

# Reimagining Modern Management through Indian Knowledge Systems

Deepa Singh

Assistant Professor, Department of Business Management and Entrepreneurship, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Avadh University,  
Uttar Pradesh, India  
Email: daissey.singh@gmail.com

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The paper aims to investigate how Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) can contribute to reimagining modern management by integrating ethical principles, sustainable decision-making practices, holistic leadership approaches and indigenous philosophies. Modern organisations are facing challenges of technological disruptions, ethical uncertainty, employee disengagement, and short-term performance orientation. These issues are demanding that modern management look into approaches that are beyond economic purposes to bring about organisational success.

**Methodology:** The conceptual design of the study was qualitative, and 14 secondary academic sources published between 2024 and 2026 were reviewed. Defined inclusion criteria were used to select relevant literature, which was then analysed using manual thematic coding. Six themes were analysed and paralleled with modern management concepts.

**Results/ Analysis:** The analysis of the research has stated that IKS is able to provide a significant understanding of self-management, ethical leadership, stakeholder orientation and employee well-being, and will support sustainable organisational development and a responsible decision-making process. These concepts are derived from Karma Yoga, Dharma, Sattva, collective welfare, self-discipline and holistic development that can complement modern approaches, transformational leadership and sustainable management.

**Originality:** The research paper has contributed to the understanding of management scholarship by positioning IKS not as a cultural or historical framework but as a potential contemporary framework for understanding managerial knowledge. Evidence-based modern management is contextually developed with Indian wisdom to bring about human-centricity, ethical, resilient and sustainable organisations.

## Keywords

Dharma, Ethical Leadership, Indian Knowledge Systems, Indian Philosophy, Karma Yoga, Modern Management, Organisational Behaviour and Sustainability.

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## INTRODUCTION

Modern management is influenced by Western Philosophies that primarily emphasise rational decision-making, financial performance, productivity, efficiency, and competition. These approaches might lead to organisational development, but within a complex environment that is impacted by environmental uncertainty, employee well-being concerns, globalisation, technological disruptions and growing expectations of ethical corporate behaviour [1]. To combat these, modern organisations require management philosophies by integrating economic performance with human, environmental, and social considerations.

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) provide a rich tradition that amalgamates governance, philosophy, psychology, ethics, economics, education and social responsibility. The organisations need to treat organisational success not only as financial outcomes, but also to balance Indian philosophical traditions with social responsibility, collective welfare and individual development [2]. The integration of concepts such as **Karma Yoga** (selfless action), **Sattva** (clarity and harmony), **Dharma** (ethical duty), **Lokasangraha** (welfare and maintenance of social order) and self-discipline is quintessential for contemporary managers. For instance, the

Bhagavad Gita mainly emphasises disciplined performance, detachment from excessive attachment and responsible action. Arthashastra provides an understanding of responsibility, administration, strategic decision-making and governance. The profiles of contemporary theories such as stakeholder management, sustainable development, ethical leadership and transformational leadership can be interpreted.

The main implication of the paper is to explore how IKS helps in re-imagining modern management and its argument that it will not replace contemporary management science, but it can complement it with a stronger emphasis.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

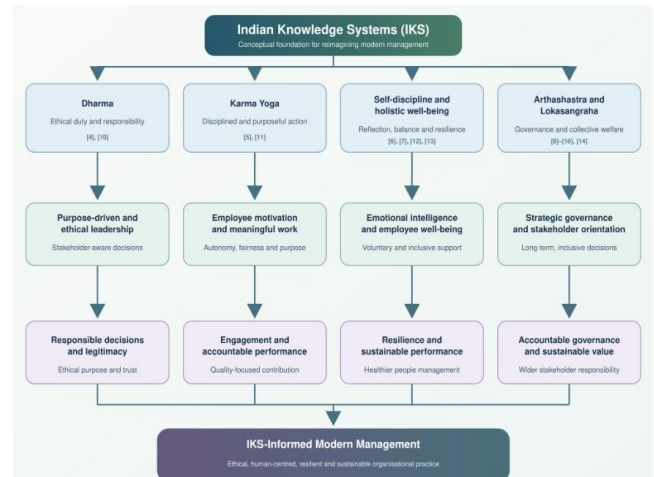
Indian Knowledge Systems represent knowledge that has been developed through centuries of scientific, social, philosophical and cultural inquiry [3]. The discussion around IKS has the potential to explain the understanding of leadership, organisational behaviour, education and management. These approaches have distinguished between professional performance and personal values, and in Indian philosophical traditions, consideration of self-development, ethical conduct and social responsibility are connected to each other and represent the dimensions of human activities.

One of the important concepts that is provided in Management Theory is based on Dharma [4], provides the argument that Dharma is understood as appropriate conduct, ethical responsibility and duty. Within the context of organisation management, the **Dharma principle** encourages the manager not only to see what is legally or profitably permissible but also to understand the ethical appropriateness.

This study has highlighted that **Karma Yoga**, as articulated in the Bhagavad Gita, provides understanding of important managerial insights. Karma Yoga pinpoints that committed action cannot go without excessive attachment to outcomes and personal rewards. In the organisational context, it is observed that Karma Yoga is dependent on a performance culture that shows relevance to excellence, intrinsic motivation and responsibilities rather than sole dependence on monetary incentives. The complementation of contemporary theories of meaningful work and intrinsic motivation is important within the organisational context in the contemporary business environment [5].

This study has stated that Indian philosophical understanding looks into the significant arguments related to leadership. The authors have argued that leadership is only associated with ethical conduct, responsibility, intrinsic motivation, wisdom and self-control. Bhagavad Gita mainly emphasises leadership by illustration of personal examples that resonate with authentic and transformational leadership theories [6]. The behaviour of leaders influences the followers, making emotional discipline and personal integrity become an important part of managerial capacities. [7], from the understanding of Indian Knowledge Systems, have stated that the behaviour of leaders mainly influences employee well-being and brings about organisational success.

The **Arthashastra** and Kautilya's knowledge, have shown that it is one of the important sources that provides Management-related knowledge. The subject discusses strategy, resource management, governance, administration and organisational control and provides systematic approaches that existed in the management principles and organisational control within the ancient Indian intellectual traditions. The historical context of history mostly differs from contemporary organisations, as the selected principles regarding information, strategic planning, governance and accountability remain conceptually related. The relevance of IKS provides a holistic understanding of employee well-being. Meditation, yoga and mental discipline can help in developing contemporary organisational approaches that can increase psychological well-being, mindfulness and stress management. The concept of **Lokasangraha** is provided by Ali [8]. In the wisdom of IKS, they have stated that cohesion and welfare of society is a foundational understanding that increases wider social responsibility with organisational performance [9].



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework**  
**Source:** Self-developed

The framework demonstrates that the basic IKS concepts are perceived as managerial mechanisms and tied to six modern management fields. Their integration promotes an IKS-inspired management strategy, which integrates ethical intent, individual self-control, worker welfare and responsibility and corporate welfare. The anticipated results will be responsible decisions, resilience, value to stakeholders and organisational sustainability.

## METHODOLOGY

The conceptual design of the study has been qualitative using the secondary sources only. The reviewed corpus included the 14 scholarly texts, which are included in the reference list, and which were published in 2024-2026. The sources were identified with the help of Google Scholar and reference-list search with the help of such combinations of variables as Indian Knowledge Systems, Dharma, Karma Yoga, Arthashastra, leadership, organisational behaviour, governance and sustainability. English-language sources were added as long as they explored IKS and how it applied to management, leadership, employee well-being, social responsibility or other organisational issues. Mainstream, inaccessible and contextually irrelevant materials were eliminated.

Manual thematic analysis was used to analyse the selected literature. The statements that were relevant were identified, coded on the concept of IKS as was discussed in the book and its interpretation by the managers and the suggested implication to the organisation. Connected codes were grouped into the six themes, which are ethical leadership, employee motivation, self-management, holistic well-being, strategic governance and stakeholder responsibility. All themes were matched to modern concept of management such as transformational leadership, stakeholder theory and sustainable management. The interpretations were periodically tested by the chosen sources to ensure the conceptual consistency and not to consider the historically framed Indian concepts direct analogies of modern theories.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis created six related themes that describe how IKS can be used as a complement to modern management. These are the findings of a conceptual synthesis of the literature reviewed, rather than evidence from organisations. All themes thus point to a possible contribution that needs to be applied in context and validated later.

### Purpose-driven and Ethical Leadership

The literature that has been reviewed presents Dharma as a responsibility, proper behaviour and actions that are right whether the action is legal or not. It can be used in management to prompt managers to consider whether their decisions are ethically justifiable, as opposed to being legal, efficient or profitable [4]. This is in line with responsible leadership where organisations are required to strike a balance between shareholder pressures, the welfare of the employees, customer concerns and environmental requirements. However, Dharma cannot be used as a definite managerial rule, as this concept is defined by the decision and the organisational situation [10]. It contributes by providing a reflective framework where managers need to take into account the stakeholders who are affected, the long-term implications and the moral obligations. It can thus reinforce intentional choices as it works together with official administration, professionalism and evidence-based management.

### Employee Motivation and Karma Yoga

Karma Yoga was developed as a system of disciplined action, personal commitment and decreased attachment to individual gains. It offers an alternative to the systems that are characterised by bonuses, promotions and competitive goals. Though extrinsic incentives can guide effort, greater reliance might cause employees to be tunnel-visioned with regard to individual accomplishments that can be measured. Karma Yoga rather appreciates the quality, meaning and accountability of work [5]. It is more applicable when organisations offer significant roles, autonomy, equitable recognition and goals [11]. However, this process of detachment should not mean a lack of interest in work or compliance with an unjust situation. The concept is a supplement to intrinsic-motivation strategies where personal discipline is linked to the contribution to the group, but performance controls are once again needed to ensure accountability.

### Emotional Intelligence and Self-management

The third theme was self-awareness and mental discipline, and emotional control. These abilities are important since managers make decisions when they are under pressure, uncertainty and interpersonal conflict [6]. Reflective yoga and meditation practices can aid individuals in being aware of emotional responses, minimising impulsive responses and staying focused [7]. This meaning parallels emotional intelligence, mindful leadership and resilience. The structural

issues like heavy workloads, inadequate employment or weak supervision, however, cannot be resolved by individual practices. They are as valuable as they are voluntary, inclusive and evidence-informed implementation [12]. The role of IKS thus plays at the self-management level to help in reflection and emotional regulation, but organisational policies need to reflect the broader causes of stress and conflict.

### Holistic well-being of Employees

Well-being is introduced in the literature as physical, psychological, intellectual, ethical and social development. This multidimensional perspective questions the reduction of employees to a productive resource and relates sustainable performance to meaningful work, positive relations, resilience and health [7]. Three ways organisations can demonstrate these principles include balanced workloads, employee assistance, development opportunities and voluntary mindfulness or yoga programmes [8]. Nonetheless, working conditions are against healthy work, which cannot be offset by purely wellness activities. A mindful IKS-based approach has to be able to bridge the gap between individual practice and equitable policy, psychological safety, and job design [13]. The theme so expands employee-well-being models with ethical and reflective aspects whilst acknowledging that there is a shared responsibility between employees, managers and organisational systems.

### Strategic Thinking and Governance

Another theme related to IKS is planning, information utilisation, allocation of resources, accountability and risk anticipation. Exegeses of the Arthashastra suggest that in Indian intellectual circles there was an awareness of governance and strategic control [9]. These concepts are related to contemporary strategic management, especially to the integration of credible information, both situational judgement and long-term strategy. Nevertheless, the principles which were created to be used in ancient political administration cannot be applied directly to corporations [14]. Jurisdictional disparities in law, rights and roles of stakeholders, institutions and organisational purpose need to be critically adapted. The theme rather expands strategic thinking by channelling the managerial focus to the quality of governance, the emerging risks and long-term effects. IKS is thus an intellectual resource for comparison as opposed to substituting the contemporary analytical tools.

### Social Responsibility and Stakeholder Orientation

The final theme was based on Lokasangraha, which was the aim of the community. It represents a change in organisational responsibility, which focuses not on profit maximisation of the business, but rather on the business's impacts on employees, communities, society and the natural environment [8]. This aligns with the theory of stakeholder and sustainable management, with an ethical obligation to societal unity and the common good. The synthesis facilitates a management model between purpose and people,

performance and planet, society and personal leadership [10]. These dimensions are interrelated, as purpose informs the decision, leadership influences behaviour, and responsible performance contributes to broader stakeholder performance. However, the issue of values is not enough to solve conflicting stakeholder interests. There should be clear priorities, consultations and quantifiable responsibility. Lokasangraha has the potential to enhance the ethical basis of stakeholder management, and contemporary governance practices can operationalise it.

## CONCLUSION

From the above understanding, it can be stated that Indian Knowledge Systems provide a better understanding for reimagining modern management systems. The concepts of Lokasangraha, self-discipline, Dharma, Karma Yoga and holistic well-being provide an alternative understanding of motivation, leadership, organisational responsibility and the decision-making process. These organisational principles are mostly relevant in a time when organisations are able to address ethical conduct, employee well-being, social responsibility, sustainability, and financial performance and productivity. The chicken leadership part is to be introduced within the strategic decision-making of the organisation, and this helps in the development of emotional discipline with self-awareness that can strengthen the effectiveness of leadership.

The understanding of IKS critical interpretation is seen, and it is seen that ancient concepts cannot be uncritically developed into the contemporary organisation because these are culturally, historically and institutionally different contexts. The research needs to understand, through future empirical studies, how these IKS-inspired management practices can impact the ethical decision-making process, employee engagement, organisational sustainability, and long-term performance of the organisations. These concepts are derived from Karma Yoga, Dharma, Sattva, collective welfare, self-discipline and holistic development that can complement modern approaches, transformational leadership and sustainable management.

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