

GOOD GOVERNANCE THROUGH THE LENS OF INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS: IMPLICATIONS FOR MODERN MANAGEMENT PRACTICE AND LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

In response to growing ethical deficits in governance and leadership, Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) offer a robust, value-based framework for good governance and modern management. Rooted in classical texts such as Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, the *Rigveda*, *Manusmriti*, the *Mahabharata* (especially the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Shanti Parva*), the *Ramayana*, Thiruvalluvar's *Thirukkural*, and Ashokan edicts, IKS articulate governance as a moral, strategic, and welfare-oriented responsibility. These texts emphasize foundational principles such as *Dharma* (ethical order), *Artha* (sustainable prosperity), *Rajadharma* (duty of leadership), and *Dandaniti* (just exercise of authority), highlighting accountability, consultative decision-making, and the prevention of power misuse (*maatsyanyāya*).

This conceptual study examines these principles as an integrated framework for ethical governance and leadership. It demonstrates their relevance to contemporary management practices, including ethical leadership, stakeholder welfare, institutional accountability, strategic foresight, and sustainable resource management. Unlike dominant Western management models that prioritize efficiency and control, IKS present a holistic approach that integrates ethics, power, and public welfare.

By bridging classical Indian treatises with modern management and leadership discourse, the study contributes to decolonizing governance frameworks and advancing culturally grounded management thought. The findings offer theoretical insights and practical implications for management education, corporate governance, leadership development, and public administration. Revitalizing IKS can foster ethical, resilient, and sustainable governance systems capable of addressing contemporary organizational and societal challenges.

Keywords: Good Governance; Indian Knowledge Systems; Arthashastra; Dharma; Power Management; Ethical Leadership; NEP 2020

1. Introduction

The contemporary global landscape is increasingly characterized by ethical failures in governance, declining public trust in institutions, corporate misconduct, environmental crises, and widening socio-economic inequalities. These challenges have exposed the limitations of dominant governance and management paradigms rooted primarily in technocratic rationality,

instrumental efficiency, and profit maximization. Consequently, scholars and policymakers are calling for epistemic diversification and the decolonization of management knowledge through the integration of indigenous and civilizational wisdom traditions. In this context, Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), developed through millennia of philosophical inquiry and institutional practice, offer a normative and ethically grounded framework for governance and leadership. Recognizing this potential, India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 identifies IKS as a foundational pillar for intellectual renewal, emphasizing their relevance in shaping ethical leadership, sustainable development, and culturally rooted institutional frameworks.

Despite India's rich civilizational heritage, contemporary public administration and management education remain deeply influenced by Western theoretical constructs, reflecting colonial administrative legacies and Eurocentric epistemological dominance. While these frameworks have contributed significantly to organizational efficiency and analytical rigor, they often overlook relational accountability, ethical restraint in the exercise of power, and the primacy of collective welfare (*yogakshema*)—principles central to indigenous governance traditions. Decolonial scholarship has increasingly highlighted the need to recover indigenous epistemologies not merely as historical artifacts but as viable and contextually relevant frameworks capable of addressing modern governance challenges. The integration of IKS into governance and management discourse thus represents both an epistemic corrective and a strategic pathway toward more ethical, inclusive, and sustainable leadership models.

Classical Indian texts such as Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, the Vedas, the *Mahabharata* (particularly the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Shanti Parva*), the *Ramayana*, Ashokan edicts, and Thiruvalluvar's *Thirukkural* articulate a sophisticated and coherent philosophy of governance rooted in the interdependence of *Dharma* (ethical order), *Artha* (material prosperity), and *Dandaniti* (ethical regulation and enforcement of authority). These texts conceptualize governance not as the unilateral exercise of power but as a moral and institutional responsibility aimed at ensuring justice, social stability, and public welfare. The concept of *Rajadharma* establishes leadership as a form of ethical stewardship, requiring rulers and leaders to exercise authority with accountability, self-restraint, and commitment to collective well-being. Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, in particular, provides a systematic framework for governance and leadership that emphasizes consultative decision-making (*mantri-parishat*), institutional accountability, strategic foresight, welfare-oriented administration, and mechanisms to prevent the abuse of power and the emergence of *mātsya-nyāya*—a condition of systemic injustice where the powerful exploit the weak.

These principles resonate strongly with contemporary management constructs such as ethical leadership, stakeholder theory, corporate governance, sustainable management, and responsible leadership. However, mainstream management theory has rarely engaged with IKS as a coherent theoretical framework, resulting in an epistemic imbalance that privileges Western models while marginalizing indigenous perspectives. Existing research on IKS has largely focused on philosophical interpretation or historical analysis, with limited systematic integration into modern management and leadership theory. This gap highlights the need for a conceptual synthesis that situates IKS within contemporary governance and management discourse as a legitimate and robust knowledge system.

This study addresses this gap by adopting an interpretive-hermeneutic and interdisciplinary approach to examine good governance through the lens of Indian Knowledge Systems and its implications for modern management practice and leadership. It synthesizes governance and leadership principles from classical Indian texts and maps them onto contemporary management constructs, including ethical leadership, stakeholder-centric governance, strategic decision-making, institutional accountability, and sustainable resource management. By positioning IKS as a normative governance framework, the study contributes to the epistemic decolonization of management knowledge and advances an indigenous paradigm of ethical leadership grounded in moral responsibility, institutional integrity, and collective welfare.

The study offers both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it expands governance and management scholarship by introducing a civilizationally rooted, non-Eurocentric framework that integrates ethics, leadership, and institutional responsibility. Practically, it provides insights for management education, corporate governance, leadership development, and public administration reform by highlighting the relevance of indigenous ethical principles in strengthening leadership effectiveness and organizational sustainability. By reconnecting contemporary management practice with indigenous ethical foundations, Indian Knowledge Systems offer a resilient and culturally grounded framework for advancing good governance and responsible leadership in the 21st century.

1. Literature Review

The literature on good governance through Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) has expanded significantly since the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which prioritizes mainstreaming indigenous wisdom for ethical, sustainable, and decolonial approaches to administration and management. Recent scholarship revives ancient texts like Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (emphasizing Dharma, Artha, and Daṇḍanīti), Vedic principles, Bhagavad Gita, and regional narratives, linking them to contemporary public policy, ethical leadership, and power management. Foundational modern editions/translations of *Arthashastra*, such as Olivelle (2013) and Kangle (1960–1965, reprinted 2014), provide critical textual bases for these interpretations.

This review organizes key studies around core keywords, selecting three representative recent or influential studies per keyword (primarily 2020–2026 publications). It highlights contributions while identifying persistent gaps.

2.1 Good Governance

2. Literature Review

The literature on good governance through Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) has expanded significantly, particularly following the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes the integration of indigenous knowledge into education, governance, and management. Indian Knowledge Systems offer a comprehensive normative framework grounded in ethical leadership, welfare-oriented governance, institutional accountability, and sustainable prosperity. Foundational classical texts such as Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, the Vedas, the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, Thiruvalluvar's *Thirukkural*, and Dharmashastra literature articulate governance as an ethical responsibility rooted in *Dharma*, *Artha*, and welfare-oriented leadership (Kangle, 1960–1965/2014; Olivelle, 2013; Rangarajan, 1992).

Modern scholarship has increasingly examined these traditions as viable frameworks for contemporary governance and management, particularly in response to calls for epistemic decolonization and ethical leadership reform.

2.1 Good Governance

Kautilya's governance philosophy has been widely recognized as a sophisticated model of ethical and strategic statecraft. Boesche (2002) argues that the *Arthashastra* presents one of the earliest systematic frameworks for governance, integrating administrative efficiency with welfare-oriented leadership. He highlights Kautilya's emphasis on institutional accountability, strategic leadership, and corruption control, demonstrating parallels with modern governance theory.

Chousalkar (2006) examines Kautilya's administrative system and argues that it incorporated advanced bureaucratic mechanisms, intelligence systems, and accountability structures comparable to modern public administration. He emphasizes that governance was viewed as a moral responsibility grounded in public welfare.

Bala (2023) emphasizes Kautilya's focus on *yogakshema* (public welfare and security) as the primary objective of governance, arguing that economic prosperity and political stability depend on ethical leadership and responsible governance.

Kaur and Tomar (2024) position the *Arthashastra* as a comprehensive non-Western framework for governance, highlighting its emphasis on ethical statecraft, diplomacy, and prevention of systemic disorder (*mātsya-nyāya*).

Maji and Gupta (2025) examine *Rajdharm* across classical Indian texts, including the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, and *Arthashastra*, identifying accountability, justice, and welfare as core governance principles.

Singh (2021) highlights that ancient Indian governance models emphasized participatory decision-making, ministerial consultation, and ethical leadership, which align with modern democratic governance principles.

2.2 Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)

Raina and Habib (2020) emphasize that Indian Knowledge Systems represent a holistic epistemological framework integrating ethics, governance, sustainability, and social responsibility. They argue that IKS offers an alternative paradigm to Western reductionist approaches to management and governance.

Sharma and Sharma (2021) highlight the importance of integrating IKS into management education to develop ethically grounded leadership models. They emphasize that Indian philosophical traditions provide valuable insights into ethical decision-making, leadership responsibility, and stakeholder welfare.

Jain (2025) examines the implementation of IKS under NEP 2020 and highlights its potential to strengthen ethical governance, cultural continuity, and institutional resilience.

Mankar (2025) analyzes the institutional challenges of integrating IKS into higher education and emphasizes its role in promoting ethical leadership and holistic development.

Tripathi and Mukherjee (2022) argue that Indian Knowledge Systems offer a culturally grounded leadership model emphasizing collective welfare, ethical leadership, and sustainable development.

Banerjee (2021) highlights the relevance of indigenous knowledge systems in developing sustainable governance frameworks, emphasizing their focus on ecological balance and ethical responsibility.

2.3 Arthashastra and Governance

Kangle's (1960–1965/2014) critical edition of the *Arthashastra* remains one of the most authoritative scholarly works, providing detailed analysis of governance, economic regulation, and leadership principles.

Olivelle (2013) provides a comprehensive modern translation and interpretation of the *Arthashastra*, highlighting its systematic treatment of governance, leadership, and institutional accountability.

Rangarajan (1992) interprets the *Arthashastra* as a comprehensive treatise on political economy, governance, and leadership strategy, emphasizing welfare-oriented administration.

Trautmann (2012) examines Kautilya's governance framework within its historical context, highlighting its sophisticated administrative structure and emphasis on leadership accountability.

Bhattarai et al. (2025) reinterpret Kautilya's governance principles for modern management, emphasizing strategic leadership, ethical governance, and stakeholder management.

Kulkarni and Prasad (2024) analyze Kautilya's economic governance principles, highlighting their relevance for modern economic policy, taxation, and corporate governance.

Sihag (2009) examines Kautilya's economic thought, arguing that his governance framework integrates ethical responsibility, economic efficiency, and public welfare, anticipating modern welfare economics.

Witzel (2012) highlights the advanced administrative and governance structures described in the *Arthashastra*, emphasizing its relevance for modern governance and institutional design.

2.4 Dharma and Ethical Governance

Olivelle (2005) examines Dharmashastra literature and highlights its emphasis on ethical leadership, justice, and moral accountability.

Radhakrishnan (1948) interprets the *Bhagavad Gita* as a philosophical guide to ethical leadership, emphasizing duty, self-discipline, and moral responsibility.

Muniapan and Dass (2009) examine leadership lessons from the *Bhagavad Gita*, highlighting its relevance for ethical leadership, decision-making, and organizational responsibility.

Sharma (2007) analyzes the concept of Dharma in leadership and argues that it provides a moral framework for ethical governance and leadership accountability.

Joon and Chauhan (2024) examine leadership principles in the *Ramayana*, emphasizing ethical governance, justice, and servant leadership.

Sivaraman (2021) highlights the relevance of Dharmic leadership principles in modern organizational governance.

Chakrabarty (2020) argues that Indian philosophical traditions provide a stakeholder-oriented leadership model emphasizing ethical responsibility and collective welfare.

2.5 Power Management and Ethical Leadership

Boesche (2002) highlights Kautilya's emphasis on ethical power management, institutional accountability, and leadership responsibility.

McClish (2019) examines Kautilya's governance philosophy and highlights its emphasis on ethical leadership, institutional control, and administrative accountability.

Muniapan and Satpathy (2013) argue that Indian philosophical traditions provide valuable insights into leadership, emphasizing ethical responsibility, self-discipline, and stakeholder welfare.

Bhattarai et al. (2025) examine leadership lessons from the *Arthashastra*, emphasizing strategic leadership, ethical governance, and accountability.

Chakrabarty (2020) emphasizes the importance of ethical leadership and stakeholder-oriented governance in Indian management philosophy.

Sharma and Bhal (2021) highlight the relevance of Indian ethical principles in corporate governance and leadership development.

Mintzberg (2004), while not focused on IKS specifically, emphasizes leadership as a moral and relational process, which aligns closely with Dharmic leadership principles.

2.6 Public Policy and Management Implications

Sihag (2009) highlights the relevance of Kautilyan economic governance principles for modern public policy and economic management.

Kulkarni and Prasad (2024) examine the applicability of Kautilya's governance principles for modern public administration and economic policy.

Thaker et al. (2023) emphasize the relevance of Kautilyan governance principles for modern governance reform, particularly in addressing corruption and leadership failures.

Muniapan (2017) argues that Indian philosophical traditions provide valuable insights for management education and leadership development.

Chatterjee (2020) highlights the relevance of Indian philosophical traditions for corporate governance and leadership ethics.

Sharma and Bhal (2021) emphasize the importance of integrating Indian ethical principles into corporate governance frameworks.

Dierksmeier and Pirson (2009), while focused on humanistic management, support governance models emphasizing ethical responsibility and stakeholder welfare, aligning with IKS principles.

3. Research Gap

Despite the growing body of scholarship on Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and their relevance to governance and leadership, several significant theoretical and conceptual gaps persist.

First, existing studies largely examine classical Indian texts such as Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and Dharmashastra literature from historical, philosophical, or political perspectives. While these studies establish the ethical and administrative sophistication of ancient Indian governance, they rarely provide systematic conceptual integration with contemporary management and leadership theories, such as ethical leadership, stakeholder theory, corporate governance, and responsible leadership.

Second, much of the current literature remains descriptive and interpretive, focusing on textual analysis without developing a coherent theoretical framework that positions Indian Knowledge Systems as a comprehensive governance and management paradigm. There is limited effort to translate core IKS principles—such as *Dharma* (ethical responsibility), *Rajadharma* (duty of

leadership), *Dandanīti* (ethical exercise of authority), and *yogakshema* (stakeholder welfare)—into structured constructs applicable to modern organizational leadership and governance.

Third, the critical dimension of power management—central to Kautilya’s governance philosophy—remains underexplored in modern management research. Although contemporary leadership theories address authority, accountability, and organizational control, few studies examine how indigenous frameworks conceptualize the ethical acquisition, exercise, regulation, and restraint of power, particularly in preventing exploitation (*mātsya-nyāya*) and ensuring institutional integrity.

Fourth, there is limited interdisciplinary synthesis connecting Indian Knowledge Systems with modern management education, corporate leadership development, and public administration practice. Existing studies rarely explore how IKS can inform leadership training, organizational governance structures, or corporate ethics frameworks in contemporary institutional contexts.

Fifth, despite the policy emphasis of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 on integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into education and institutional development, empirical-theoretical and conceptual studies examining the implications of IKS for modern management practice and leadership remain scarce. There is a lack of structured frameworks that demonstrate how indigenous governance principles can be operationalized within contemporary organizational and managerial environments.

Finally, from an epistemic perspective, mainstream management scholarship continues to be dominated by Eurocentric theoretical frameworks, resulting in the marginalization of indigenous governance traditions. There remains a critical need for scholarship that contributes to the epistemic decolonization of management and leadership studies by positioning Indian Knowledge Systems as a legitimate, coherent, and theoretically robust framework for understanding good governance and ethical leadership.

The Gap addressed by this study:

Despite growing scholarly attention to Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), several critical gaps remain in understanding their relevance to modern governance and management.

First, existing studies largely examine classical texts such as Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*, Bhagavad Gita, and Dharmashastra in isolation, without developing an integrated governance framework that connects ethical philosophy, administrative practice, and power management. The interdisciplinary linkage between classical governance principles and modern management theories—particularly ethical leadership, organizational governance, and power regulation—remains underdeveloped.

Second, while Arthashastra is increasingly recognized for its contributions to political economy and statecraft, insufficient attention has been given to its systematic theory of ethical power management, including mechanisms of accountability, ministerial counsel, collective decision-making, and checks against abuse of authority.

Third, the integration of regional literary traditions and historical administrative practices into governance analysis remains limited. Ethical critiques of power misuse present in texts such as the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Sangam literature, and modern Indian literary works have not been adequately incorporated into contemporary governance and management discourse.

Fourth, although recent policy frameworks such as the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasize the importance of Indian Knowledge Systems, their practical implications for management education, corporate governance, and leadership development remain conceptually fragmented and insufficiently theorized.

Finally, there is a lack of comprehensive conceptual models that synthesize Indian Knowledge Systems into a coherent governance and management framework capable of informing modern organizational leadership, public administration, and sustainable governance.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a **qualitative, conceptual, and interpretive research methodology**, grounded in textual analysis and interdisciplinary synthesis.

➤ Research Design

The research follows a **conceptual and analytical design**, focusing on the systematic interpretation of primary classical texts and secondary scholarly literature to develop a theoretical framework linking Indian Knowledge Systems with modern governance and management practices.

➤ **Data Sources:** The study utilizes both primary and secondary sources:

Primary Sources

- Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (Kangle, 1960–65; Olivelle, 2013), Bhagavad Gita, Vedas and Upanishads, Manusmriti and Dharmashastra literature, Ramayana and Mahabharata, Ashokan edicts, Sangam literature (e.g., Thirukkural)

Secondary Sources: Peer-reviewed journal articles (2020–2026), Scholarly books on Indian political thought and governance, Policy documents (NEP 2020), Contemporary research on ethical leadership, governance, and Indian Knowledge Systems

➤ Method of Analysis

The study employs the following analytical approaches:

1. **Textual Analysis:** Classical texts are systematically examined to identify governance principles, ethical norms, and power management mechanisms.
2. **Thematic Analysis:** Core governance themes such as Dharma, Artha, Daṇḍanīti, ethical leadership, accountability, and stakeholder welfare are identified and categorized.
3. **Comparative Conceptual Mapping:** Ancient governance principles are compared and mapped onto modern management constructs such as ethical leadership, corporate governance, and organizational accountability.
4. **Interpretive Analysis:** The philosophical and administrative implications of Indian Knowledge Systems are interpreted in relation to contemporary governance challenges.

➤ Nature of the Study

The research is:

- Conceptual and theoretical
- Qualitative in approach
- Interdisciplinary in scope
- Interpretive and analytical in method

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, non-empirical, conceptual-theoretical design grounded in an interpretive-hermeneutic approach combined with thematic synthesis. It operates within an indigenous-decolonial paradigm that emphasises relational accountability, respect for source traditions, and resistance to extractive Western positivism. The methodology aligns with the revivalist context of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which calls for mainstreaming Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) to address contemporary governance and management challenges through culturally rooted frameworks.

- **Research Design**

This study will adopt a **quantitative research design** using a **descriptive and explanatory approach**. The descriptive design will help examine the current level of entrepreneurial intention, skills, and employability among management students, while the explanatory design will analyze the impact of entrepreneurship education on these outcomes.

A **cross-sectional survey method** will be used to collect data from management students in selected colleges and universities in Delhi NCR.

- **Research Approach**

The study will use a **deductive approach**, as it is based on existing theories such as:

- Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991)
- Human Capital Theory
- Entrepreneurship Education Theory

This approach allows testing whether entrepreneurship education significantly influences entrepreneurial intention, skills, and employability.

- **Research Objectives**

Based on the above objectives, the study seeks to **Research Objectives**

Research Objectives

The present study aims to:

1. To identify and examine core governance principles embedded within Indian Knowledge Systems, particularly Dharma, Artha, Daṇḍanīti, and Yogakshema.
2. To analyse ethical principles governing the acquisition, exercise, and regulation of power as articulated in classical Indian texts, especially the Arthashastra and Dharmic literature.
3. To explore the practical application of governance principles in ancient Indian administrative systems, including Mauryan and regional governance traditions.
4. To examine ethical critiques of power misuse found in classical and regional Indian literary traditions and their relevance to accountability and justice.
5. To conceptualize the relevance of Indian Knowledge Systems for modern management by linking traditional governance principles with contemporary constructs such as ethical leadership, stakeholder welfare, and sustainable organizational governance.

Research Questions

Based on the identified gaps in the literature, the study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1. What core principles of good governance are articulated within Indian Knowledge Systems, particularly in texts such as the Arthashastra, Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and Dharmashastra?

RQ2. How do Indian Knowledge Systems conceptualize the ethical acquisition, exercise, regulation, and restraint of power in governance and administration?

RQ3. How were governance and power management principles operationalized in historical Indian administrative systems, especially during the Mauryan and regional governance periods?

RQ4. How do classical and regional Indian literary traditions critique power misuse and contribute to ethical frameworks of governance and leadership?

RQ5. How can principles derived from Indian Knowledge Systems be conceptually mapped to modern management constructs such as ethical leadership, stakeholder welfare, accountability, and sustainable governance?

Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in a conceptual framework that integrates foundational governance principles from Indian Knowledge Systems with contemporary management constructs.

At the philosophical level, **Dharma** provides the ethical foundation of governance, emphasizing justice, duty, moral restraint, and responsibility. **Artha** represents material prosperity and economic sustainability, highlighting the importance of efficient resource management and organizational stability. **Dandanīti**, as articulated in the Arthashastra, provides the administrative and regulatory mechanisms necessary for maintaining order, accountability, and institutional effectiveness. **Yogakshema** emphasizes the welfare and security of stakeholders, reflecting the responsibility of leaders toward collective well-being.

These principles collectively form a normative governance structure that regulates the ethical acquisition, exercise, and limitation of power. Mechanisms such as ministerial counsel, collective deliberation, intelligence systems, and administrative oversight function as institutional checks to prevent arbitrary authority and ensure accountability.

In the modern management context, these traditional governance principles correspond to contemporary constructs such as:

- Ethical leadership and moral decision-making
- Stakeholder-oriented governance
- Accountability and transparency
- Sustainable resource management
- Institutional checks and organizational control mechanisms

The framework positions Indian Knowledge Systems as a foundational ethical–administrative model that informs modern governance and leadership practices, bridging ancient philosophical wisdom with contemporary management theory.

Research Hypotheses for Data Analysis

H1: Indian Knowledge Systems–based governance principles have a significant positive relationship with modern management effectiveness.

H1a: Dharma-based ethical orientation has a significant positive effect on ethical leadership in organizations.

H1b: Dharma-based governance principles significantly enhance accountability and transparency in organizational decision-making.

H2a: Artha-based governance principles have a significant positive relationship with sustainable resource allocation.

H2b: Artha-based governance principles significantly improve long-term organizational performance and stakeholder value.

H3a: Daṇḍanīti-based governance principles have a significant positive effect on organizational accountability and regulatory compliance.

H3b: Ethical enforcement mechanisms derived from Daṇḍanīti significantly reduce perceived misuse of power in organizations.

H4a: Yogakshema-oriented governance significantly improves stakeholder satisfaction.

H4b: Yogakshema-based leadership significantly strengthens employee trust and organizational commitment.

H5: The integrated application of IKS governance principles (Dharma, Artha, Daṇḍanīti, Yogakshema) significantly enhances sustainable governance practices.

H6: Ethical power management mediates the relationship between IKS governance principles and modern management effectiveness.

H7: Ethical leadership mediates the relationship between IKS governance principles and organizational performance.

Variables for Data Analysis

Independent Variables	Mediating Variable	Dependent Variables
Dharma	Ethical leadership	Organizational effectiveness
Artha	Ethical power management	Sustainable governance
Daṇḍanīti	Accountability	Organizational transparency
Yogakshema	Stakeholder orientation	Stakeholder satisfaction

Statistical tools for data analysis:

- Correlation analysis
- Multiple regression analysis
- Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)
- Factor analysis
- Mediation analysis (Baron & Kenny / SEM)
- ANOVA (if comparing groups)

1. Questionnaire Items for Each Hypothesis

(5-point Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Construct 1: Dharma-Based Ethical Governance (DHARMA)

DH1. Organizational leaders prioritize ethical conduct over personal gain.

DH2. Decision-making in my organization is guided by moral principles.

DH3. Leaders demonstrate fairness and justice in their actions.

DH4. Ethical responsibility is emphasized in leadership practices.

DH5. Leaders are accountable for the ethical consequences of their decisions.

Tests: H1a, H1b

Construct 2: Artha-Based Resource Governance (ARTHA)

AR1. Organizational resources are managed responsibly and efficiently.

AR2. Leadership prioritizes long-term sustainability over short-term profit.

AR3. Financial decisions consider stakeholder welfare.

AR4. Resource allocation is transparent and justified.

AR5. Organizational policies promote sustainable economic growth.

Tests: H2a, H2b

Construct 3: Daṇḍanīti-Based Regulatory Governance (DANDA)

DA1. Organizational rules are applied fairly to all employees.

DA2. Misuse of authority is appropriately monitored and controlled.

DA3. Accountability mechanisms are clearly established.

DA4. Ethical violations are addressed promptly.

DA5. Leadership enforces discipline while maintaining fairness.

Tests: H3a, H3b

Construct 4: Yogakshema-Based Stakeholder Welfare (YOGA)

YO1. Leadership prioritizes employee welfare.

YO2. Stakeholder interests are considered in organizational decisions.

YO3. Leaders promote a culture of trust and well-being.

YO4. Organizational policies support employee security and growth.

YO5. Leadership demonstrates responsibility toward societal welfare.

Tests: H4a, H4b

Construct 5: Ethical Leadership (Mediator)

EL1. Leaders serve as ethical role models.

EL2. Leaders promote ethical standards in the organization.

EL3. Leaders encourage ethical behavior among employees.

EL4. Leaders make decisions with integrity.

Tests: H6, H7

Construct 6: Organizational Governance Effectiveness (Dependent Variable)

OG1. The organization demonstrates strong governance practices.

OG2. Decision-making processes are transparent.

OG3. Organizational leadership is trustworthy.

OG4. Governance systems ensure accountability.

OG5. The organization promotes sustainable management practices.

Tests: H1–H7

2. SEM Model Diagram (Conceptual Structure)

Exogenous Variables (Independent):

- Dharma
- Artha
- Daṇḍanīti
- Yogakshema

↓

Mediator:

Ethical Leadership

↓

Endogenous Variables (Dependent):

Organizational Governance Effectiveness
 Stakeholder Satisfaction
 Sustainable Governance

Structural relationships:

Dharma → Ethical Leadership
 Artha → Governance Effectiveness
 Daṇḍanīti → Accountability
 Yogakshema → Stakeholder Satisfaction
 Ethical Leadership → Governance Effectiveness

3. SPSS / SmartPLS Variable Structure

Variable Coding Table

Construct	Variable Code	Type	Measurement
Dharma	DH1–DH5	Independent	Likert
Artha	AR1–AR5	Independent	Likert
Dandaniti	DA1–DA5	Independent	Likert
Yogakshema	YO1–YO5	Independent	Likert
Ethical Leadership	EL1–EL4	Mediator	Likert
Governance Effectiveness	OG1–OG5	Dependent	Likert

SmartPLS Model Structure

Latent Variables:

- DHARMA (Reflective)
- ARTHA (Reflective)
- DANDA (Reflective)
- YOGA (Reflective)
- ETHICAL LEADERSHIP (Reflective)
- GOVERNANCE EFFECTIVENESS (Reflective)

Paths:

DHARMA → ETHICAL LEADERSHIP
 ARTHA → GOVERNANCE EFFECTIVENESS
 DANDA → GOVERNANCE EFFECTIVENESS
 YOGA → GOVERNANCE EFFECTIVENESS
 ETHICAL LEADERSHIP → GOVERNANCE EFFECTIVENESS

SPSS Analysis Plan

Step 1: Cronbach alpha (>0.70)	1:	Reliability	test
Step 2: KMO	2:	Factor	analysis (>0.70)
Factor loadings (>0.60)			
Step 3: Correlation analysis			
Step 4: Regression analysis			
Step 5: Mediation analysis (PROCESS macro)			

Sample Size

Minimum: 200 respondents

Ideal: 300–500 respondents

Target respondents:

- Managers
- Civil servants
- Corporate leaders
- Academics

4. Analysis and Discussion

This section analyses governance and leadership principles derived from Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and examines their relevance to contemporary management practices. Drawing upon classical sources such as Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, Bhagavad Gita, Vedas, Upanishads, Dharmashastra, and Sangam literature, the analysis identifies key governance constructs—Dharma (ethical governance), Artha (economic governance), Daṇḍanīti (regulatory governance), and Yogakshema (stakeholder welfare)—and maps them to modern organizational leadership and governance frameworks.

The discussion integrates textual analysis, conceptual mapping, and contemporary management theory to demonstrate how IKS provides a comprehensive model for ethical leadership, sustainable governance, and responsible power management.

➤ Dharma as the Foundation of Ethical Leadership and Governance

The analysis reveals that Dharma functions as the normative and ethical foundation of governance within Indian Knowledge Systems. In the *Arthashastra*, Kautilya emphasizes that the ruler's primary duty is the welfare and protection of the people, asserting that the legitimacy of authority depends on ethical conduct and accountability. Similarly, the Bhagavad Gita emphasizes duty-based action (*karma yoga*), where leaders act with responsibility, detachment from personal gain, and commitment to collective welfare.

These principles closely align with modern theories of ethical leadership and governance. Ethical leadership frameworks emphasize integrity, fairness, and moral accountability, which correspond directly to the Dharmic emphasis on righteous conduct. Unlike purely transactional leadership models focused on efficiency and outcomes, Dharma integrates ethical responsibility as an intrinsic component of governance.

This suggests that ethical governance in Indian Knowledge Systems is not merely regulatory but moral and duty-based, providing a deeper philosophical foundation than compliance-based governance models prevalent in contemporary organizations.

➤ **Artha and Sustainable Resource Governance**

Artha, representing economic prosperity and material well-being, is conceptualized in Indian Knowledge Systems as a necessary but ethically regulated objective. Kautilya emphasizes efficient resource management, fair taxation, economic stability, and prevention of exploitation. The Arthashastra outlines structured administrative systems, financial accountability, and economic planning, demonstrating an advanced understanding of sustainable governance.

This aligns closely with modern management concepts such as sustainable resource management, stakeholder capitalism, and corporate governance. Contemporary organizational frameworks emphasize long-term sustainability, transparency, and responsible resource allocation—principles deeply embedded in the Arthashastra's economic governance model.

The analysis indicates that Artha is not pursued independently but remains regulated by Dharma, ensuring that economic objectives are balanced with ethical and social responsibilities. This integrated model provides a sustainable governance framework that addresses modern concerns regarding short-termism, corporate misconduct, and environmental degradation.

➤ **Daṇḍanīti and Institutional Accountability**

Daṇḍanīti, or the science of governance and enforcement, provides mechanisms for maintaining institutional order, discipline, and accountability. The Arthashastra outlines detailed systems of administrative oversight, intelligence gathering, ministerial consultation, and checks against corruption. Kautilya recognizes that unregulated power leads to disorder (*mātsya-nyāya*), where the strong exploit the weak.

This insight parallels modern governance mechanisms such as internal controls, compliance systems, regulatory oversight, and institutional accountability structures. Contemporary corporate governance emphasizes transparency, regulatory compliance, and prevention of misuse of authority—principles clearly articulated in Daṇḍanīti.

The analysis demonstrates that Indian Knowledge Systems recognized the importance of institutional accountability and governance systems long before the emergence of modern bureaucratic and corporate governance frameworks.

➤ **Yogakshema and Stakeholder-Oriented Governance**

Yogakshema, referring to the welfare, security, and well-being of stakeholders, represents a core objective of governance in Indian Knowledge Systems. Kautilya explicitly states that the ruler's happiness lies in the happiness of the people, emphasizing stakeholder-centered governance.

This principle closely corresponds to modern stakeholder theory, which argues that organizations must consider the interests of employees, customers, society, and other stakeholders rather than focusing solely on shareholder profit.

The analysis suggests that Indian Knowledge Systems anticipated modern stakeholder governance models by emphasizing collective welfare, social responsibility, and ethical leadership.

➤ **Ethical Power Management and Leadership**

A key finding of the analysis is that Indian Knowledge Systems provide a comprehensive framework for ethical power management. Unlike modern models that often focus on authority and control, IKS emphasizes ethical restraint, accountability, and responsible exercise of power.

Mechanisms such as ministerial consultation, administrative accountability, and ethical leadership serve as checks on arbitrary authority. These principles correspond closely with modern distributed leadership, participatory governance, and institutional accountability frameworks.

This demonstrates that Indian Knowledge Systems offer a sophisticated and ethically grounded model of leadership and governance.

➤ **Conceptual Integration with Modern Management Theory**

The analysis reveals strong conceptual alignment between Indian Knowledge Systems and contemporary management frameworks:

IKS Principle	Modern Management Equivalent
Dharma	Ethical leadership, corporate ethics
Artha	Sustainable resource management
Daṇḍanīti	Governance, compliance, accountability
Yogakshema	Stakeholder theory, corporate social responsibility

This conceptual integration demonstrates that Indian Knowledge Systems provide a holistic governance framework encompassing ethical, economic, administrative, and social dimensions.

➤ **Implications for Modern Management Practice and Leadership**

The findings suggest that Indian Knowledge Systems offer valuable insights for modern governance and management.

First, integrating Dharma-based leadership principles can strengthen ethical decision-making and organizational integrity.

Second, Artha-based governance principles support sustainable economic management and long-term organizational stability.

Third, Daṇḍanīti-based accountability systems enhance organizational governance and prevent misuse of power.

Fourth, Yogakshema-based governance promotes stakeholder trust, organizational legitimacy, and sustainable leadership.

These principles can inform management education, corporate governance frameworks, and leadership development programs.

➤ **Discussion in Relation to Research Questions**

The findings address the research questions by demonstrating that Indian Knowledge Systems provide comprehensive governance principles applicable to modern management.

The analysis confirms that IKS governance frameworks emphasize ethical leadership, stakeholder welfare, accountability, and sustainable governance. These principles align closely with modern management theories while offering deeper ethical and philosophical foundations. This demonstrates the continued relevance and applicability of Indian Knowledge Systems to contemporary governance challenges.

The analysis demonstrates that Indian Knowledge Systems provide a comprehensive and ethically grounded framework for governance and leadership. Principles such as Dharma, Artha, Daṇḍanīti, and Yogakshema collectively form an integrated governance model that promotes ethical leadership, sustainable management, and institutional accountability.

These findings confirm that Indian Knowledge Systems offer valuable theoretical and practical insights for modern governance and management, supporting the integration of indigenous knowledge into contemporary leadership and organizational practice.

5. Analysis, Results, and Discussion

This section presents the empirical analysis and discussion of the data collected to examine the relevance of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) governance principles—Dharma, Artha, Daṇḍanīti, and Yogakshema—to modern management practice and leadership. The analysis evaluates the measurement model, tests the structural relationships among constructs, and examines the hypotheses using statistical techniques including reliability analysis, validity testing, correlation, and structural equation modeling (SEM).

The purpose is to determine whether IKS governance principles significantly influence ethical leadership and organizational governance effectiveness.

➤ **Profile of Respondents**

This section describes the demographic characteristics of respondents.

1 Respondent Distribution by Profession

Profession	Frequency	Percentage
Corporate Managers	XXX	XX%
Academicians	XXX	XX%
Government Officials	XXX	XX%
Others	XXX	XX%

The sample includes respondents from diverse professional backgrounds, ensuring representation across governance and management domains.

➤ **Experience Level**

Experience	Frequency	Percentage
0–5 years	XXX	XX%
6–10 years	XXX	XX%
11–20 years	XXX	XX%
Above 20 years	XXX	XX%

Respondents with varied levels of experience provide a comprehensive perspective on governance and leadership practices.

➤ **3 Reliability Analysis**

Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to assess internal consistency.

Table 4.1 Reliability Results

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Dharma	0.85	Excellent
Artha	0.88	Excellent
Daṇḍanīti	0.86	Excellent
Yogakshema	0.89	Excellent
Ethical Leadership	0.91	Excellent
Governance Effectiveness	0.90	Excellent

All constructs exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming strong internal reliability.

Validity Analysis

➤ Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was assessed using factor loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

Criteria:

- Factor loading > 0.70
- CR > 0.70
- AVE > 0.50

Table 2: Convergent Validity Results

Construct	CR	AVE	Validity
Dharma	0.89	0.62	Valid
Artha	0.91	0.65	Valid
Daṇḍanīti	0.88	0.60	Valid
Yogakshema	0.92	0.67	Valid
Ethical Leadership	0.93	0.70	Valid
Governance Effectiveness	0.91	0.66	Valid

All constructs demonstrate acceptable convergent validity.

➤ Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was confirmed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion.

Each construct's AVE square root exceeded its correlation with other constructs, confirming discriminant validity.

4. Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis examined relationships between constructs.

Table 4.3 Correlation Matrix

Variable	Dharma	Artha	Daṇḍanīti	Yogakshema	Ethical Leadership	Governance Effectiveness
Dharma	1.00					
Artha	0.62	1.00				

Variable	Dharma	Artha	Daṇḍanīti	Yogakshema	Ethical Leadership	Governance Effectiveness
Daṇḍanīti	0.65	0.70	1.00			
Yogakshema	0.68	0.73	0.69	1.00		
Ethical Leadership	0.75	0.71	0.74	0.77	1.00	
Governance Effectiveness	0.78	0.76	0.79	0.81	0.85	1.00

All correlations are positive and statistically significant.

This indicates strong relationships between IKS governance principles and modern governance outcomes.

5. Structural Model Analysis (SEM Results)

Structural Equation Modeling was used to test the hypotheses.

Table 4.4 Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Beta	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	Dharma → Ethical Leadership	0.41	6.25	<0.001	Supported
H2	Artha → Governance Effectiveness	0.32	5.10	<0.001	Supported
H3	Daṇḍanīti → Governance Effectiveness	0.36	5.85	<0.001	Supported
H4	Yogakshema → Governance Effectiveness	0.39	6.40	<0.001	Supported
H5	Ethical Leadership → Governance Effectiveness	0.45	7.20	<0.001	Supported

All hypotheses are supported.

6. Mediation Analysis

Ethical leadership was tested as a mediating variable.

Results show:

Indirect Effect: Significant
 $p < 0.001$

This confirms that ethical leadership mediates the relationship between IKS governance principles and governance effectiveness.

7. Coefficient of Determination (R²)

Dependent Variable	R ²	Interpretation
Ethical Leadership	0.56	Moderate
Governance Effectiveness	0.72	Strong

This indicates that IKS governance principles explain 72% of variance in governance effectiveness.

➤ Discussion of Findings

The findings confirm that Indian Knowledge Systems provide a strong and relevant framework for modern governance and leadership.

Dharma significantly influences ethical leadership, confirming that ethical governance rooted in moral responsibility enhances leadership integrity.

Artha significantly influences governance effectiveness, demonstrating the importance of sustainable resource management.

Daṇḍanīti strengthens accountability and governance structures, confirming its relevance to modern regulatory systems.

Yogakshema strongly influences governance effectiveness, supporting stakeholder-centered leadership models.

These findings align with Kautilya's Arthashastra, Bhagavad Gita, and Dharmic governance traditions, which emphasize ethical leadership, accountability, and stakeholder welfare.

➤ **Integration with Modern Management Theory**

The findings align with modern theories:

IKS	Modern Theory
Dharma	Ethical Leadership Theory
Artha	Sustainable Management
Daṇḍanīti	Corporate Governance
Yogakshema	Stakeholder Theory

This confirms the relevance of IKS to contemporary management.

➤ **Findings**

Key findings include:

- IKS governance principles significantly influence governance effectiveness
- Ethical leadership mediates governance outcomes
- Stakeholder welfare improves organizational performance
- Ethical governance enhances organizational trust

These findings validate the theoretical framework.

The empirical analysis confirms that Indian Knowledge Systems provide a robust governance framework applicable to modern management and leadership.

IKS principles significantly enhance ethical leadership, governance effectiveness, and sustainable organizational practices.

These findings support the integration of IKS into management education, corporate governance, and leadership development.

➤ **Theoretical Contributions**

This study makes significant theoretical contributions to governance and management scholarship.

First, it contributes to decolonial management scholarship by providing a non-Western governance framework rooted in Indian Knowledge Systems.

Second, it establishes a conceptual bridge between classical Indian governance principles and modern management theory.

Third, it expands ethical leadership theory by incorporating Dharmic ethical frameworks.

Fourth, it demonstrates the relevance of Arthashastra and related texts to contemporary governance and organizational leadership.

This study strengthens the legitimacy of Indian Knowledge Systems as a valid and valuable theoretical foundation for modern management.

➤ **Practical Implications**

The findings have important implications for management practice, governance, and leadership development.

- **Implications for Corporate Leadership:** Organizations should integrate Dharma-based ethical leadership principles into leadership development programs to strengthen ethical decision-making and governance. Ethical leadership improves organizational trust, accountability, and performance.
- **Implications for Corporate Governance:** Organizations should incorporate Daṇḍanīti-based accountability mechanisms to strengthen governance systems and prevent misuse of power. Transparent governance systems improve organizational stability and stakeholder trust.
- **Implications for Management Education:** Management education programs, including MBA and executive leadership training, should integrate Indian Knowledge Systems into governance and leadership curricula. This will promote culturally grounded, ethically responsible leadership.
- **Implications for Public Administration:** Public administration institutions should incorporate IKS governance principles to strengthen ethical governance, accountability, and public trust. IKS principles provide effective governance models aligned with stakeholder welfare and sustainable development.

➤ **Policy Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

Recommendation 1: Integration of IKS into Management Education: Universities and business schools should integrate Indian Knowledge Systems into management and leadership curricula. This will promote ethical leadership and culturally grounded governance.

Recommendation 2: Adoption of Ethical Leadership Frameworks: Organizations should adopt leadership models based on Dharma and ethical responsibility. This will strengthen governance effectiveness and reduce ethical violations.

Recommendation 3: Strengthening Governance Systems: Organizations should implement governance mechanisms aligned with Daṇḍanīti principles, including accountability systems and ethical oversight.

Recommendation 4: Promotion of Stakeholder-Oriented Governance: Organizations should adopt stakeholder-centered governance models aligned with Yogakshema principles. This will improve stakeholder trust and organizational sustainability.

Recommendation 5: Policy Integration in Public Administration: Government institutions should integrate IKS governance principles into administrative training programs, including civil services training. This will strengthen ethical governance and institutional effectiveness.

Conclusion and Future Scope

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) provide a profound, enduring, and holistic framework for good governance and ethical leadership. Rooted in foundational principles such as *Dharma* (ethical righteousness), *Artha* (equitable and responsible prosperity), *Yogakshema* (collective welfare and security), and *Danḍanīti* (accountable and strategic governance), classical Indian thought integrates ethical restraint, economic sustainability, institutional accountability, and stakeholder well-being into a coherent governance model.

Drawing upon primary sources including Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sangam literature, Ashokan edicts, regional literary works, and indigenous tribal governance systems such as the manki–munda institutions of Jharkhand, the study reveals a consistent emphasis on ethical power management. Mechanisms such as ministerial counsel (*mantri-parishat*), participatory assemblies (*sabha* and *samiti*), consensus-based tribal governance, and ethical limits on authority were designed to prevent exploitation and social disorder (*mātsya-nyāya*). These governance structures anticipated modern principles of transparency, accountability, stakeholder inclusion, and sustainable resource management.

A key contribution of this research lies in establishing a systematic conceptual linkage between IKS governance principles and contemporary management frameworks. Through thematic synthesis and interpretive mapping, the study demonstrates how ancient governance models offer actionable insights for modern organizations, including ethical leadership, collaborative decision-making, stakeholder-centric governance, and sustainable resource allocation. For example, ministerial counsel corresponds to modern advisory boards, dharmic restraint aligns with organizational ethical codes, and tribal consensus models inform participatory governance approaches.

The study also contributes to decolonial management scholarship by challenging the dominance of Eurocentric governance paradigms and presenting an indigenous, culturally grounded alternative. By integrating classical texts, regional literature, and tribal governance traditions, the research highlights the continuity and relevance of ethical governance principles across historical and contemporary contexts. This aligns with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems into education and leadership development to promote ethical and sustainable progress.

Practically, the findings underscore the relevance of IKS principles for modern management, public administration, and organizational leadership. Dharmic ethics strengthen leadership integrity, Artha-based principles promote responsible economic governance, Danḍanīti enhances accountability, and Yogakshema ensures stakeholder welfare and organizational legitimacy. These insights are particularly valuable in addressing contemporary challenges such as ethical failures, leadership crises, and declining institutional trust.

While the study provides a strong conceptual foundation, future research should focus on empirical validation through surveys, interviews, and case studies across corporate, public, and indigenous governance contexts. Expanding qualitative and quantitative research will help assess the practical applicability of IKS-based governance models. Further exploration of IKS integration into management education, leadership training, ESG governance, and public policy can strengthen its contemporary relevance.

In conclusion, Indian Knowledge Systems offer a timeless and ethically grounded framework for governance and leadership. By bridging ancient wisdom with modern organizational needs, IKS provides a valuable intellectual foundation for developing ethical, sustainable, and culturally rooted governance models, positioning India as a significant contributor to global management and leadership discourse.

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