



Original Research Paper

Revitalizing Modern Management: A Framework for Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into Corporate Governance and Leadership

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Abstract

In today's fiercely competitive landscape, businesses are grappling with a "crisis of purpose"—burnout rates are soaring, quiet quitting is prevalent, and the emphasis on short-term quarterly gains often undermines long-term viability. Global economies are encountering unusual threats that span the social, economic, and environmental aspects of sustainability. Classical Indian wisdom, known as Sanaātana Dharma, signifies that its significance transcends spatial and temporal boundaries and is universally applicable. Consequently, the ancient Indian ethos can aid contemporary businesses in crafting sustainable management models. Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) promote harmony between the individual and the group by envisioning well-being for entire communities and ecosystems. The core of the IKS is this integrative vision, which offers a unified, multifaceted approach that is extremely pertinent to today's organizational and management difficulties. Incorporating the Indian Knowledge System provides a framework to address this by viewing the organization as a living entity rather than a mere machine, offering a human-centered model for the industrial era. This study delves into the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)—particularly the principles of Dharma (Ethics), Karmayoga (Selfless Action), and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (Universal Interconnectedness)—into modern business practices.

The primary focus of this study is a novel attempt to map Triguna theory to Human Resource Management and the Trusteeship model to Corporate Social Responsibility, thereby proposing a distinct 'Sattvic' leadership paradigm that emphasizes holistic well-being and ethical governance beyond current models and emphasize on “Sarve Jana Sukhinobhavanthu

Introduction

Management is a body of knowledge that enables entities to deal with a multitude of situations involving people, processes, and the environment to ensure that work is done efficiently to deliver goods and services useful to society. Good management must result in greater satisfaction for all stakeholders. The core principle is to do good work in the most efficient manner (karma yoga).

Modern business management is currently facing a multitude of challenges and sustaining business in the competitive and fast-changing world is difficult unless strategies are in place. With the fast-changing business landscape, from technological advancements and globalization to regulatory changes and shifting consumer expectations, organizations must constantly innovate and adapt for their existence.

Digital impact: Integration of technology in operational efficiency, enhancing customer experience, cost reduction, and driving growth.

Globalization: Today's dynamic and volatile environments have increased the challenges in terms of competition, compliance to quality standards, supply chain complexities, and international trade expectations.

Regulatory Compliance and Business Ethics: Businesses today operate in an environment where regulations, government policies, and geopolitical conditions are constantly changing. Organizations must stay compliant with legal requirements while maintaining high ethical standards. At the same time, global economic uncertainties can significantly affect operations, investments, and long-term planning.

Shift in Consumer Expectations: Consumer preferences are evolving rapidly due to technological advancements and increased access to information. Modern customers expect personalized experiences, transparency in business practices, and a strong commitment to sustainability. Companies that fail to meet these expectations risk losing customer trust and market relevance.

Recruitment and Talent Management Challenges: While technology and automation have reduced the need for manpower in some areas, attracting and retaining skilled talent remains a major challenge. Organizations compete for employees with specialized skills, and continuous training and upskilling are essential to keep pace with technological changes and industry demands.

Building Resilient Teams: Organizations often face difficulties when individual aspirations

and priorities differ from team or organizational objectives. Managers and leaders must foster collaboration, align goals, and create a supportive work culture to build resilient, high-performing teams capable of handling uncertainty and change.

The Core Conflict: Efficiency vs. Adaptability: Many organizations struggle to balance operational efficiency with the need for flexibility. A common challenge arises when management attempts to address modern business problems using outdated processes and systems—similar to trying to fly a supersonic jet with the navigation charts of a steamship. Success requires adapting organizational structures and practices to match the speed and complexity of the current environment.

Managing the Velocity of Change: The pace of change in today's business world is unprecedented. However, traditional hierarchical structures often slow decision-making and delay the implementation of new policies or strategies. Organizations need more agile and responsive systems that enable faster adaptation to market shifts, technological innovations, and emerging challenges.

Need for the study

These challenges provide opportunities to explore the ancient Indian Knowledge System to find solutions and guide businesses toward success and sustenance. The concepts of Dharma (Ethics), Karmayoga (Selfless Action), and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (Universal Interconnectedness) from Indian Knowledge Systems can be integrated into contemporary business frameworks to foster a more sustainable and human-centric management model for Corporate Social Responsibility.

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) promote harmony between the individual and the group by envisioning well-being for entire communities and ecosystems. The core of the IKS is this integrative vision, which offers a unified, multifaceted approach that is extremely pertinent to today's organizational and management difficulties. The holistic approach described in scriptures such as the Vedas, Buddhist texts, and Kautilya's Artha shastra established the principles of sustainability centuries ago. Bhagavad Gita, which is regarded as the quintessence of the Vedas, highlights numerous lessons on sustainability that can help businesses tackle the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world. While Western management often focuses on short-term gains and competitive advantage, IKS emphasizes ethical foundations (*dharma*), sustainability, and the interconnectedness of all stakeholders (1).

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) bring together diverse disciplines such as philosophy, healthcare, ecology, linguistics, governance, and aesthetics, offering an integrated approach to understanding

human life and society. Rooted in ethical values, inclusivity, and sustainability, IKS promotes balanced and responsible growth. Its time-tested principles and self-development practices provide valuable guidance for resilient leadership, effective decision-making, and purpose-driven organizations. In an era where many management models prioritize material success, IKS offers a meaningful alternative by emphasizing harmony, social responsibility, and long-term well-being.

Review of Literature

Ancient Indian wisdom serves as a rich source of insights for contemporary management thought. The values and principles embedded in texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Shrimad Bhagavad Gita continue to influence leadership, decision-making, and organizational behavior. As modern management plays a central role in the functioning of organizations and corporate institutions, scholars increasingly recognize the relevance of these ancient teachings in addressing contemporary business challenges.

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) represent a structured and comprehensive body of knowledge that evolved in the Indian subcontinent across domains including governance, economics, ethics, medicine, mathematics, strategy, and leadership. Unlike many modern management theories that often examine concepts in isolation, IKS adopts a holistic perspective in which human behavior, decision-making, and societal outcomes are interconnected. Classical works such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Arthashastra, and Dharmashastras are not merely philosophical texts but practical guides that offer actionable principles for governance, administration, and ethical conduct.

Research suggests that indigenous knowledge systems have long contributed to societal resilience, with evidence from the 1970s indicating their role in strengthening disaster preparedness and community adaptability.(2) More recently, policymakers and management practitioners have begun exploring ways to integrate IKS into modern planning and decision-making processes.(3) The incorporation of Indian Knowledge Systems into management education can foster a more holistic, inclusive, and culturally grounded approach to leadership and organizational development.

Ancient Indian literature, ranging from the Jataka Tales to the Aranyakas, provides timeless lessons for leadership development. These texts emphasize ethical decision-making, self-

discipline, emotional intelligence, and strategic adaptability. By drawing upon such diverse sources of wisdom, future managers can develop a balanced leadership style that prioritizes stakeholder welfare, sustainability, and long-term value creation.

In the field of leadership and management, IKS places greater emphasis on responsibility than authority, balance rather than dominance, and sustainable success over short-term gains. Organizations are viewed not as mechanical structures but as living systems composed of interconnected individuals and relationships. Understanding these principles enables leaders to adopt governance and management practices that are ethical, context-sensitive, and aligned with broader societal needs rather than focusing solely on profit maximization.

The ancient Gurukul system further illustrates the educational philosophy of IKS. Based on personalized mentorship, experiential learning, and character development, the Gurukul model nurtured individuals capable of applying knowledge with wisdom and integrity. It combined theoretical understanding with practical application, preparing learners to address complex societal challenges with discernment, compassion, and cultural awareness. Reimagining the Gurukul approach in the context of modern business education could help create multidisciplinary learning environments that not only promote academic excellence but also cultivate morally grounded, emotionally resilient, and socially responsible leaders. (4)

Shrimad Bhagavad Gita is the soul of modern management principles for bringing harmony and cohesiveness and enhancing efficiency in the organization. The knowledge of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita enlightens human beings to explore their weaknesses and convert them into strengths, perform all the work assigned to them, share responsibilities, build good teams, and meet challenges at the workplace.

Vedic literature and Indian philosophies have attracted several scholars to research into the depth of the ancient Indian knowledge wherein kings and emperors governed the country through sheer administration and visionary leadership for betterment of the people and the nation with sustainable practices for economic progress. Research work on Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad-Gita, Ramayana, and Kautilya's Arthashastra (*The Science of Wealth* or *The Science of Power*) have been conducted in the Indian setting by scholars including Chakraborty (1993, 1995, 1999, 2000, 2008, 2017) (5-10), Sharma (1996, 1998, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2007, 2015)(11-18), Krishnan (2001, 2003)(19,20), Kejriwal and Krishnan (2004)(21), Roka (2006)(22), Satpathy (2006, 2007)(23,24),

Muniapan (2006, 2007, 2009)(25-27), Parashar (2008) (28), Satpathy and Muniapan (2008)(29), and Muniapan and Dass (2008, 2009) (30,31). Though substantial in terms of research, compared to the extent these studies were similar to observing the tip of the iceberg with a vast knowledge still uncovered and hidden inside the extensive body of literature in India. Several renowned authors have provided valuable insights into the integration of IKS into modern management practices, and research is still ongoing as modern business management is forever evolving with new dimensions, posing new challenges.

Professor Sitangshu Kumar Chakraborty (popularly known as Professor S. K. Chakraborty) in his scholarly work on human value-oriented management practices has made significant contributions to linking management knowledge and practices to classical Indian ethos and Vedantic wisdom. He founded the Management Centre for Human Values at IIM Calcutta, promoting ethical decision-making and

sustainable business practices. His teachings and writings have significantly influenced modern management by advocating the balance between spirituality and professional success. (32,33)

CK Prahalad's groundbreaking concept, #The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid (34), has reshaped global business forever. The concept considers the four billion underserved individuals worldwide as not just recipients of aid but partners in progress, capable of driving innovation and fueling economic growth. Prahalad's ideas empowered businesses to view inclusivity as profitability and corporate rethink their strategies. The success story of Karsanbhai Patel's humble Nirma revolution to global level was not just about selling products—it was about uplifting communities and ensuring no one is left behind. While modern, it echoes the IKS value of "Sarvodaya" (upliftment of all).

Excerpts from the ancient scripts such as ideas from the Kautilya's Artha Shastra (35) when applied to modern business in the contemporary context provide stable governance models at various levels of management:



Figure 1: Levels of management and governance model.

This model proposed by Kautilya in ancient times is relevant even in contemporary context. Kautilya's Artha shastra has academic literature for economic, political, social, international relations, and legal thought (36). During the last two decades, its application to modern management and leadership contexts has also received scholarly attention (e.g., Sharma (1994) (37) Bansal, (2003) (38); Pillai (2010, 2013) (39,40). With its relevance in contemporary world, Kautilya's Artha shastra can be considered as a distinctive Indian contribution to management, leadership, and governance.

Verma (2009) in his study on Values-based management (41) examined the applicability of Gandhi's concepts to leadership and management. A thorough investigation into the applicability of

Gandhian philosophy to modern management systems was conducted by Srivastava (2010) (42). The concept of "Indian Management" has led to the application of Gandhian management, leadership, and governance principles in a variety of new fields, including corporate social responsibility (CSR), corporate governance, social entrepreneurship, social enterprise development, sustainability, and spirituality in management and society.

Modi's catchphrase, 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas' model of governance aims at collective development through collective energy which is built on his journey from grassroots to global routes. His "Man Ki Baat" best serves as a 'reach out model' to take the Government to the people stating that the government is not an empire but a facilitator and an

umpire. This indicates a paradigm shift from the 'empire model' to the 'umpire model' in Good Governance. These ideas along with the focus on 'Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah ..' (Happiness for all) provide a new intellectual foundation for sustainable and holistic development at the national and global levels. (43)

The principles of honesty, integrity, respect, and compassion are the foundations for the Indian value system and the epic's themes of duty, righteousness, devotion, and compassion have been a guiding force for generations, shaping the moral and ethical fabric of Indian society. (44)

The Ramayana teaches us about the importance of integrity, fairness, accountability, empathy, respect, and ethics—fundamental principles of ethical management. The management principles which are taught in Ramayana are setting clear objectives, strategic planning, teamwork, motivation, conflict resolution, ethics and values. Corporate companies like Infosys, TATA group have incorporated teachings of Ramayan into its management principles. (45)

Objectives of the study:

Identify practices in Indian Knowledge Systems that can provide solutions to modern business problems.

Analyse how integrating ancient wisdom with modern management practices can benefit organizations.

Develop a conceptual framework integrating IKS in modern business organizations in areas such as Organizational structure, Leadership, Human Resource Management, Marketing, Operations, and Innovation.

Methodology:

This qualitative study is based upon secondary data-based research methodology. Data is obtained from review of existing literature, regulations and policy, article publications, empirical studies and government report available in open access databases. The review of literature with key words such as IKS, modern management, challenges yielded substantial articles which form the basis for this study.

Results and discussion:

The dominant business paradigm continues to be shaped by industrial-era management models that prioritize efficiency, short-term profitability, and linear approaches to problem-solving. While these frameworks have

contributed significantly to economic growth, they often overlook broader human, social, and environmental dimensions of organizational life. As a result, many organizations struggle to nurture intrinsic motivation, recognize interconnectedness among stakeholders, and adapt effectively to rapidly changing environments. Corporate success is frequently measured through financial indicators alone, leaving little room for a deeper purpose that aligns organizational goals with societal well-being and human development.

A major limitation of contemporary management thought is its tendency to treat the human element as secondary to operational and financial objectives. This narrow focus can contribute to toxic leadership practices, fragmented decision-making, and organizational cultures driven by short-term gains rather than long-term value creation. Although modern organizations increasingly rely on data analytics and performance metrics, they often underemphasize qualities such as intuition, emotional intelligence, creativity, and intrinsic motivation. The result is a mechanistic and, in many cases, unsustainable corporate environment that fails to foster meaning, engagement, and a sense of purpose among employees—factors that are increasingly recognized as critical to long-term organizational success.

In many contemporary organizations, decision-making tends to be reactive, incentive systems are frequently misaligned with broader organizational objectives, and ethics are often viewed as compliance requirements rather than strategic assets. In this context, leadership informed by Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) offers a valuable alternative. Rather than focusing solely on roles and hierarchies, IKS adopts a systems-oriented perspective in which authority is inseparable from responsibility, growth is evaluated in terms of its societal impact, and decisions are guided by long-term consequences. The enduring relevance of Kautilya's Arthashastra lies in its ability to address challenges that continue to affect modern organizations, including unchecked authority, excessive focus on short-term outcomes, and weak accountability mechanisms.

The potential contribution of Indian Knowledge Systems to management lies in their ability to address contemporary organizational shortcomings through a holistic, ethical, and interconnected worldview. IKS integrates ethics, sustainability, and long-term thinking into the core of management practice. Concepts such as *Swadharma* (individual purpose and duty), the spirit of *Yajna* (selfless contribution for collective welfare), and *Poornatvam* (wholeness and completeness) provide a foundation for more balanced and purpose-driven leadership.

Unlike many conventional management models that rely heavily on external controls and extrinsic rewards, IKS-based approaches encourage intrinsic motivation, self-awareness, and values-based leadership.

Adopting an IKS-inspired management framework requires a shift from a narrow profit-centric orientation toward a Dharmic business model that considers the interests of all stakeholders, including employees, customers, investors, society, and the natural environment.

Such a transformation involves cultivating Dharmic leadership, developing successful organizational models rooted in IKS principles, and identifying sectors where these ideas can be most effectively applied, such as healthcare, education, social enterprises, and sustainability-driven industries. By integrating ancient wisdom with contemporary management practices, organizations can create more resilient, ethical, and purpose-driven systems that generate both economic and societal value.

Table 1: Contemporary management and IKS

Feature	Contemporary Management	IKS-Informed Leadership
Driver	Extrinsic (Rewards/Punishment)	Intrinsic (<i>Swadharma</i> & Purpose)
Time Horizon	Short-term (Quarterly Profits)	Long-term (Generational Impact)
Ethics	Compliance Checklist	<i>Dharma</i> (Inherent Duty/Righteousness)
Success Metric	Financial ROI / Efficiency	<i>Poornatvam</i> (Wholeness/Well-being)
View of People	Human Resources (Capital)	Holistic Beings (Potential & Spirit)

Businesses which operate on the foundation of IKS usually adopt three classical concepts:

Dharma (Ethics/Righteousness): Serve the society through business and not just the shareholders.

Koshtha (Holistic Accounting): Focus on environmental and social health rather than

balance sheet.

Lokasangraha (Universal Welfare): Leadership evolves more than being an owner to a trustee of resources.

IKS can drive transformation with five critical dimensions as depicted in the below diagram:

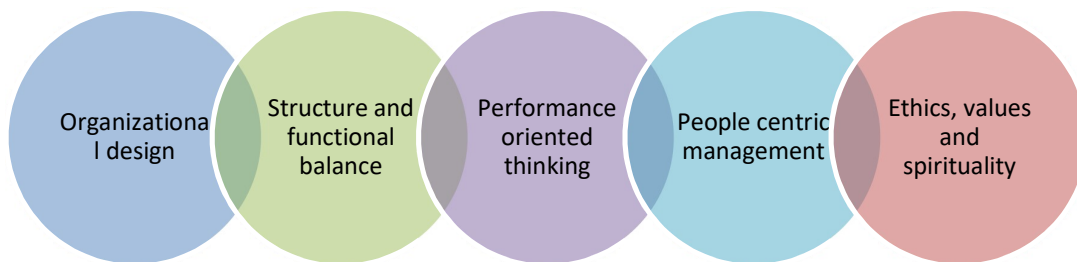


Figure 2: Five dimensions for transformation.

Modern organizations that operate without a Dharmic framework often face challenges such as fragile leadership, declining stakeholder trust, ethical dilemmas, and a short-term focus that can undermine long-term sustainability. The absence of a strong value-based foundation may lead to decisions driven primarily by immediate gains rather than enduring organizational and societal well-being.

By integrating principles from Indian

Knowledge Systems (IKS) into management education and practice, organizations can cultivate a culture of ethical decision-making that is both sustainable and purpose-driven. IKS promotes leadership grounded in self-awareness, responsibility, and service, enabling leaders to navigate complexity with resilience and integrity. Furthermore, its emphasis on Dharma, collective welfare, and personal alignment with purpose helps restore meaning in the workplace, fostering greater

employee engagement, stakeholder trust, and long-term organizational success.

1. Structure of an Organisation: A Living, Evolving System (Vasudaiva Kutumbakam)

In contrast to rigid and hierarchical organizational models, Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) offer a more holistic and adaptive approach to management. Drawing on the Panchakosha framework, IKS helps organizations build resilient and dynamic ecosystems that integrate strategy, operations, knowledge, innovation, and purpose into a unified whole.

Swami Vivekananda, one of India's most influential thinkers, emphasized self-reliance, perseverance, and empowerment. His famous call, "*Arise, awake, and stop not until the goal is reached*," continues to inspire individuals and organizations alike. This spirit of determination serves as a valuable management principle, encouraging leaders to cultivate resilience, commitment, and a growth-oriented mindset within their teams.

IKS also redefines business success by embedding the Purusharthas—Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha—into organizational objectives. This approach aligns profitability with social responsibility and long-term sustainability. It reflects the Vedic philosophy of "*Saha Nau Avatu*" (may we be protected together, nourished together, and prosper together), promoting collaboration, shared growth, and collective well-being.

Organizations such as Infosys have embraced this collaborative spirit by fostering teamwork, mutual respect, and shared purpose. By integrating values that resonate with IKS principles, they have nurtured work environments where collective success takes precedence over individual achievement.

Another key aspect of IKS is its emphasis on decentralized leadership and distributed authority. Rather than relying solely on centralized control, organizations can enhance agility, accountability, and innovation by empowering individuals at every level. Inspired by Indic traditions of mentorship and participative governance, this approach builds trust-based leadership. Encouraging personal reflection and alignment with one's *Swadharma* enables employees to lead with authenticity, clarity, and intrinsic motivation.

In practice, this translates into a strong focus on continuous learning and capability development. Organizations such as HCL Technologies have invested in learning ecosystems that encourage innovation, skill enhancement, and professional growth, preparing

employees to thrive in a rapidly changing business environment.

The principles of IKS are also reflected in the Bhagavad Gita's timeless teaching: "*Karmanye vadhikaraste ma phaleshu kadachana*"—"You have the right to perform your duties, but not to the fruits of your actions." This verse highlights the importance of focusing on effort, commitment, and excellence rather than becoming overly attached to outcomes.

In the modern corporate context, this philosophy encourages organizations to prioritize ethical conduct, dedication, and long-term value creation over short-term gains. The Tata Group exemplifies this principle through its strong commitment to ethics, social responsibility, and nation-building. Its legacy demonstrates that true success is measured not only by financial performance but also by the positive impact an organization creates for society.

2. Leadership: The Sage- leadership (The Rajarshi Leader)

True leadership emerges not from positional authority but from self-awareness and inner mastery, a concept deeply rooted in the Indian tradition of *Atman* (self) realization. The *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita* highlights essential leadership qualities such as duty, discipline, courage, compassion, humility, and self-control. Effective leaders must first understand themselves—their values, strengths, limitations, and physical and psychological conditions—before they can successfully guide others.

Communication is another cornerstone of leadership. The ability to communicate with honesty, empathy, and respect fosters trust and strengthens relationships within an organization. Leaders who articulate a compelling vision and inspire others toward shared goals create a sense of purpose and collective commitment, enabling teams to perform at their highest potential.

Indian Knowledge Systems offer a rich foundation for leadership development. The *Bhagavad Gita* emphasizes selfless service (*Nishkama Karma*), resilience, and a duty-oriented approach to leadership. It advocates decision-making that prioritizes the welfare of both the organization and its people rather than narrow self-interest. Similarly, the *Arthashastra* provides practical insights into governance, strategic thinking, economic stability, and ethical administration, while the *Upanishads* cultivate self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and wisdom—qualities that are indispensable for leaders navigating today's complex and dynamic business environment.

Modern organizations can particularly benefit from the concept of the *Rajarshi* Leader—the Sage-Executive—often comparable to the idea of Level 5 Leadership. A *Rajarshi* (Raja = Leader; Rishi =

Sage) combines the ambition and determination required to achieve organizational excellence with the wisdom and detachment necessary to make ethical and balanced decisions. Such leaders prioritize long-term value creation, psychological safety, and employee well-being over the pressures of a relentless “hustle culture.” This reflects a shift from ego-centric leadership to ecosystem-centric leadership, where success is measured not only by individual achievement but also by the well-being of all stakeholders.

The Trusteeship model, popularized by Mahatma Gandhi and rooted in the teachings of the *Isha Upanishad*, further reinforces this perspective. It redefines the role of leaders from owners of resources to custodians of collective wealth and responsibility. By embracing trusteeship, organizations can move beyond the pursuit of short-term quarterly gains and focus instead on sustainable growth, ethical stewardship, and societal impact.

In today's globalized business landscape, organizations that value diversity, inclusion, and collaboration are often better positioned to innovate and adapt. Companies such as Accenture demonstrate the benefits of fostering diverse teams and inclusive work cultures, where varied perspectives contribute to creativity, problem-solving, and organizational resilience. Integrating these timeless principles of Indian wisdom with contemporary management practices can help cultivate leaders who are not only effective and successful but also ethical, purpose-driven, and socially responsible. (46)

3. Operations Management: Regenerative Business (Aparigraha):

Modern business focus on quality and doing more with less. The Lean concept is centered on the elimination of waste (*Muda*). In IKS, this mirrors the concept of Aparigraha (non-possessiveness/non-accumulation) and Kaushalam (skillfulness). Lean Philosophy focuses on value-added steps. Anything that doesn't add value to the customer is waste, while its IKS counterpart (*Aparigraha*) discourages the hoarding of resources, information, or excess inventory. It promotes a “lean” lifestyle and mindset, ensuring that only what is necessary is consumed. IKS encourages “Mindful Action,” where the worker’s focus is so high that errors naturally vanish.

Six Sigma is a data-driven methodology for eliminating defects, aiming for 99.99966% accuracy. In IKS, this level of perfection is the result of cultivating Sattva (the quality of balance, light, and precision). Six Sigma uses DMAIC whereas IKS counterpart Sattvic management

defines high variance in business (defects) is often seen as a result of *Tamas* (inertia/laziness) or *Rajas* (chaotic over-activity). Six Sigma fixes the *system* to get quality; IKS fixes the *individual's state of mind* to ensure quality is an inherent output.

Just-in-Time (JIT) production is a management philosophy that seeks to produce exactly what is needed, when it is needed, thereby minimizing waste and excess inventory. In the JIT framework, inventory is often viewed as a “mask” that conceals underlying inefficiencies and operational problems. While JIT emphasizes synchronization between production and demand, its philosophical counterpart in Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) can be found in the concept of *Ritu*—the natural order, rhythm, and timing that govern the universe.

Applying *Ritu* to business management involves aligning organizational activities with natural demand patterns, environmental cycles, and sustainable resource utilization rather than pursuing artificial or unlimited growth. Such an approach encourages businesses to respect ecological boundaries and recognize their interdependence with the environment. When the efficiency of JIT is integrated with the ecological wisdom of *Ritu*, organizations can move toward a model of regenerative business, where operational excellence is balanced with environmental stewardship and long-term sustainability.

Total Quality Management (TQM) is an organization-wide philosophy based on the principle that quality is everyone's responsibility. It seeks to create a culture of continuous improvement where every employee contributes to enhancing products, services, and processes. The IKS concept of *Swadharma*—one's inherent duty and responsibility—provides a deeper ethical foundation for this approach.

From an IKS perspective, organizational excellence emerges when individuals perform their professional responsibilities with sincerity, competence, and integrity. When employees adhere to their *Swadharma*, the collective *Dharma* of the organization is upheld, resulting in trust, accountability, and quality-driven performance. While conventional TQM systems often rely on external audits, compliance mechanisms, and performance metrics, the IKS framework emphasizes inner accountability, self-discipline, and *Atma-tripti* (inner satisfaction derived from fulfilling one's duty conscientiously). This internalized commitment to excellence creates a culture where quality becomes a matter of character rather than mere compliance.

Human Resource Management and the Triguna Theory

Human Resource Management (HRM) encompasses activities such as recruitment, training, performance evaluation, and career development. These functions require an understanding of employees' strengths, limitations, motivations, and potential for growth. Indian Knowledge Systems offer a unique perspective through the *Triguna* theory of the *Sāṃkhya* tradition (21), which categorizes human behavior into three fundamental qualities: *Sattva* (harmony, wisdom, and balance), *Rajas* (activity, ambition, and dynamism), and *Tamas* (inertia, resistance, and passivity). (47,48)

The Triguna framework provides a psychospiritual lens for understanding individual differences in behavior, motivation, decision-making, and ethical conduct. Rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach, organizations can use this framework to design roles, training programs, and leadership development initiatives that align with an individual's dominant tendencies and natural inclinations.

Employees exhibiting predominantly *Sattvic* qualities often demonstrate clarity of thought, ethical behavior, emotional stability, and collaborative leadership. Those influenced by *Rajasic* tendencies may excel in competitive, goal-oriented, and fast-paced environments but may also be susceptible to stress and excessive attachment to outcomes. Individuals with dominant *Tamasic* tendencies may require greater guidance, motivation, and developmental support to enhance engagement and performance.

Contemporary research has begun to validate the relevance of the Triguna model in organizational settings. Studies have found that *Sattva* is positively associated with psychological well-being, resilience, and life satisfaction, whereas excessive *Rajas* and *Tamas* are linked to stress, burnout, and reduced well-being. (49) Furthermore, evidence suggests that practices such as yoga, meditation, and mindfulness can cultivate *Sattvic* qualities, thereby enhancing emotional balance, workplace effectiveness, and overall employee flourishing.

By integrating the Triguna framework into modern HRM practices, organizations can move beyond purely competency-based assessments and adopt a more holistic approach to talent management—one that recognizes the interconnected dimensions of personality, well-being, ethics, and professional development. (50)

a. *Sattva* Guna (Strategic Thinker-Creativity); suitable for R&D, Ethics/Compliance, Strategy, Mentorship roles

b. *Rajas* Guna (The High-Performer-

Activity); suitable for Sales, Business Development, Project Management, Start-up environments.

c. *Tamas* Guna (The Support-Inertia) - lack of energy suitable for Quality Control, Bookkeeping, Data Entry, Safety Officers.

The Ideal Team Mix would be to have-

Sattvic Leader: To set the vision and keep the team ethical.

Rajasic Engines: To set deadlines and drive market growth.

Tamasic Anchors: To establish stability and stay grounded for routine operations.

Contemporary Human Resource Management often views employees primarily as organizational resources or human capital. In contrast, Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) advocate a more holistic perspective that recognizes employees as complete human beings whose well-being, purpose, and inner development are integral to organizational success. From this viewpoint, the role of HR extends beyond workforce management to the cultivation of *Sattva*—the qualities of balance, clarity, wisdom, and harmony—within the organization. Such an approach seeks to reduce the excessive stress and restlessness associated with *Rajas* while addressing the stagnation and disengagement linked to *Tamas*.(51)

The *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita* provides valuable insights into individual and collective performance through the concepts of *Karma* and *Dharma*. *Karma* refers to an individual's actions and responsibilities, encouraging excellence in personal performance, while *Dharma* emphasizes one's obligations toward the larger group, organization, and society. Together, these principles foster a workforce that is both individually competent and collectively responsible. The Gita further highlights three enduring management outcomes—success, prosperity, and happiness—suggesting that organizational achievement should encompass not only economic performance but also human well-being and fulfillment.

By harmonizing the dynamics of the *Trigunas* with the balance embodied in the *Panchamahabhutas* (the five fundamental elements of nature), organizations can move beyond transactional relationships and cultivate ecosystems of conscious excellence. Such workplaces encourage holistic growth, ethical conduct, resilience, and meaningful engagement.

Modern organizations are increasingly challenged by burnout, disengagement, and a loss of purpose among employees. IKS offers several frameworks that can help address these concerns. *Ananda Mimamsa* (the study of joy) emphasizes the pursuit of lasting fulfillment rather than temporary satisfaction. The *Brahma Viharas*—compassion

(*Karuna*), loving-kindness (*Maitri*), empathetic joy (*Mudita*), and equanimity (*Upeksha*)—promote healthy interpersonal relationships and emotional well-being. Similarly, *Advaita Bhava*, the principle of interconnectedness, encourages individuals to recognize their shared purpose and mutual dependence within the organizational ecosystem. Together, these principles can help restore meaning, belonging, and intrinsic motivation in the workplace.

A practical example of this approach can be seen in TVS Group, which has incorporated aspects of the Guna framework into its quality and employee development initiatives. By emphasizing personal growth, mental well-being, and character development alongside operational excellence, the organization has fostered a culture that values "Total Quality People" in addition to Total Quality Management. This focus on employee well-being and balanced development has contributed to high workforce commitment, strong retention, and sustained manufacturing excellence.

Marketing Management: Sarvodaya and Shared Prosperity

The principles of collaboration and collective growth that underpin Indian thought are beautifully expressed in the Vedic invocation "*Saha Nau Avatu*"—"May we be protected together, nourished together, and prosper together." This philosophy offers an alternative lens for marketing and business strategy, shifting the focus from a narrow profit-maximization approach toward *Sarvodaya*, the welfare and upliftment of all.

While conventional marketing often prioritizes market share, competitive advantage, and short-term gains, IKS emphasizes ethical conduct (*Dharma*), sustainability, stakeholder well-being, and long-term value creation. Businesses are viewed not merely as economic entities but as contributors to social harmony and collective prosperity.

The cooperative model pioneered by Amul exemplifies these principles. Rooted in the concepts of *Sahakar* (cooperation) and *Samgacchadhwam* (moving forward together), the model empowers stakeholders across the value chain, particularly those at the grassroots level. By eliminating exploitative intermediaries and enabling farmers to become owners of the brand, Amul created a sustainable and inclusive economic ecosystem. This approach transformed India from a milk-deficient nation into one of the world's leading milk producers while simultaneously enhancing rural livelihoods and

promoting equitable wealth creation. The model also reflects the principle of *Antyodaya*—the upliftment of the last person in society—demonstrating how business can serve as a vehicle for inclusive growth.

Innovation (Navapravarthana), Society, and Sustenance

Innovation within the IKS framework extends beyond technological advancement to encompass social, ecological, and human development. Indian Knowledge Systems comprise *Jnana* (knowledge), *Vijnana* (scientific understanding), and *Jeevan Darshana* (philosophy of life), all of which have evolved through centuries of observation, experimentation, reflection, and practical application.

India's civilizational heritage offers numerous examples of knowledge-driven innovation. Ancient scholars such as Aryabhata, Sushruta, and Charaka made pioneering contributions to astronomy, mathematics, medicine, and healthcare. Their work reflected a deep integration of scientific inquiry, ethical responsibility, and sustainable living. Unlike purely extractive models of innovation, these traditions sought to enhance human welfare while maintaining harmony with nature.

In the contemporary context, the concepts of social innovation and inclusive development are closely interconnected. Social innovations address societal challenges by creating solutions that are accessible, equitable, and sustainable. Inclusive development ensures that the benefits of progress reach all sections of society, particularly marginalized and underserved communities. By fostering participation, empowerment, and a sense of belonging, inclusive innovation enables individuals to feel valued and respected, thereby strengthening both social cohesion and economic development.

The integration of IKS principles into innovation management encourages organizations to pursue progress that is not only economically viable but also socially responsible and environmentally sustainable. Such an approach creates lasting value for individuals, communities, and society while contributing to a more balanced and resilient future.

Practical solutions to many of the modern-day challenges are available in IKS. Traditional practices of water management, organic methods of growing crops and use of indigenous medicines will address issues such as climate change, healthcare, and lead to sustainable development.

Moreover, IKS can foster a culture of entrepreneurship by emphasizing values such as self-reliance, creativity, and social responsibility. Entrepreneurs inspired by IKS are likely to develop business models that are aligned with the needs of society and the environment.

By integrating IKS into the innovation ecosystem, we can develop solutions that are not only effective but also culturally appropriate and socially inclusive.

An example of fostering innovation and entrepreneurship among rural children and teachers is Agastya Foundation, an educational NGO, that uses traditional knowledge and creativity by combining indigenous wisdom with modern STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) education to create socially impactful ventures.

IKS has always been "green" because it views nature (*Prakriti*) as sacred, not just a resource to be extracted. By moving toward *Antyodaya* (uplifting the last person), businesses tap into massive, underserved markets (the "Bottom of the Pyramid").

To implement IKS effectively, modern businesses are adopting the "Charkha" of Sustainability, which balances:

Economic Viability (Arth)
Environmental Harmony (Prakriti)
Social Equity (Nyaya)

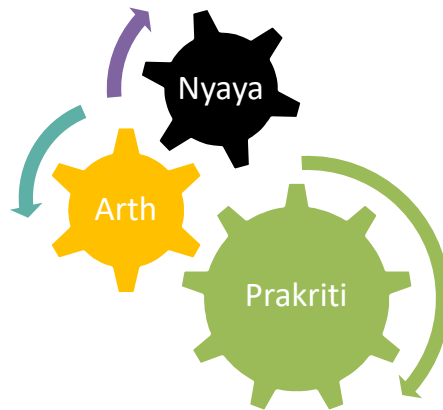


Figure 3: Charkha of Sustainability.

The best example for ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) is The Tata Group. The "Trusteeship" Model built by Jamshedji Tata is based on the Vedantic principle of Trusteeship.

Sustainability, Trusteeship, and Regenerative Value Creation.

The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into modern business does not imply the rejection of profit or economic growth. Rather, it advocates a broader understanding of wealth creation in which profit serves a higher social and ethical purpose. Rooted in the principles of *Dharma* and Trusteeship, IKS views wealth not merely as private ownership but as a resource that carries responsibilities toward society. Organizations are therefore encouraged to act as custodians of wealth, ensuring that economic gains contribute to the well-being of stakeholders and the larger community.

This philosophy is reflected in the governance structure of Tata Sons, where a significant proportion of equity ownership is held through philanthropic trusts. This model demonstrates how long-term social investment can coexist with business success, creating institutions that are resilient, trusted, and capable of generating enduring value. The Tata legacy

illustrates that investments in education, healthcare, community development, and social welfare are not merely acts of charity but strategic commitments that strengthen organizational reputation, stakeholder trust, and long-term competitiveness.

From an IKS perspective, value chains are not simply networks for the exchange of goods and services but interconnected ecosystems of mutual growth and shared prosperity. When an organization sources raw materials or services from local communities, the relationship extends beyond a transactional exchange. Businesses become partners in community development through investments in livelihoods, skills, infrastructure, and social well-being. Such an approach transforms conventional supply chains into ethical and circular value networks, where economic activity contributes to social empowerment and environmental sustainability.

This perspective fosters a deeper form of brand loyalty—one that is grounded not merely in marketing or customer engagement strategies but in genuine social impact and responsible business conduct. Communities, suppliers, employees, customers, and investors become active participants in a shared journey of value creation, reinforcing trust and long-term relationships.

A key distinction between contemporary

sustainability frameworks and the IKS approach lies in their underlying orientation. Modern sustainability initiatives are often reactive, compliance-driven, and focused on minimizing harm. In contrast, IKS views sustainability as an inherent way of life rooted in harmony with nature, society, and the self. Rather than simply reducing negative impacts, it seeks to create regenerative systems that continually renew social, ecological, and economic resources.

The framework of the *Purusharthas* provides a valuable guide for achieving this balance. By integrating *Artha* (material prosperity), *Dharma* (ethical responsibility), *Kama* (human fulfillment), and *Moksha* (higher purpose and self-realization) into organizational decision-making, businesses can create models that are simultaneously profitable, ethical, meaningful, and sustainable. Such an approach encourages organizations to move beyond extractive practices toward regenerative value creation that benefits both present and future generations.

The teachings of Swami Vivekananda further reinforce this perspective. Vivekananda emphasized selfless service, social upliftment, and the responsibility of individuals and institutions to contribute to collective welfare. His vision resonates strongly with contemporary Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, where businesses increasingly recognize their role as agents of positive social change.

Organizations such as Mahindra Group have embraced this philosophy through initiatives that integrate community development and social

impact into their broader business strategy. Such efforts demonstrate how purpose-driven leadership can create value not only for shareholders but also for society at large.

Similarly, Wipro has incorporated sustainability into its organizational practices through initiatives focused on renewable energy, resource efficiency, and responsible environmental management. These efforts reflect principles that have long been embedded within Indian traditions, where ecological stewardship and respect for nature are viewed as essential components of human prosperity. By aligning business objectives with environmental responsibility, organizations can contribute to ecological balance while simultaneously enhancing operational resilience and long-term value creation.

Ultimately, the IKS approach to sustainability redefines business success. It encourages organizations to move from a paradigm of extraction and short-term gains to one of stewardship, regeneration, and shared prosperity. In doing so, businesses become not only engines of economic growth but also catalysts for social transformation, environmental renewal, and human flourishing.

The 4-P Framework

The basic concepts of IKS when integrated into business organizations results in the 4-P framework for the holistic growth of the organizations and the society. The 4-P stand for Purushartha (Purpose), Prakriti (Planet), Praja (People) and Pararthya (Philanthropy). All business activities revolve around these 4Ps and hence, business thrives. This concept is explained in the below diagram.

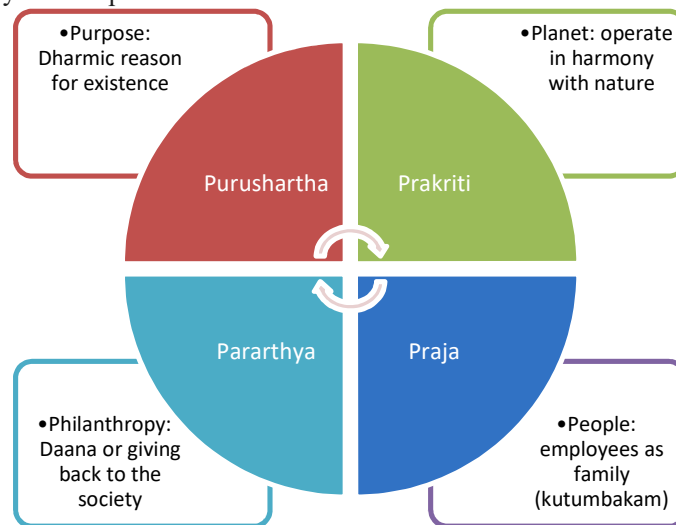


Figure 4: The 4-P framework of business organization based on IKS concepts

Challenges:

Traditional Knowledge (TK) and Traditional Cultural Expressions (TCEs) are highly vulnerable to commercial exploitation because modern intellectual property systems are fundamentally misaligned with community-based ownership. The integration of IKS into modern business though provides solutions to problems, however, has challenges.

- o Cultural Appropriation and fair commercialization.
- o Preservation of Authenticity in modern business.
- o Regulatory and Intellectual property framework.

Opportunities:

Considering the dire need for solutions to modern day business problems, opportunities also exist for the integration. The convergence of global eco-consciousness with Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies provides India a historic window to scale its Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into a multi-billion-dollar engine of sustainable innovation. Modernizing ancient Indian practices transforms them from localized traditions into highly competitive, validated global products that actively revive national cultural pride. (52) The drawbacks in using IKS without scientific validation may fail to meet global market and sustain commercially. Hence, bridging traditional Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) with Fourth Industrial Revolution technology requires transforming ancestral concepts into standard, verifiable, and data-backed digital architecture.

Obstacles for integration of IKS into modern business management:

Despite its potential to provide solutions to multiple modern day business problems, integrating IKS faces significant obstacles:

Lack of Standardization: Unlike conventional, data-driven tools, Ayurvedic and yogic practices are difficult to measure quantitatively, making adoption slow in traditional corporate environments.

Scepticism and Bias: There is a prevailing, often Western-centric, view that relegates indigenous knowledge to folklore or mythology, creating resistance in academia and business.

Knowledge Erosion & Documentation: A lack of digital documentation and organized R&D makes it hard to scale IKS-based business models.

Institutional Barriers: Limited policy support, funding, and a lack of trained faculty or managers capable of blending traditional wisdom with modern technology.

Language: Ancient IKS wisdom is locked within non-structured, regional languages or Sanskrit manuscripts. Even though there is a large body of IKS that has been published in print, there is still a vast body of IKS that has not yet been found, has not yet been recorded, and has not yet been properly translated and annotated.

Aphorism: The majority of IKS foundational writings are locked within non-structured, regional languages or Sanskrit manuscripts, or aphorisms known as "Sutras," which are short, concise statement that expresses a general truth, principle, or wise observation about life. This poses a significant risk of misunderstanding and misinterpretation unless meanings are standardized and validated. (53)

IKS offers holistic solutions in various domains, including health, education, sustainability, and ethics, by providing self-sustaining financial engines and thus, can help address global challenges. Furthermore, industry integration can foster application of ancient traditions from academic archives into active, global markets. Building such sustainable economic models requires structured frameworks to transition conventional heritage into modern, commercially viable, and universally accessible applications. (54)

Conclusion:

The corporate world today is highly competitive, with many individuals focused on climbing the corporate ladder, often at the expense of others (55). This creates toxic work environments where personal success is prioritized over collective growth. In contrast, Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) challenge this individualistic mindset by promoting principles such as Dharma (ethics), sustainability, and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam—the idea that the world is one family. Ancient texts like the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, and *Thirukkural* offer timeless lessons on leadership, governance, decision-making, teamwork, and strategy that remain highly relevant to modern management.

Modern organizations operate in a VUCA environment characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. Rapid technological change, globalization, shifting consumer demands, and environmental challenges make business environments increasingly unpredictable. Conventional management approaches often focus on short-term efficiency and reactive strategies, which may deliver immediate results but struggle during ethical crises or long-term disruptions.

IKS offers a different perspective by viewing uncertainty and change as natural aspects of life rather than problems to eliminate. Rooted in concepts such as Rta (cosmic order) and Dharma, it emphasizes resilience, adaptability, and inner

stability. Effective management, therefore, is not just about controlling external challenges but also about cultivating self-awareness, ethical judgment, and collective wisdom.

Additionally, IKS redefines organizational success. While modern business often measures success through profit and market dominance, Indian philosophy balances Artha (wealth) with Dharma (ethics), Kama (human fulfillment), and Moksha (higher purpose and self-realization). Organizations guided by these principles aim to create value beyond financial performance by balancing profitability with sustainability, innovation with responsibility, and individual achievement with collective welfare.

By integrating these ideas, businesses can transform VUCA challenges into opportunities for learning, resilience, and sustainable growth. This shift calls for global management institutions that combine ancient Indian wisdom with modern technological and corporate practices (56,57).

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