome the life related problems youths are facing in modern day.

Many of studies have proved the benefits of yoga in all sphere of life including life skills. It is seen that demand for yoga equipment skyrocketed by 154% during the covid 19 pandemic. Yoga was one of the most discussed topics on social media amidst the pandemic, with a 74% growth in popularity of Yoga related activities even in profession. Even after such popularity of Yoga and its contribution for health and wellness, many people are still unaware that Yoga can play vital role in life skills as explained by Rishis in Yogic texts. Anyone can improve their health as well as develop life skills with the help of yoga practice. According to WHO: Life skills can be defined as *“the abilities for Adaptive and Positive Behavior that enable the individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of*

Every Day Life". Moreover, UNICEF also defines life skills as *"a behavior change or behaviour development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: Knowledge, Attitude, and Skills"*(De Voogt et al., 2017).

Thus, it can be said that life skills are the sets of psychosocial abilities that enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitudes and values regarding their concerns into well informed and healthy behavior. It empowers people to take decisions based on a logical process of *"what to do, why to do, how to do and when to do*. Adoption of life skills is the key to excellence.

Broadly, Life Skills fall into three basic categories:

- (1) Cognitive or Thinking Skills
- (2) Social or Interpersonal Skills
- (3) Emotional Skills.

The above basic skills have ten core areas which are given in the following table.

	Life Skills	Meaning
Cognitive or Thinking Skills	1. Self-awareness	Identify strengths and weaknesses and can answer to "Who am I" question
	2. Decision making	Choosing the best solution by assessing different solutions
	3. Problem-solving	How to solve the problems by dividing it into smaller components
	4. Creative thinking	Thinking in a different way and beyond our own direct experiences
	5. Critical thinking	Accept or reject ideas or issues by reasoning

Social or Interpersonal Skill	6. Interpersonal relationship	How to start and continue the relationship with others
	7. Empathy	Where and when show which kind of emotion
	8. Effective Communication	Ability to manage levels of stress by changing our environment or lifestyle, and learning how to relax
Emotional Skills	9. Emotion management	Can understand people and feel their feelings
	10. Coping with Stress	able to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally, in ways that are appropriate to our cultures and situations

Life Skills in Yoga Sutra: Yoga Sutra is one of the six foundations of Indian philosophy and has been used for millennia to study, explain and experience the complexities of the mind and human existence (Ahmad et al., 2012).

In Yoga Sutra verse 1.2, Maharishi Patanjali defined yoga as -

“Yogascitta-vritti-nirodha”

Which means yoga is the removing of the fluctuations of the mind. This state of Yoga remove the distortion in the mind and create the sense of self which the idea of cognitive work. Ultimately, the sense is being in here and now, very much practical to self – awareness enhancing skill.

In achieving that self-awareness further in the verse 1.3, Maharishi says, *“Tada drastuh svarupe avasthanam”* which means pure awareness can abide in its very (real) nature. Mind plays an important role in human life; even we can feel that we are a body with a Mind. In this context, most of the time our behavior are regulated by our emotion. What we think we become, and yoga is the stilling of the vritties of the mind. Maharishi Patanjali also speaks two kinds of Vritties-waves are very important while making decision. In the verse 1.5

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Maharishi says, “*Vrittayah pancatayyah klista-aklistah*”. It means there are five types of modification of mind either positive (Aklista) or negative (Klista). By yoga practice ignorance reduces, and mind becomes clear which improve the ability of problem solving skill.

In the Yoga Sutra, further in the verse 1.33, Maharishi Patanjali says “*Maitrikaruna-muditopekshanam sukha-dukha-punyapunya-vishayanam bhavanatash-chitta-prasadanam*” which means the mind becomes clear by cultivating attitudes of friendliness, compassion, gladness indifference respectively towards happiness, misery, and virtue and vice. In this Sutra Patanjali tells the correct attitude to face various kinds of situations that may arise in our relationship with those amongst whom we lives(Swami Prabhavananda, 1953).

FIVE YAMAIN THE CONTEXT OF LIFE SKILL EMPLOYED IN PATANJALI YOGA SUTRA

1. Ahimsa:

“*Ahimsasatyasteyabrahmacaryaishvarapranidhana Yamah*” says patanjali in verse 1.35. According to Patanjali yoga sutras, ahimsa means the abandonment of any harmful intention whatsoever. It means we should not harm anything verbally or non-verbally, which is present in this world. By practicing ahimsa mind will become calm and harmonize, which improves the ability of effective communication(Swami-Satyananda-Saraswati, 2013).

Effective communication:

Effective communication means how we communicate with other people or anything living beings or non-living beings. Communicating with others negatively or someone hurts by us, then it will become himsa, and if we communicate with love and compassion or positively then it will become ahimsa. Maharishi Patanjali also explained ahimsa means love, harmlessness, non-killing, and non-violence(Wlody, 1981).

2. Satya:

Satyapratishthayamakriyaphalashryatvam I.36

Maharishi Patanjali explained in the above sutra that Satya means establishing in truth. When one is established in truthfulness, then that person develops a kind of divine intelligence in him. In yoga, this is called psychic speech. With the practice of truthfulness, he develops power in himself and his mind becomes so clear like a mirror that what is to happen is reflected by his speech. This happens because a person has complete control over his speech. So, if we follow the path of truthfulness we will develop creative thinking(Swami-Satyananda-Saraswati, 2013).

Creative thinking:

Creative thinking means to think in a different way and beyond our own direct experiences. If anyone has the ability to think creatively, then they can solve their problems in real life with different possible ways. Creative thinking generates new ideas in the field of knowledge. When too much logic is placed, creative ideas will be overlooked(Maharani, 2014). Therefore, creative thinking requires freedom of thought, which is very well explained by Maharishi Patanjali in Yoga Darshana.

3. Asteya:

Asteyapratishthayam sarvaratnopasthanam I.37

In the above sutra Patanjali defined Asteya as honesty. When the aspirant is established in the yogic virtue of Asteya (honesty), then he can develop the power of cognition like intuitive awareness. Honesty brings a kind of awareness that makes you aware of the hidden wealth. Honesty is when we really start delighting with, not only what we have but also what others have. When we begin to focus on feeling happy rather than feeling jealousy, greedy, or wanting others things, it hardly matters to us who those things really are. The abdomen of all these stealing things will develop the interpersonal relationship skill(Swami-Satyananda-Saraswati, 2013).

Interpersonal relationship:

Interpersonal relationship means first how we connect with ourselves, then family, peer, community, society, nation, and the world. Our identities are defined by our interpersonal

relationships, which we are as a person, and this can be obtained by establishing in Asteya (honesty). Good interpersonal relationships mean sharing and caring, which help us lead healthy and happy lives and for this, we need to be constantly aware of the effects of our thoughts, words, behavior, and actions on our relationships (Kanniammal, 2008).

4. Brahmacharya:

Brahmacharyapratishthayam viryalabhah I.38.

According to Maharishi Patanjali as stated above, brahma means supreme or infinity, and charya means moving, so brahmacharya means establishing in supreme or moving into infinity, but here he explained in-depth, that brahmacharya means sexual abstinence. Semen also means indomitable courage, which is necessary for spiritual practice. When a person is firmly established in celibacy, he attains infinite consciousness, strength, energy, and courage; thereby the person feels more joyful and feels free from stress and tensions. When a person realizes their blissful nature, he becomes an unlimited source of happiness. The person begins to recognize that you are not here just to eat, sleep, talk, and have sexual and sensual pleasures, but for a unique purpose. When person free from all these tensions and worries definitely he can cope with stress (Swami-Satyananda-Saraswati, 2013).

Coping with stress:

A person with a small mind is always tempted by the cravings of the senses. He tries to get satisfaction through stimulation of the senses, and if a person cannot complete his desire, then that desirable thing raises the stress level. Coping with stress means identify the reasons of stress in our day today lives, acknowledge how it put an adverse effect on us, and act in a ways that help us control our stress levels (World Health Organization, 2020). Establishing in the path of brahmacharya person can identify one's strength and knowledge, which will help to cope with stress.

5. Aparigraha:

Aparigrahasthairyejanmakathantasambodhah I.39.

Aparigraha or (non-possessiveness) is the most important virtue. It means giving up the tendency to accumulate objects of utility and enjoyment. Sadhak keeps only those things that are necessary for survival. This keeps the mind blank and does not need to worry about anything because there is nothing that can be preserved, and this improves the ability of problem-solving (Swami-Satyananda-Saraswati, 2013).

Problem solving:

Problem-solving enables us to deal effectively with the problems in our lives. Significant problems that remain unresolved can cause mental stress as well as physical stress (World Health Organization, 2020). Problem-solving skills can be learned by following the path of Aparigraha.

Five Niyama:

1. Shaucha:

Shauchatsvangajugupsapairairsamsargah I.41.

Shaucha is beyond the purity of the body and includes purity of mind as well as purity of speech. By the practice of mental purity, one attains happiness, concentration, fitness for sense control and becomes able to see oneself. This mental purification helps person to improve critical thinking (Swami-Satyananda-Saraswati, 2013).

Critical Thinking:

Critical thinking means thinking differently and out of the box, looking beyond our direct experience, reacting favourably, being flexible to situations in daily life, achieving objectives in daily life situations (Donnellan & Robins, 2012). Person can improve the ability of critical thinking by following the path of shaucha.

2. Santosha:

Santoshadanuttamah sukhlabhah I.42.

According to Maharishi Patanjali santosha means satisfaction, or accepting life as it is, and the practicing of santosha one can acquire unexcelled happiness. The happiness that cannot

be shaken by life's difficult moments. Contentment is related to equanimity; and this practice allows one to accept any situation, including pleasure, pain, success or failure. One whose accept whatever circumstances in their life, his mind become steady, and steady or satisfied mind can take best decision(Swami-Satyananda-Saraswati, 2013).

Decision Making:

Decision making, is the process of selecting a course of action from many alternative actions. To improve decision making skills, one needs to know himself, his values and his abilities by the practicing of Santosha.

3. Tapas:

Kayeindriyasiddhirshuddhikshayatapasah I.43.

Maharishi Patanjali says that, by practicing austerities, perfection comes in the body, and impurities of senses are destroyed. Tapas (austerities) are the desire to work, which means to develop discipline and enthusiasm. When person follow the discipline and all the organs become healthy and perfect, then empathy can improve easily(Swami-Satyananda-Saraswati, 2013).

Empathy:

Empathy means, seeing reality from the other person's point of view, or when and where to show which kind of emotions. As others talk to us, they express their feelings through their voice, facial expression, or other non-verbal ways. By practicing the tapas with strong determination one can know about others' feelings and also can develop empathy for others.

4. Swadhyaya:

Svadyayaishatadevatasamprayogah I.44.

Self-awareness is a journey of self-observation, self-understanding, self-transcendence, and self-transformation. When we practice self-study, we begin to dissolve the often

illusory detachment we feel from our deeper self, from the people around us, and from our world(Swami-Satyananda-Saraswati, 2013).

Self-awareness:

Self-awareness means person recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and also give answers to the question “Who am I”

5. Ishwarapranidhana:

Samadhisiddhirishvarapranidhanat I.45.

Ishwara pranidhana means complete surrender to God. Ishwara Pranidhana helps the person to heal the afflictions of the mind, which cause pain and suffering, as it is designed to divert our energies away from our selfish desires and personal dramas and towards the ultimate quest for oneness. It also removes the obstacle in the body and mind, all these help a person to manage their emotions(Swami-Satyananda-Saraswati, 2013).

Emotion management:

Emotion management is a mental ability that helps people to understand their own feelings and the feelings of others. Emotional intelligence introduces individuals to their own values and strengths so that they can lead more effective lives(Bahadir, 2018).

Summary:

Thus, it can be said that in current scenario life skills play very vital role in all spheres of one's live. It increases the overall development and makes the personality effective. Life skills also makes the person to be self-disciplined who can adapt and manage the responsibilities entrusted upon. It also provides abilities to handle the problems in a very systematic way. It is the need of the time to impart life skills even in the early age of children so that they would be self-directed towards adopting multiple skills necessary for their versatile growth. Maharishi Patanjali devised a rule book that teaches us life skills in the form of aphorisms of yoga sutra in Sanskrit with 196 verses which are the foundation of Ashtanga Yoga. It provides step by step methods to individuals to overcome the life skills related challenges in life.

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