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## Indian Knowledge System as the Foundation of Viksit Bharat

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### Abstract

This paper explores the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) as a foundational pillar of this vision. Rooted in centuries-old traditions of holistic wisdom, science, arts, and ethics, IKS represents a comprehensive worldview that combines sustainability, self-reliance, spiritual insight, and rational inquiry. Through an interdisciplinary lens, the paper demonstrates how IKS can guide contemporary development in education, governance, agriculture, health, environmental sustainability, and innovation. The re-integration of IKS into national policy and consciousness, especially through NEP 2020 and various government initiatives, is essential for realizing the dream of a Viksit Bharat that is not only economically strong but also culturally and spiritually enriched.

**Keywords:** Indian Knowledge System (IKS), Civilizational Wisdom, Ancient Indian Education, Cultural Resurgence, Indian Philosophy

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side (आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतोऽदब्धासो अपरितासउद्भिदः।) and the concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (अयं निजःपरोवेति गणना लघुचेतसाम् उदारचरितानां तु वसुधैवकुटुम्बकम्।) are two universal visions of Indian civilization which are themselves sufficient to prove that India is synonymous with humanitarianism. India in its Hindi name Bharat itself defines providing Enlightenment to everyone of this word, therefore the Indian knowledge system is the backbone of Indian tradition, civilization and development. India is a country which gave a universal vision to mankind that “Man cannot only solve the problems of life but man can also explain the meaning of life also”. Indian knowledge system is based on this belief that man is different from all other creatures only due to one reason (rest all sensory organs are more or less the same) that is the



power of evolution and this power of evolution is not only the development of materialistic properties but this power of evolution is the development of wisdom, technology, understanding of proper uses of technology, spirituality, social harmony, mercy, liberty, social service, pleasure, globalisation and including materialistic development also. Indian knowledge system emphasizes the development of all these aspects. The Indian knowledge system has its own authentic fundamental documents to achieve all such development and to make India Viksit Bharat and world peace through the promotion of its principle of Vasudhaiva kutumbakam

### **Rediscovering Civilizational Strength**

The vision of Viksit Bharat, or a fully developed India by 2047, requires not only economic transformation but also a cultural and spiritual resurgence. India's development model must be rooted in its own civilizational identity rather than borrowed paradigms from the West. The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) offers a holistic approach that integrates material progress with ethical and spiritual well-being. Drawing from millennia-old traditions, India possesses an intellectual reservoir capable of guiding contemporary development across multiple domains. Viksit Bharat should thus not only focus on technological and economic milestones but also cultivate self-awareness, cultural pride, and moral integrity. Rediscovering India's indigenous wisdom systems and integrating them into national policy, education, and lifestyle practices can help build a nation that is self-reliant, sustainable, and spiritually grounded. This chapter underscores the importance of reviving India's ancient systems of thought, science, and social organization to build a future that resonates with the country's inherent values. A nation that forgets its civilizational roots risks losing its identity, cohesion, and capacity for meaningful progress. As India prepares to celebrate a century of independence, the rediscovery and reapplication of its native knowledge systems are both a necessity and a responsibility. It is time to recognize that true development includes not just GDP growth or infrastructure expansion but also the nurturing of collective consciousness rooted in dharma, sustainability, and self-realization. By looking inward and reclaiming its heritage, India can present a unique development model to the world—one that harmonizes the spiritual with the material, the traditional with the modern, and the local with the global. The Indian Knowledge System, therefore, becomes not just a relic of the past but a roadmap for a resilient, inclusive, and enlightened future. (Rao, 2017; Mishra, 2021)

### **Cultural Foundations of Indian Knowledge**

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is deeply embedded in the cultural ethos of India. Rooted in a civilization that dates back thousands of years, it is characterized by continuity, adaptability, and spiritual depth. Unlike the compartmentalized knowledge systems of the modern West, IKS integrates diverse domains—philosophy, science, art, economics, medicine, and governance—within a unified cultural worldview. Its foundation lies in the concept of dharma, or righteous living, which acts as a guiding principle for all aspects of life. (Radhakrishnan, 1929; Sharma, 2003)

The Vedas, Upanishads, and other classical texts reflect a synthesis of practical knowledge and metaphysical insights. For example, Ayurveda and Yoga are not only health sciences but are embedded in a larger vision of human well-being and cosmic harmony. Classical Indian education promoted holistic development—mental, physical, spiritual, and ethical—through Gurukul systems, which emphasized character-building over rote learning. Furthermore, Indian epistemology recognizes multiple ways of



knowing, including perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*), and testimony (*śabda*). This plurality encourages dialogue and co-existence of diverse philosophical schools, such as Vedānta, Nyāya, and Buddhism. These systems debated rigorously yet shared a commitment to seeking truth rather than establishing hegemony. Cultural expressions such as classical music, dance, architecture, and crafts also carry embedded knowledge—mathematical ratios, ecological insights, and moral symbolism. Festivals and rituals serve as dynamic vehicles for passing down generational wisdom and community ethics. Revitalizing these cultural foundations can help India develop in a way that is not alienating but empowering. In a globalized world that often leads to cultural homogenization, IKS offers a framework for rooted globalism—being Indian in essence yet universally relevant in application. Recognizing and promoting this cultural coherence is essential for building a confident, innovative, and inclusive Viksit Bharat.

### **A Glorious Legacy of Indian Knowledge**

India's intellectual legacy spans millennia and embraces a wide spectrum of disciplines, reflecting a profound engagement with both the natural and metaphysical realms. From the Sulbasutras' geometry to Panini's linguistic precision, India's thinkers contributed richly to global knowledge. The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is not a monolith but a collection of evolving traditions that addressed diverse aspects of life through inquiry, synthesis, and practical application. Ancient Indian mathematics, exemplified by the concept of zero and the decimal system, laid the foundation for modern arithmetic. Astronomers like Aryabhata and Bhaskaracharya developed sophisticated models of planetary motion, while metallurgists crafted rust-resistant iron structures like the Delhi Iron Pillar. In medicine, Sushruta's surgical techniques and Charaka's medical philosophy remain globally relevant. (Joseph, 2011; Sarma, 2018)

Indian philosophy, through the six darśanas (schools), offered profound insights into logic, ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics. These systems were not merely speculative but structured for personal and social transformation. For instance, Yoga and Vedanta emphasize experiential knowledge leading to self-realization, while Nyaya and Vaisheshika provide frameworks for logical analysis and categorization of the physical world. India's knowledge traditions were also deeply ethical and ecological. The holistic vision of life promoted harmony between individual, society, and nature. Agriculture, architecture, and water management practices were deeply sustainable, guided by principles of balance and interdependence. This glorious legacy must be made accessible and relevant today. Digitizing ancient manuscripts, translating texts, and incorporating IKS in modern curricula are critical steps. Furthermore, highlighting Indian contributions in global scientific discourse can help instill pride and inspire innovation. As Viksit Bharat aspires toward leadership in the 21st century, it must draw strength from this intellectual inheritance—not merely as cultural nostalgia, but as a dynamic resource for solving contemporary challenges and shaping a humane future.

### **Holistic Education in Ancient India**

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) placed great emphasis on holistic education, which aimed to nurture the physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of a student. Ancient India's education system, exemplified by Gurukuls and universities like Takshashila and Nalanda, was not limited to the transmission of information but focused on the transformation of the individual.



Education was seen as a sacred process, deeply rooted in ethics, self-discipline, and experiential learning. (Altekar, 1944; Ranganathan, 2022)

Students in Gurukuls lived with their teachers (*Gurus*) and engaged in *shravana* (listening), *manana* (contemplation), and *nididhyasana* (deep assimilation). This tripartite method fostered critical thinking and inner maturity. The curriculum was broad, including subjects like grammar, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, logic, music, and philosophy, alongside training in character and conduct. Knowledge was imparted through Sanskrit and regional languages, ensuring linguistic and cultural continuity. What distinguished Indian education was its spiritual grounding. Learning was not pursued for material gain alone but for *moksha*—liberation and self-realization. This perspective elevated education to a process of inner awakening and social responsibility. The role of the teacher was not merely academic but moral and spiritual. Institutions like Nalanda and Vikramashila attracted scholars from across Asia and became global centers of intellectual exchange. They exemplified academic freedom, interdisciplinary inquiry, and cosmopolitanism grounded in Indian values. Modern India can learn from these models to reorient its education system. Rather than emphasizing rote memorization and standardized testing, it can foster creativity, critical inquiry, and values-based learning. Integrating IKS into education can help create compassionate citizens who are rooted in their culture yet equipped for global challenges. Reviving the ethos of holistic education is essential for building a Viksit Bharat where development is not just economic but deeply humanistic.

### Indian Knowledge System and Scientific Temper

Contrary to the colonial narrative that ancient India was mystical but unscientific, the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) has always fostered a scientific temper rooted in observation, reasoning, and empirical analysis. The term “scientific temper,” popularized by Jawaharlal Nehru, aligns well with the Indian intellectual tradition that emphasizes *Yukti* (rationality), *Anubhava* (experience), and *Pramana* (means of knowledge). IKS does not view science and spirituality as separate or opposed, but as complementary paths to understanding reality. Fields like Ayurveda and Yoga illustrate this integration. Ayurveda is based on systematic observation, classification, and diagnosis using principles like doshas and gunas, while Yoga incorporates physiology, psychology, and philosophy into a single, coherent framework. In astronomy and mathematics, thinkers like Aryabhata, Varahamihira, and Bhaskaracharya combined observation with mathematical reasoning to formulate theories about planetary motion, trigonometry, and calculus. Their methods—documented, verifiable, and replicable—demonstrate a clear scientific spirit. (Lad, 2002; Deb, 2019)

Moreover, Indian philosophical systems like Nyaya and Vaisheshika built elaborate systems of logic and epistemology. The *Nyaya Sutras*, for example, present a rigorous analysis of debate, fallacies, and valid knowledge (*pramana*), similar to modern scientific methodology. These traditions cultivated critical thinking, skepticism, and debate as essential to the pursuit of truth. In today’s context, developing a scientific temper informed by IKS can enrich innovation, sustainability, and mental well-being. For example, traditional ecological knowledge can guide conservation; ancient water systems can inform climate-resilient infrastructure; and holistic health models can complement modern medicine. Integrating IKS with modern STEM education can inspire curiosity while grounding science in ethical and cultural frameworks. Thus, IKS is not a relic of superstition but a living tradition that



promotes inquiry, logic, and experimentation. Embracing this heritage is crucial for building a Viksit Bharat that is scientifically advanced yet rooted in its civilizational ethos.

### **Indian Models of Sustainability and Economy**

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) offers a distinctive and time-tested vision of sustainability and economic organization, rooted in harmony with nature and social equity. Unlike modern development models that prioritize consumption and growth often at the cost of ecological balance, Indian traditions emphasize lokasangraha (welfare of all), aparigraha (non-possessiveness), and dharma (righteous duty) as principles guiding individual and collective behavior. Ancient economic thought, as articulated in texts like the Arthashastra, discussed taxation, trade, agriculture, and governance with remarkable depth. These models promoted decentralized economic practices, local self-reliance, and equitable distribution of resources. The grama (village) economy functioned as a unit of sustainable livelihood, supported by crafts, agriculture, and cooperative labor. The concept of varna as division of labor—not hierarchy—supported economic interdependence while upholding ethical duties. (Gadgil & Guha, 1992; Sahu, 2020)

Indian traditions also exhibit sophisticated ecological knowledge. Indigenous agricultural practices—crop rotation, rainwater harvesting, and natural pest control—ensured biodiversity and soil fertility. Forests were revered as sacred groves, and rivers as living deities, promoting conservation through reverence rather than regulation. In the Gandhian vision, which drew deeply from IKS, *Gram Swaraj* (village self-rule) became the ideal of sustainable development. Gandhi advocated for a production model centered on need, not greed, aligned with ethics, ecology, and empowerment. In the context of climate change, resource scarcity, and social inequality, IKS offers valuable lessons. Policies inspired by these principles can promote organic farming, cottage industries, circular economies, and decentralized governance. Reviving traditional water systems, herbal medicine, and artisanal crafts can also create employment while preserving ecological and cultural heritage. A Viksit Bharat must integrate these indigenous models into its economic planning, education, and innovation ecosystems. By doing so, India can pioneer a development path that is sustainable, inclusive, and rooted in civilizational wisdom—demonstrating to the world that progress and tradition can coexist.

### **Indian Ethics, Dharma, and Governance**

Ethics in the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is inseparably linked with the concept of Dharma—righteous conduct, moral order, and the cosmic law that sustains life. Unlike Western ethics which often draws from contractual or utilitarian reasoning, Indian ethics is based on duty, character, and the pursuit of higher ideals. Dharma offers a flexible, context-sensitive guide for action, balancing personal responsibilities with societal good. (Sen, 2005; Rangarajan, 1992)

Governance in ancient India was deeply influenced by ethical values enshrined in texts like the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Manusmriti, and Arthashastra. A ruler (Raja) was not an autocrat but a *dharma-pravartaka*—upholder and promoter of Dharma. His legitimacy was derived not just from power but from service, justice, and compassion. The notion of *Ramarajya* encapsulates this ideal—a society where justice, transparency, welfare, and moral integrity prevail. Administrative frameworks were well-organized and efficient, with attention to decentralization, consultation, and accountability. The Arthashastra detailed economic policies, espionage, disaster management, and military strategies,



showing a pragmatic but ethical approach to governance. Village panchayats functioned as democratic institutions for local dispute resolution and welfare planning. The Indian worldview also emphasized inner governance—self-control, humility, and detachment—as essential for outer governance. Leaders were expected to cultivate virtues like *satya* (truth), *ahimsa* (non-violence), and *tyaga* (sacrifice). In modern India, integrating these ethical principles can improve public administration, political accountability, and civic life. Ethics education, value-based policymaking, and leadership rooted in service can counter corruption and alienation. As Bharat aspires to be a global leader, its governance model must reflect not only technical efficiency but moral excellence. Dharma-centered governance can create a just and harmonious society, where laws are respected not out of fear but from a sense of duty. The Indian Knowledge System thus offers a timeless template for leadership and public ethics—crucial for building a truly Viksit Bharat.

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