



# Indian Knowledge Systems and the Ethics of Leadership in Governance

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## **Abstract:**

Indian Knowledge Systems provide a strong ethical context for leadership and governance; linking authority to responsibility, power to restraint and administration to public welfare. Indian traditions emphasize moral self-control as the core of leadership, whereas procedural theories of governance are more concerned with law, efficiency, and institutional structures. Ideas of dharma, rajadharma, lokasangraha, nishkama karma, satya, ahimsa and sarvodaya help to articulate the responsibilities of rulers, administration and public institutions. The present paper looks at the role of Indian Knowledge Systems in the current discussions on ethical leadership in governance. It is based on classical text like Bhagavad Gita, Arthashastra, Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata, political ethics of Buddhism, Gandhian thought, good governance, sustainable development, and responsible technology as modern governance models. The paper suggests that Indian Knowledge Systems do not oppose modern democratic governance but rather can enrich it by its main focus on moral character, social justice, accountability, welfare of the citizens, ecological responsibility and service without selfishness. Meanwhile, the paper acknowledges the importance of critical interpretation, so as to ensure that the traditional concepts are not employed to legitimate hierarchy, exclusion or authoritarianism. The study ends with the proposal that Indian Knowledge Systems could help implement a value-based governance framework that is ethical, inclusive, participative and culturally indigenous.

**Keywords:** Indian Knowledge Systems, ethical leadership, governance, dharma, rajadharma, Arthashastra, Bhagavad Gita, public administration, good governance, NEP 2020.

## **1. Introduction**

Governance leadership is not just about directing but also about making use of power for people's good. Governance is typically assessed in terms of transparency, accountability, rule of law, institutional efficiency, participation and control of corruption in contemporary public administration. Peaceful, inclusive, accountable and effective institutions as pillars of justice and development are highlighted in international frameworks like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. According to the United Nations, Goal 16 is about peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice, and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. In similar fashion, UNESCAP defines good governance



as participation, consensus, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness, equity, inclusiveness, and rule of law. (ESCAP)

These are modern principles which matter but are more concerned with institutional action than with the inner moral makeup of the leader. In Indian Knowledge Systems, ethics is the core of governance, filling this gap. In Indian traditions leadership is not only a technical function but it's a moral discipline. A person who is a ruler, minister, administrator, teacher, judge, or a community leader is expected to control his/her desires, do his duty according to dharma, safeguard the weak and strive for the welfare of the people and not for his/her personal gain.

Indian Knowledge Systems are again being the focus of education and policy. Indian Knowledge Systems are also explicitly recognised in the National Education Policy 2020 as an integral part of India's intellectual inheritance, and they are suggested for its incorporation in education, including as an elective course in secondary schools. The University Grants Commission also has issued guidelines for integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into higher education programs of the students, even in introductory courses. The Ministry of Education set up the IKS Division in June 2020 to implement the Indian Knowledge Systems scheme and granted administrative support to the Division by AICTE. It is clear that these developments indicate that IKS is not just a cultural subject but also is a developing academic and policy field.

This paper explores the ethical contribution of Indian Knowledge Systems to leadership in governance. The main research question is: What role can Indian Knowledge Systems play in an ethical framework of leadership in modern governance? The paper proposes that IKS offers a comprehensive perspective in which governance is assessed based on outcomes as well as on the quality of the moral process in decision making, the intentions of the leader, and the welfare of the society.

### **Enabling students to view Indian Knowledge Systems as the systems of knowledge of India.**

Indian Knowledge Systems is the vast reservoir of knowledge that has evolved in the Indian subcontinent in the fields of philosophy, science, statecraft, medicine, ecology, education, arts, language, ethics and spirituality. They are related texts like Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Arthashastra, Dharmashastras, Buddhist/Jain texts, Sangam literature, epics, knowledge traditions of regions and oral, community-based and practice-oriented knowledge.

IKS is not one religion. It is multi-lingual, multi-voiced and multi-formative. Examples include the Upanishads which stress self-knowledge and spiritual unity; the Bhagavad Gita which discusses duty, action, detachment and moral courage; the Arthashastra, a pragmatic theory of statecraft; and the ideas of compassion and non-harm in Buddhist thought, the ideas of non-violence and restraint in Jain thought, and the ideas of truth, non-violence, trusteeship and sarvodaya in Gandhian philosophy. These traditions, combined, form an ethical grammar of leadership.

One of the central aspects of IKS is the intertwining of knowledge and actions. The usefulness of knowledge is not limited to the capacity to achieve material control. It lies in its capacity to enrich judgment, develop discipline and foster social harmony. That is why Indian traditions link education with the formation of character. From this angle, Leadership is not simply a matter of commanding others but of ruling oneself before ruling the society.

## **Ethical Leadership: Modern & Indian Perspective**

According to modern studies of leadership, ethical leadership is defined as leadership that models normatively appropriate interpersonal behavior and personal action and communicates, reinforces, and reflects normatively appropriate interpersonal behavior and personal action in decision making (Brown et al., 2005). Brown, Treviño, and Harrison's influential research indicates that followers' combination of honesty, fairness, trust, consideration, and willingness to report problems is related to ethical leadership. Thus, ethical leadership is personal and institutional – that is, the leader needs to be personally ethical, and they need to establish systems that promote ethical conduct.

This concern is echoed by Indian Knowledge Systems, which introduces dharma and rajadharma as other concepts. The term Dharma is a complex term that encompasses duty, justice, moral order, responsibility and moral conduct. It has no religious boundaries – it serves as a norm for one's personal, social, and political life. Rajadharma is the code of conduct expected of leaders and government officials. It demands power to be utilized for protection, justice, public welfare and moral order.

Indian conception of ethical leadership, thus, has three aspects to it. The first step is for the leader to master himself. Greed, anger, pride, or attachment is one of the characteristics of the leader who cannot govern well. Secondly, the leader should act upon dharma (duty and justice), and not be guided by personal preference. Thirdly, leadership has to be based on the welfare and stability of the social order, called lokasangraha. Ethical leadership here is not only about being free from corruption, but it's about achieving social good.

## **Methodology**

This paper adopts a qualitative, interpretive and conceptual research approach. Does not rely on statistical data or field surveys. Rather, it examines selected classical Indian texts and contemporary literature on governance to create a conceptual framework for ethical leadership in governance.

The main sources are the Bhagavad Gita, Arthashastra, the ideas of the Upanishads, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Buddhist ethical thought and the writings of Gandhi. There are also discussions in academic literature about responsible technology, Indian Knowledge Systems, public administration, good governance, and ethical leadership which are secondary sources. The method used is comparative and analytical. It is a comparison of moral thoughts from the field of IKS with the principles of contemporary governance which include Accountability, Transparency, Justice, Participation, Welfare, Sustainability etc. The paper also adopts a critical approach. It does not assume that the old ideas are always better than the new institutions. Instead, it considers how some of these principles can be fruitfully applied in the context of contemporary democracy, constitution and inclusive governance.

## **Dharma in the Context of the Social Order of Governance**

Ethical principle of Indian thought is Dharma. Governance: Dharma refers to the application of authority in a just, responsible and moral manner. But a leader is not legitimate simply because he or she has the office. The legitimacy of power is based on ethical duty.

In the Mahabharata, the term rajadharma is considered one of the greatest responsibilities as the actions of the ruler are reflected in the entire society. A ruler's failure is not private; it causes public suffering. The need for public leaders to control resources, laws, policies and institutions that impact millions of people is still relevant today. The unethical leader can create distrust, become a factor of inequality, break down institutions and normalize corruption.



Another concept Dharma introduces is contextual judgment. Ethical governance is not a matter of rules. Leaders should take into account the timing, location, consequences, and wellbeing of impacted individuals. But “contextual judgment” does not imply “moral relativism.” That is, wisdom, and not mechanical rule-following, is needed in the process of ethical decision-making. There can be no compromise between law and compassion, justice and social stability for a dharmic leader.

It is particularly significant in a contemporary political system wherein rulers are confronted with complex dilemmas: economy and ecology, national security and civil liberty, technological progress and privacy, majority and minority rights. Dharma provides a set of principles to determine whether decisions are considered just, promote well-being, and uphold moral standards.

### **Public Leadership and Rajadharma**

Rajadharma is the moral duties of rulers. Classical Indian thinking that the ruler is not exempt from duty, for the ruler is bound with duty. The State is not for the ruler's enjoyment, but to protect and ensure the welfare of the people. This concept is like today's public service ethics which involve people doing something in the public service and not in their own interests.

The concept of welfare orientation of rajadharma has significance to democratic governance. Political leaders and civil servants in a democracy are public office holders who are trusted to serve the public. They are not the owners of the state; they are merely responsible for it on their own for a period of time. Rajadharma fortifies this notion by stating that public power is morally contingent. When a leader pays no attention to the people, he has failed to do his job.

The Arthashastra is also a practical description of government. It is usually portrayed as a realist text, but the power/responsibility dichotomy is never articulated. Kautilya speaks of administration, taxation, security, economic management, intelligence, law and welfare. Scholarly writings on Kautilya and good governance reveal that the Arthashastra continues to be relevant to the issues of public administration, accountability and statecraft in the political thought of India. There has also been recent scholarship on Kautilyan principles as an indigenous model of good governance (JSTOR). (Kuey)

One of the key ethical values of rajadharma is that governance has to be people-centred. The use of public funds must be for public good; the weak must be protected by law; punishment must be commensurate; and decision making must be disciplined. The leader should not be proud, luxurious and partial. This is similar to expectations of accountable, transparent and service oriented governance of the present day.

### **Ethical Leadership and the Bhagavad Gita**

In the Bhagavad Gita, the concept of duty, action, self-control and detachment provides a potent ethical theory of leadership. Arjuna's problem is not merely a personal one, it is a leadership problem. He is faced with a challenging choice that involves his duty, his emotions, violence, justice and social responsibility. There is no such thing as blind action in Krishna's teaching. Instead, it calls upon Arjuna to be clear, disciplined, and dedicated to doing their duty properly.

One of the core leadership principles of the Gita is the practice of nishkama karma – action without attachment to the results of the action. For governance, this translates to the fact that leaders must do the right thing, not for their own agendas, popular opinion, fear or greed. A public official cannot control all of the outcomes, but that official can control the intent, effort, fairness, and integrity.

Another key concept is lokasangraha, which refers to maintenance and wellbeing of the world or social order. The leaders' behaviour should be exemplary, as it will affect others. When the leaders condone or

accept corrupt, unscrupulous, and selfish behavior, the rest of society internalises it. Institutions are stronger when leaders act in a disciplined, fair and service-oriented manner.

Self-mastery is also a key theme of the Gita. If a leader is unable to reign in his anger, desire, ego and attachment, he can use power in a wrong way. Ethical governance is based on inner governance. This concept is especially relevant in today's society because even when the law is followed, bad behavior can be avoided if leaders are not held to their moral standards.

### **An analysis of the book Arthashastra: Ethics, Accountability, and Administrative Realism**

The Arthashastra is a key Indian treatise on politics and government. It is practical and at times also severe, but acknowledges that the government does not succeed without discipline in government, care of the people, economic security and the people's protection. The text makes governance a serious science and therefore, the need to train, be vigilant and hold accountable.

Kautilya's statecraft may be said to be of realpolitik but also has ethical lessons to teach in governance. First, it recognises the danger of corruption. Authorities responsible for public goods might corrupt it and systems of inspection, audit, supervision and punishment are required. This presages contemporary concepts of accountability in administration and anti-corruption measures.

Secondly, political stability and economic welfare are connected in the Arthashastra. Taxation, exploitation, and neglect of the weak are a burden on the state. Governance has to safeguard agriculture, trade, security, infrastructure and justice. Thirdly, Kautilya points to the need of competent ministers and counsellors. A ruler must consult and deliberate and appoint capable officials. This is important today because it is not only ethical leadership that is individual, it is also the need for ethical institutions and competent teams.

The Arthashastra adds the elements of realism to the IKS-based leadership ethics. It reminds us that "morality" cannot be realized without administrative ability. There are weak institutions and a weak leader who may be personally honest but not effective. Ethical governance thus involves virtue—and systems, personal integrity, rules, monitoring, accountability, and public welfare.

### **The moral stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata constitute leadership.**

The Ramayana and Mahabharata offer lessons on governance ethics in the form of stories, conflicts and dilemmas. These epics are not formulas, but dramatizations of the complexity of ethical leadership. In the Ramayana, Rama is depicted as a model of duty, restraint, sacrifice and dedication to public responsibility. The concept of Ram Rajya is often understood as an ideal of "welfare and Just government" (Govardhan). The Ramayana, however, also spawns critiques regarding the conflict between public duty and personal justice. This is helpful when it comes to governance in today's world where ethical leadership is frequently a balancing act. Leaders need to hear the views of the public, but they also have a responsibility to safeguard the dignity of individuals and their constitutional rights.

The Mahabharata is more complicated. It reveals that poor leadership starts with greed, inaction, ego and moral corruption. In the strengths that make these characters their weakness, Dhritarashtra's attachment, Duryodhana's ambition, Bhishma's silence and Yudhishtira's dilemmas show alternate shortcomings of governance. Neutrality towards injustice is complicity, the epic teaches. Public administration requires that ethical leaders not only refrain from wrong doing but also that they do something contrary to injustice.

The epics thus enhance the ethos of governance by demonstrating that leadership is challenged during conflict. Ethical leadership is not only a matter of politeness, it is a matter of courage, of justice, and of responsibility, not of loyalty.

### **Buddhist, Jain and Gandhian contributions**

Compassion, non-harm, moderation and welfare are the core principles of Buddhist political ethics. In Buddhist philosophy the righteous ruler's concept is associated with giving, moral discipline, patience, and caring for the suffering of people. Whether governance brings about a decrease in suffering and a sense of social harmony is used to measure it.

Jain thought brings the principles of ahimsa, aparigraha and anekantavada. Ahimsa is non-violence, aparigraha is non-possessiveness and anekantavada means openness to other views. These principles have a lot to do with the democratic governance. Non-violence is an antidote to coercive and oppressive politics. The absence of control over the means of production helps to combat corruption and greed. Pluralism, consultation and tolerance have a number of supporting views.

Modernises many of these ethical traditions – gandhian thought. Satya, Ahimsa, Swaraj, Sarvodaya and trusteeship are Gandhi's ideas of moral criticism of power. Gandhi's idea of politics is dangerous if it is not based on ethics. Swaraj is not just a condition of national independence, but self-rule, self-discipline, moral responsibility. To promote the welfare of all, particularly the weakest elements. Trusteeship is the principle that wealth and power must be used for the good of the people and not for self-serving purposes. In governance, Gandhian ethics is of favour decentralisation, simplicity, public service, non-violence and moral accountability. It also poses a question to the notion that development is only measured in terms of economic growth. Development should be assessed in the context of respect for human rights, social justice and the needs of the poor and marginalised.

### **Indian Knowledge Systems and Modern Good Governance**

Good governance is emphasised in modern frameworks with accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, participation, efficiency, equity and inclusion. Worldwide Governance Indicators from the World Bank are indicators of voice and accountability, as well as political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption. World Bank (2001): These principles are consistent with many of the concepts of IKS, but IKS also brings a new and more ethical perspective.

Accountability in modern governance may be external, for instance through audits, courts, elections, media, and institutional review. IKS introduces the concept of internal accountability, conscience, self-discipline, dharma and fear of moral failure. The transparency is not only the disclosure of information but it is related to satya which is the truthfulness. Not just a matter of consultation, but sign of respect for plural points of view and social harmony. The rule of law is not just the legal control but is linked to justice and moral order.

IKS can hence be useful in developing a more comprehensive governance structure. It can promote moral leadership, when used in harmony with institutional checks and character formation. A dharmic leader should be answerable to law, as well as conscience; to citizens as well as moral responsibility; to the present needs as well as future generations.



## **Ethical Leadership in Public Administration**

Ethical decision making is a daily occurrence in Public Administration. Civil servants and public officials deal with public funds and welfare schemes, law, education, health, infrastructure and services for citizens. These failures in ethics have real consequences for the people. IKS can be used to enhance public administration in a number of ways.

It fosters service orientation, one of the first. The public office is a responsibility and not a right. Secondly, it fosters neutralism. The dharma-driven leader ought not to be partial to family, political affiliates, caste, religion, or the interests of the rich. Third, it facilitates moderation in the exercise of power. The use of authority should be in proportion and equitable. Fourth, it has a particular focus on welfare. Policies must be assessed on how they impact on people, particularly the poor and vulnerable.

In settings where public trust in government is low due to corruption, bureaucratic inaction and political interference, this framework plays a significant role. If citizens are aware that officials are honest, responsive, and fair, they will be able to rebuild the trust that has been lost. But ethical leadership should not be based on the goodness of a single person. The provision of transparency, citizen charters, grievance redressal, social audits, independent oversight, and digital accountability must all support it.

## **Corporate Governance and Organisational Leadership**

While this paper is oriented towards public governance, IKS is also applicable to corporate governance. Today's businesses impact jobs, the environment, tech, consumer actions, and social inequity. Corporate leaders are thus ethically responsible not only to maximise profit but also to others.

The Indian notion of trusteeship is particularly relevant. It implies that those who have a wealth are trustees of the wealth and have to handle it responsibly. This is no condemnation of private business, but this sets moral boundaries for greed and exploitation. Likewise, aparigraha reminds us against an undue accumulation and uninhibited consumption.

In the field of corporate governance, IKS can help in making decisions ethically by paying attention to fairness to the employees, responsibility in the supply chain, caring for the environment, honesty in consumers, and caring for the community. It is also consistent with modern concepts like corporate social responsibility, environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria and stakeholder capitalism. But business practices that are exploitative must not be accompanied with use of symbolic language by IKS. Ethical leadership is not all about cultural branding, it's about measurable conduct.

## **Digital Governance, AI Ethics, and IKS.**

Digital platforms, artificial intelligence, biometric systems, data analytics, and automated decision-making are influencing governance processes more and more. They can enhance service delivery but also have ethical implications surrounding privacy, bias, exclusion, surveillance, accountability and transparency. The responsible use of AI has come up in India's debates, with concepts like safety, reliability, inclusivity, non-discrimination, equality, privacy, security, transparency, accountability and reinforcement of positive human values. Fairness, ethics, accountability and transparency have also been called for by (NITI AAYOG) NITI Aayog as essential characteristics of responsible AI. (NITI AAYOG)

IKS can help in the digital governance process with an essential ethical question: Is technology promoting human welfare, justice and dignity? To implement a dharmic digital governance would involve the technological systems to be transparent, inclusive and accountable. Lokasangraha would call for digital technologies to reinforce social justice, not widen the social divide. Ahimsa would demand the attention

to the harms that can be inflicted by biased algorithms, by the misuse of surveillance, or by denial of service. Anekantavada would promote multiple technologies in the process of technology design, particularly from the marginalised groups.

Therefore, by bridging the gap between technology control and moral duty, IKS can enhance AI ethics. This should be done with care, however. There are no modern data protection law, algorithmic auditing, cybersecurity or constitutional protections to be replaced by ancient concepts. Rather, they have the opportunity to give ethical guidance for the development and management of technology humanely.

## **Leadership Ethics and Environmental Governance**

Indian Knowledge Systems also offer valuable inputs to environmental governance. Many Indian traditions consider nature not only as a means of use, but as a part of a moral and cosmic order. Rivers, forests, mountains, animals and land are revered. This ecological awareness can contribute to sustainable governance.

The current environmental conditions, such as climate change, pollution, loss of biodiversity, and resource depletion, illustrate the failure of extractive development. The principles of IKS – restraint, balance, non-harm, interdependence – can help to rethink the concept of development. Good governance about environment needs to question not only on profit or political gain but what is sustainable and fair for future generations.

Considering resource use, protection of vulnerable communities, recognition of traditional ecological knowledge and long-term planning, a dharmic approach to environmental leadership would incorporate these elements. It would also stand to check corruption in environmental clearance and lack of environmental responsibility in industry. Economic growth and ecological responsibility are a balance between governance.

## **Challenges and critical concerns**

While valuable as ethical teachings, it is pertinent to use IKS in governance that is critical and inclusive. There are a number of difficulties.

The first is the potential to idealise the past. Hierarchical, non-inequal, matriarchy and conflict free ancient Indian societies were not possible. Thus, there is no reason why IKS should be portrayed as a golden era. Its moral standards should be understood and assessed in the context of the values of the constitution, democracy and gender equality, social justice and human rights.

Secondly, a risk of selective use comes. Leaders can talk about dharma/tradition and still not be accountable, transparent, and rights-respecting. Morals can be abused and used to support authority instead of challenging it. Thus, it is important that IKS is linked to democratic checks and institutional safeguards. Thirdly, a pluralistic challenge. In India there are various knowledge traditions like Hindu knowledge tradition, Buddhist knowledge tradition, Jain knowledge tradition, Sikh knowledge tradition, Islamic knowledge tradition, Christian knowledge tradition, tribal knowledge tradition, regional knowledge tradition and folk knowledge tradition. There is no need to cut down on IKS; it should be encompassed in a broader tradition. Preserving diversity is a necessary criterion of any approach towards knowledge in the true sense of the word Indian.

Fourthly, the matter of academic rigour. IKS will be learnt appropriately, with accuracy of the text, context and with scholarly intent. It's not supposed to be propagandising or trend-jacketing or pride in culture. The aim must be towards knowledge, ethics and social good.

## **Proposed Framework for ethical Leadership in Governance by focusing on IKS.**

From the above discussion, this paper suggests the framework of ethical leadership which is based on the Seven Pillars of the IKS.

Self-Governance is the first pillar. The role of leadership is to develop self-discipline, humility, restraint and freedom from the urge of greed. Outside of inner discipline, outside of governance becomes corrupted. Second pillar is decision taking based on dharma. The considerations should always be motivated by notions of justice, duty, fairness and welfare, and not by notions of self-interest or partisan interest.

The third pillar is the one of collective welfare, called lokasangraha. Governance needs to foster social stability, public good and the welfare of all citizens, particularly of vulnerable groups.

The fourth pillar is that of "Truth & Transparency". Public communication, disclosure of data, justification of policy, and institutional honesty should be informed by Satya.

The 5th pillar is accountability and audit. Ethical leadership must be inspired by modern governance and administrative realism of the Arthashastra, which provides for oversight, inspection and anti-corruption mechanisms and hold people responsible for their consequences.

Compassion and non-harm is the 6th pillar. Governance should lessen the suffering, prevent coercion, ensure protection of rights and prevent social exclusion.

The 7th pillar is Sustainability and restraint. Leadership needs to remain sensitive to ecological constraints, future generations and use of resources.

This will not substitute for constitutional governance. It rather adds a moral and cultural framework to the institutional principles, supplementing it.

## **Policy Recommendations**

Meeting no.1 suggests that leadership training for the higher officials, public officials and institution heads should be made accessible with ethical anecdotes from Indian Knowledge System and contemporary Ethics of Administration. It is possible that real governance dilemmas be addressed using texts like the Bhagavad Gita, Arthashastra, Mahabharata, Buddhist teachings, Jain ethics and the writings of Gandhiji in a critical manner.

Secondly, IKS needed to be a multidisciplinary approach in higher education. The NEP 2020 and UGC guidelines already provide an opportunity for this integration. Courses should not only be of culture description, they should link with law, public policy, management, sustainability, technology and ethics (Education Government of India).

Third, governance institutions need to have value-based decision-making framework. Consideration of the ethics of impact should be part of the policy decision making, particularly in technology, environment, welfare and policing.

Finally, the moral upbringing of public administrators as well as institutional accountability should be reinforced. *caractères Sans sanction est faible, sanctions Sans caractères est mécanique*. Both are needed. Fifth, research in IKS should incorporate marginalised knowledge traditions, regional practices, local governance traditions, tribal ecological knowledge, women's voice. This will avoid a restriction in scope and democratise IKS.

## **Conclusion**

The ethical base for governance leadership is richly provided by Indian Knowledge Systems, which are conversant to the present times. The concepts like dharma, rajadharma, nishkama karma, lokasangraha,

satya, ahimsa, aparigraha, anekantavada, sarvodaya and trusteeship provide a profound moral vocabulary for public leadership. They remind us that governance is as much about character, responsibility, restraint, justice and service, as it is about rules, policies and institutions.

Modern governance structures focus appropriately on transparency, accountability, participation, rule of law, and good institutional performance. These are not principles which IKS opposes. Instead, it can help to make them stronger, in the sense of being more intro-accountable, moral-more disciplinant and having more welfare sense of power. The Arthashastra contributes administrative realism, the Bhagavad Gita contributes selfless duty, moral courage; the epics contribute ethical reflection with dilemmas, Buddhism and Jain thought contributes compassion and non-harm, and Gandhian philosophy contributes truth, non-violence, decentralisation, and welfare for all.

Meanwhile, there is a need of critical interpretation of IKS. It must not be used for the purpose of romanticising the past, establishing or upholding hierarchy or diluting constitutional values. The ethics embedded in it should adhere to the democratic values, equality, human rights, gender justice and pluralism. Indian Knowledge Systems, when understood with responsibilities, can assist in building a governance model which is culturally rooted, ethically disciplined, socially inclusive and politically globally relevant.

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21. I can also convert this into a **4,000–4,500-word expanded version** with more references and a stronger literature-review section.