

BOOK REVIEW

Skill Sutras Jayshree Mohanraj
Illustrations by Anupam Arunchalam
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The book under review addresses the key issues of communication and offers an account of the various skills required for communication. As the country moves towards a 'Skill-ed India', where efficacy is appraised for reengineering the nation, there is a growing need for expression of ideas, views and information. It entails that for a technical skill there is the need of communication skills because the latter offers ways for the interface of seminal ideas for the constitution of new skills with practical implications. It is believed that this new book 'Skill Sutras' will help students develop their communication skills, especially those coming from the rural background to the cities for the purpose of higher education and/or employment. As the title suggests the 'sutras' or formulae given in the book will be helpful in inculcating new (updated) and necessary skills to communicate effectively according to the need of the hour. Having been foregrounded in the rich repertoire of Indian tradition and culture, and drawing upon anecdotes and events of the epics like the

Ramayan, the *Mahabharata* and so on the book carves a niche in the field of communication. In addition, instances from the lives of great Indian philosophers and leaders like Gautam Buddha, Adi Sankaracharya, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar are taken to strengthen the argument as well as to motivate and inspire millions of budding minds.

Written in the form of a dialogue between Raju and his aunt, Nandita the book makes a good attempt to help the learners overcome their fear of communication. A successful youth like R.K. Narayan's Raju (as in *The Guide*), this Raju too, is a source of inspiration for millions of rural youth. Nandita, a consultant and an instructor of communication skills narrates various episodes from the great Indian epics on the various utilitarian values inherent in these. She feels that she can motivate Raju to use them for his development of communication skills. No doubt Raju is an intelligent boy but he requires some motivation. Further he needs to learn some strategies to overcome stage fear, began actively participating in discussions and debates, making presentations etc. To illustrate all these, Nandita uses examples from the classics. For instance, she uses the story of Ganesh and Kartikeya. She begins thus:

"Once Lord Shiva wanted to give a rare fruit to his favourite son. Kartikeya or Ganesh, who should be proclaimed his favourite? The condition laid down for obtaining the fruit

was very simple. One had to go round the Universe-the heaven, earth, and the nether land, three times to get the fruit.

As soon as the race began Kartikeya set off on his wonderful peacock.

Ganesh had his tiny mouse to ride. He thought to himself 'How can my tiny mouse take my weight and compete with the peacock?' Then he hit upon an idea. He asked Shiva and Parvati, 'Aren't you considered to be the parents of the entire creation?' Shiva affirmed.

Ganesh prayed to Shiva and went round the primal parents chanting 'Om'

When each time Kartikeya completed one round of the universe he would see his brother Ganesh ahead of him.

Ganesh went round his parents three times. This means going round the Universe three times successfully. He got the fruit even before his brother returned after three hectic trips round the Universe!"(p,19)

From this story Raju learnt that Ganesh is smarter and cleverer than Kartikeyan. He (Ganesh) employed a good strategy and solved the problem promptly as he had the simple presence of mind. Raju got some ideas regarding problem-solving. He also understood there are different ways to approach a problem. Nandita continues: "let's take a look at Ganesh. He has large ears. It means we must carefully in order to gather the correct piece of information. A person can become a good speaker by being a good listener. I am sure you know Ganesh was the scribe for Vyasa's Mahabharata. None other could record the great epic Vyasa

dictated at a great speed and it had a very complex structure." (p,19)

So Raju understands a few things: 1.it is necessary to listen carefully to what is being said 2. one should think and decide on a strategy required to solve a problem or address an issue 3. this will lead to the development of self confidence at a later stage. Another instance is given when Lord Krishna says in the Bhagvat Gita: "perform your prescribed duty, for, doing so is better than not working." (p,19)

Raju learns that one does not solve problems by running away from them. Instead one boldly faces them and uses good strategies to find a solution. During the entire ten weeks Raju acquires almost all the sutras required for the development of communication skills. A great change comes over the boy who had initially been very timid. After ten weeks training from Nandita he changes; from 'a failure' he becomes 'a winner' who won the debate competition in the college.

Being innovative and creative in her approach Jayshree Mohanraj captures the essence of the 'ancient wisdom' and its role in the development of 'modern communication'. The title is apt and catchy as it conveys the focus of communication strategies in letter and spirit. The illustrations enrich the content of the book by providing adequate strength to the topics discussed.

REFERENCE:

Narayan,R.K., (1958): *The Guide*, Chennai, Indian Thought Publications.