

# Exploring Indigenous Perspective on Traits That Let Humans Thrive: An Indian Model for Developing Resilience as a Tool for Optimal Human Life

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<b>Received</b> 18-04-2023	<b>Abstract:</b> Being bombarded with difficulties and challenging situations is no new to any individual's life, but what makes human capable of thriving throughout and living a calm and satiated life despite all challenges is the ability called as resilience. It becomes important to study this construct as challenges are in everybody's life, and in this view how effectively we deal with them and come out of them stronger could be the biggest determinant of success and well being in life. This study will discover the concept of resilience from indigenous perspective, and suggest indigenous techniques to develop resilience as a tool for optimal human life. Modern researchers have started to explore various correlates of mental health and well being in texts such as Bhagvad geeta, Patanjali yogdarshan, Ramcharitmanas, Bhagavadgeeta and other works that provide profound knowledge and solutions to modern issues in hidden format. Texts such as patanjali yogsutra mention 4 attitudes (Chitta Prasadnam) to build emotional and psychological aspect of resilience in addition to that it talks about the concept of Pratipaksha bhavna, Panchklesh, Sanskaras, Yama, Niyama; of Ashtanga yoga and few yoga poses and activities to boost resilience. Bhagavad geeta stresses on the concepts of Gyan Yoga, Karma Yoga and Bhakti Yoga in order to develop a resilient attitude in life. Other than this, Ramayana and Mahabharata also show expression of resilient attitude in various characters. All these texts can be referred to look for the concepts of resilience and various methods through which it can be developed.	<b>Keywords:</b> Resilience, Indigenous techniques, Bhagavad geeta, Patanjali Yogsutra, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Panchklesh, Ashtanga Yoga, Yama Niyama, Chitta Prasadnam, Pratipaksha Bhavana.
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## INTRODUCTION

The (APA,2014) defines resilience as “The process of adapting well with in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress”. The ability to overcome challenging or demanding life events, notably through mental, emotional, and behavioural flexibility and adaptation to internal and external difficulties, is known as resilience. Cambridge dictionary defines Resilience as the ability to feel happy again after some sort of negative events, and challenging situations have occurred in a person's life.

How well people adapt to adversity depends on a number of elements, the most important of which are:

- Way individuals view and engage with the world.
- The quantity and calibre of available social resources
- Unique coping mechanisms

According to Luthans et al.,(2006), resilience is the capacity to recover or move on after experiencing difficulty, conflict, failure, or even success and more responsibilities. It is an

unmasked potential about which people may not be conscious of but only after being exposed to traumatic situations became conscious of this capability. Resilience is necessary and important to be considered as it makes individual thrive through challenges and aids to peaceful life. Various terms that are associated with resilience are, **strength , persistence, tenacity, perseverance, potency, fortitude & tenaciousness.**

### Determinants of resilience:

The American Psychological Association (APA) claims that social support is the main contributor to resilience. Relationships that are kind, encouraging, and compassionate provide trust, love, and assurance. A positive outlook on the future, commitment, a strong sense of self-worth, effective communication and problem-solving abilities, the ability to take essential action while maintaining control, and the ability to control powerful emotions and impulses are other aspects. Additionally, the importance of spirituality is discussed and its positive effects on resilience are underlined. Few studies show how people has managed to feel positive emotions also during the period of adversity and situations that aid to already prevailing stress. Memories,

especially painful ones, appear to have an impact on a variety of resilience-related characteristics. Positive emotions can be self-generated by resilient people facing difficulties using happy memories from the past, and this affects how intense an event is felt. A network of emotional memories may have a significant role in the control of emotions as well as the results of emotions (such as depression). These findings collectively lend support to research that suggests personality traits and memory may be connected causally. Western cultures and communities, where individualism and self-reliance are generally prioritized, light focus on psychological resilience research. The elements that affect resilience might change and focus more on the balance between individual and collective resources in cultures like India where communities, social groupings, and religion or spirituality have significance more (Makinen, 2019, p. 3-5). Masten et al.,(2009)found that in human development, resilience research has concentrated mainly on three distinctive situations:-

- a) Functioning well during a time of significant adversity
- b) Recovering from a traumatic or gravely upsetting occurrence and returning to a former level of excellent functioning.
- c) Achieving new levels of positive or normal adaptation when severely adverse conditions improve.

Other than this it has been found that frequently experiencing positive emotions such as leads to an enhanced amount of psychological resilience (Gaffey et al.,2016).

**Techniques to build resilience from patanjali yogsutra:** Emotional resilience is a quality or ability that makes a person maintain emotional stability and feeling of contentment in one's life if happening of a very bad and disturbing event has caused arousal of negative emotions. Exploring techniques that can enhance this construct of resilience becomes important as to survive through emotionally overwhelming experiences better and easily. Yoga is a school of indian philosophy one of six astika darshanas. Maharshi patanjali has embedded the whole concept of yoga in patanjali yogsutra comprising of 194 sutras and 4 padas or chapters around 200 to 300 bc. The ultimate goal of yog darshan is moksha. It works upon discovering person's being/very existence, from physical, mental and intellectual desires to attaining a state where one can experience the reality and true nature of consciousness. Ashtanga

yoga of sadhanpada works as preparation & kriya yoga, through set of techniques and activities make the way to experience the ultimate truth with lesser efforts. Maharshi patanjali talks about the term " chitta prasadana" which means and emotional approach to deliberately ignore distressed state of mind, and if mind is already disturbed then to attempt to make it full of peace, calmness, tranquility and serenity ( Bhivandker, 2020).

**Pratipaksha Bhavana:** Yog sutra 1.33 states four approaches to limit impulsive reactions, witness, direct and control emotions, free the mind of plenty of unwanted thoughts and develop an attitude to manage people and situations significantly. These approaches can be prescribed to develop an emotional aspect of resilience and let the mind be away from trouble even when in it.

**Four attitudes:**

- **Maitri ( Friendliness ):** towards an individual who's happy or towards happiness
- **Karuna ( Compassion ):** Towards an individual suffering in life or towards "Dukha".
- **Mudita ( Delight, joy):** Towards virtuous individual or towards "Punya".
- **Upeksha ( Non-reaction/ Benevolent indifference):** Towards an individual who exhibits negative qualities or "Apunya".

As maharshi patanjali suggests these four attitudes should be taken into consideration for operating with different individual's in life. Maitri, for those who're happy or towards happiness, Karuna for those who are suffering, or towards any kind of suffering in life, Mudita, for those who are virtuous so that we do not start criticizing them and abstain us from better mental health, Upeksha for those who possess negative qualities or towards Vices/ Demerits. But one very important thing to notice is to understand that any person can be in any state in one's life, so we must act according to the category to which a person belongs to.

**Pratipaksha bhavana :** this technique mentioned in Patanjali Yogsutra (2.33) can be helpful to counter negative emotions and deal with emotional disturbances of the mind. It involves producing exact opposite of the emotion you're feeling at the time of the emotional distress, with total consciousness and awareness. For instance, if you're feeling utter sadness and longing for a person who's not in your life anymore, instantly

replace it with the feelings of happiness and joy that you've felt with the same person at different times. This is going to enhance the situation positively.

**Resilience from Ashtanga Yoga:** The amazing text Patanjali Yogsutra prescribes an eighth limbed (asthanga) pathway to empty the mind of consistent unnecessary patterns of thoughts and discovering strength in oneself. They are, Yama ( 5 attitudes for relationship with others), Niyama ( 5 attitudes for relationship with ourselves), Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharna, Dhyan, Samadhi (Shah, 2022). Resilience is greatly impacted by relationships with family, society (Fleming et al., 2008). In this context 5 yamas: (ahimsa, satya, asteya, brahmacharya, aparigraha) and 5 niyamas: (Shaucha, Santosh, Tap, Swadhyaya, Ishwar Pranidhan) can be used to foster effective relationship with oneself and others (Hughes, 2017). First Yama Ahimsa (non violence) is the most important, not only in terms of physical violence (Makinen, 2019), rather it refers to love, kindness, compassion, belongingness and other similar feelings sprouting from within, only efforts done through physical endeavors are not enough (Sharma, 1996). Second Yama, Satya refers to expressing the thoughts as it is, as decided in the mind, heard and seen in behavior until it hurts a truthful person, In short, using mind and speech meaningfully for selfless benefit of others is Satya (Sharma, 1996). Asteya, third Yama is about Non-Stealing (Hughes, 2017). In short, not accepting anything that is not freely given to you, not just food, money, and other materials but also not taking unnecessarily someone's time, energy, ideas, and most importantly give credits wherever needed (Dowdle & Sieber, 2022). Then comes Brahmacharya, not indulging in pleasures and fantasies and moving towards greater consciousness makes us powerful (Patanjali Yogsutra, Ch-2<sup>nd</sup>, Sutra-38). Last Yama is Aparigraha, the attitude of non-grasping, which helps in limiting the attachment to various stimuluses in life (Dowdle & Sieber, 2022). Santosha (contentment), and swadhyaya (self study) should be practiced by individuals to get rid of unwanted expectations we keep from others and attachments that keep us suffering, and give us insight of solutions to challenges we face (Makinen, 2019).

**Exploring causes behind problems; Panchkleshas and Samskara's:** According to Devi & Parihar (2020) Panchkleshas are indispositions of the mind that are the cause of all human suffering, they are: Avidya (ignorance), Asmita (ego), Raaga (Attachment)

, Dvesh (Disinclination) And Abhinivesh (Death Anxiety). A samskara is the subconscious memory of past pleasurable and painful experiences (Patanjali Yogsutra, Sadhanpada, Sutra 15). By understanding the root cause of our suffering we can consciously avoid and refrain from them by becoming more aware towards them and in such way our resilience would be improved (Makinen, 2019).

Thus in this view, different techniques and concepts mentioned in patanjali yogsutra can be useful to understand the cause of problems and develop repulsive attitudes towards them.

**Yogic practices :** The sequence given below of 12 activities can help us build resilience and cope through challenging situations effectively (eggleston, 2020).

1. Mindful breathing
2. Dirgh pranayama ( 3 part breath)
3. Parivritta sukhasana (Seated Twist)
4. Parsva sukhasana ( Side bending easy pose)
5. Paschimottanasana ( Seated forward bend)
6. Utthita marjaryasana ( Balancing cat pose)
7. Adho mukha svanasana ( downward facing-dog pose)
8. Balasana ( Child's pose)
9. Savasana ( Corpse's pose)
10. Metta ( Loving-kindness) meditation
11. Yog nidra ( yogic sleep)
12. 3 Easy resets: Extended exhales, Personal mantra/Affirmations ( I am enough, I am whole), Chin mudra ( gesture of consciousness)

A regular practice of these activities is suggested to improve resilience in an individual.

Scriven (2021) suggests few yoga poses that can aid to building physical, emotional, and psychological resilience: Tadasana, Virbhadrasana, Garudasana, Natrajasana. Also few yoga and wellness practices, such as Chandrabhedana pranayama, Practicing compassion from within through different form of mediations like lovingkindness mediation, surrendering ourselves to divinity and being that is greater than us and our every relationship, enhancing supportive relationships to get through the tough times, supporting community organizations to promote cultural resilience can be effective in developing overall resilience (Ramirez, 2021). Yoga aids in developing resilience by **1) Bringing calmness to the body:** releasing physical tension relaxes the mind, brings harmony in it, and aids in better functioning of nervous system. **2) Forcing the brain to adapt to change:** Brain loves being

surrounded by same situations to which it has become used to and avoids challenges. Practicing yoga sequences forces the brain to come out of that comfort zone and adapt to changing situations better, physically and mentally. **3) Responding to challenges without overwhelming:** A number of poses that require balance, focus on breath, and internal calmness can be used as a tool to face challenges along with focusing on solutions and managing ourselves in an effective manner. **4) Building emotional strength:** Confidence that comes through practicing yoga allows us to trust in our decisions and get through most of the situations easily (Brady, 2020).

**Resilience in Bhagvad Geeta:** The hindu philosophical text Bhagvad Geeta is an assemblance of the dialogic conversations between Arjuna ( who's in great confusion in midst of battlefield) and Lord Shri Krishna ( Who counsles and solves doubts of perturbed Arjuna) composed by sage Vyasa (c. 4-5 B.C.E.). Bhagvad Geeta broadly offers ways in which psychological resilience can be build ( Keshavan, 2020). Three ways prescribed in Bhagvad geeta to function constructively and adapt in a successful manner while in adverse situations are :

**Gyana Yoga:** The understanding of self that we hold is only in form of the physical, mental, and social information about ourselves we acquire from the birth through our perceptions( Keshavan, 2020), which is the root cause of all the suffering as we identify objects and things as "ours" or "mine" that do not actually have to anything with our existence. Thus, knowing the very true nature of the self and realizing what is unchangeable but also realizing that not everything is unchangeable holds a great importance ( Bhagvad geeta, 18.35). Attaining equanimity; being equally unresponsive to both joys and sorrows in that come to us in life and just witnessing them thoroughly without being indulged in them has also been stressed upon here. This path implies going beyond, being attached to sensory pleasures and being troubled by challenges (Pandey & Mishra, 2021). By knowing that you're neither this, nor that, you're that being which is the god itself ( Bhagvad geeta, 18.55). Such understanding of oneself will help be less deflected by difficulties and be more resilient in the whole phase because of the hope and optimism developed by the feeling of powerfulness derived by the sense of oneness with god.

**Karma Yoga:** This approach refers to doing all the actions in life without being indulged in it and without thinking of it's consequences. Lord Shri Krishna in verse 2.47 of Bhagvad Geeta says, O Arjuna! Do not make the outcome of the actions ultimate goal of your life neither the attachment to sensory or other kind of pleasures make you feel obsessed towards them. ( Vivekvani, 2020, p-2). In the process of becoming resilient this notion can be helpful as when an individual is exposed to challenges, if he keeps in mind that his motive is not to get results from the actions that he's doing but simply do what the situation demands doing, he will not be emotionally shaken by the experience of adversity and be able to function more efficiently.

**Bhakti yoga:** This concept of Bhagvad Geeta is thought more of as a protective factor that helps in managing emotional upheaval during challenging situations by many authors (Pandey & Mishra, 2021) (Garg, 2019). According to Sri Sri Ravi Shankar bhakti is when as a result of realizing, that everything is supreme consciousness, nothing else exist, one loses sense of separateness, loses the identity defined by the world, and merges into a vast ocean of an all encompassing, throbbing consciousness. This belief that god is within oneself and a feeling that the person is not alone, infact he's all powered by the supreme god, one would not fall weak in the face of difficulties and feel emotionally supported and empowered which would aid to better emotional resilience.

**Resilience in ramayana:** Many lessons that portray resiliency can be seen in the ancient hindu epic Ramayana. The book clearly states various such stances which put forward an example of the greatest way to tackle difficult situations while being calm. From lord Rama, we can learn tolerance, the way he created the bridge over the sea with the help of monkeys, and how he fought all the difficulties without being trembled teaches us that difficulties are meant to be overcome and we should just look at the best ways possible to manage the way throughout (Das, 2023). Pt. Mohan chandran in his article :The Master Strategist-3 has stated Lord Rama as the person with best crisis management skills world has ever seen.

**Resilience in Mahabharata:** Another ancient indian epic which points out various psychiatric and mental aspects, and offers effective solutions to them is Mahabharata. This book offers that to be able to face challenges one must be aware of his strengths, capabilities, and methods that they can

use effectively in order to regain the state previous than adversity (Kumari,2019).

## CONCLUSION:

Various Indian philosophical texts talk about the concept of resilience in various forms also ancient Indian epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata present various scenarios where the demonstration of resilient attitude has been shown. Different indigenous techniques from texts like Bhagavad Gita and Patanjali Yogsutra also are mentioned in various works and can be used effectively in order to maintain resilient attitude while in the face of adverse situations.

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