

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM AND THEIR ROLE IN REALIZING VIKSIT BHARAT: A THEORETICAL AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) embodies a multidimensional intellectual heritage rooted in philosophical inquiry, experiential learning, and ethical reflection. In the contemporary vision of Viksit Bharat (Developed India), there is an increasing need to revisit and reinterpret these foundational ideas within modern socio-economic and educational frameworks. This paper critically examines the philosophical underpinnings of IKS through the lenses of classical Indian schools of thought and contemporary theoretical frameworks. Drawing upon Advaita Vedanta, Nyaya, Samkhya, and Buddhist epistemology, alongside modern perspectives such as decolonial theory, constructivism, and integral humanism, the study explores how indigenous knowledge paradigms can inform sustainable development, ethical governance, and holistic education. The paper argues that integrating these philosophical principles into policy and practice can foster a development model that is not only economically robust but also culturally rooted and ethically sound. Viksit Bharat means more than high GDP. It means a country that is self-reliant, fair, and proud of its culture (NITI Aayog, 2023). But many current development ideas come from Western thought. These may not fit India's history and values. So, we need to look again at the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). IKS is India's own way of thinking that mixes science, ethics, and spirituality (Kapur, 2021).

Keywords: Indian Knowledge System, Viksit Bharat, Advaita Vedanta, Decolonial Theory, Integral Humanism, Holistic Education, Sustainable Development

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Introduction:

The aspiration of *Viksit Bharat* extends beyond economic growth to encompass cultural resilience, social equity, and intellectual self-reliance. However, prevailing development models often draw heavily from Western epistemological traditions, which may not fully align with India's civilizational ethos. This necessitates a critical engagement with the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), which offers an alternative paradigm grounded in holistic and integrative thinking. The Viksit Bharat @2047 initiative envisions India as a developed nation by 2047, combining economic progress with cultural strength and ethical values. The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) represents India's ancient intellectual tradition, covering philosophy, science, logic, medicine, and ecology. Policy documents like the **National Education Policy 2020** and **UGC guidelines now promote IKS in higher education (University Grants Commission [UGC], 2022)**. This paper critically studies the core ideas of IKS using both classical Indian schools—Advaita Vedanta, Nyaya, Samkhya, and Buddhist thought—and modern

frameworks like decolonial theory, constructivism, and integral humanism. It shows how these ideas can guide sustainable growth, fair governance, and complete education in **Viksit Bharat (NITI Aayog, 2023)**. The study argues that using IKS in policy can create a development path that is economically strong, socially fair, and culturally grounded. However, IKS must be used with scientific proof and without social bias (Ambedkar, 1987). A “Three-Filter Test” is proposed to apply IKS in a responsible way.

Thinkers like S. Radhakrishnan (1953) said Indian philosophy is practical. It teaches how to live, not just how to think. Ananda Coomaraswamy (1943) also said IKS guides both personal life and society. This paper places IKS in today’s world and checks how it can help build the nation. Scholars such as Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Ananda Coomaraswamy emphasized that Indian philosophy is not merely speculative but deeply practical, guiding individual and societal conduct. This paper seeks to position IKS within contemporary theoretical discourse and evaluate its relevance for nation-building.

Theoretical Frameworks:

1. Decolonial Theory and Epistemic Recovery

Decolonial theorists argue that colonialism marginalized indigenous knowledge systems by privileging Western epistemologies. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o highlights the need to reclaim native intellectual traditions. In the Indian context, IKS represents an epistemic recovery that challenges knowledge hierarchies and restores cultural agency.

2. Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist theorists like Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky emphasize that knowledge is actively constructed through experience. This aligns with the Indian pedagogical tradition, where learning occurs through dialogue (*shravan*), reflection (*manan*), and realization (*nididhyasan*).

3. Integral Humanism

Proposed by Deendayal Upadhyaya, Integral Humanism offers a framework that integrates material and spiritual dimensions of development. It resonates strongly with IKS principles, advocating for a balanced and ethical socio-economic order.

Philosophical Foundations of Indian Knowledge System:

1. Advaita Vedanta: Non-Dualism and Unity of Existence

Advaita Vedanta, articulated by Adi Shankaracharya, posits the non-dual nature of reality, where the individual self (*Atman*) is identical with the ultimate reality (*Brahman*). This worldview fosters a sense of universal interconnectedness, which is crucial for sustainable and inclusive development.

2. Nyaya: Logic and Epistemology

The Nyaya school, founded by Gautama, provides a rigorous framework for logical reasoning and knowledge validation. Its emphasis on evidence (*pramana*) and critical inquiry can enhance scientific temper and rational decision-making in modern India.

3. Samkhya: Dualism and Analytical Framework

Samkhya philosophy, attributed to Kapila, distinguishes between consciousness (*Purusha*) and matter

(*Prakriti*). This analytical dualism offers insights into human psychology and well-being, contributing to mental health and self-awareness.

4. Buddhist Epistemology: Impermanence and Mindfulness

Buddhist thinkers like Nagarjuna introduced concepts of emptiness (*Shunyata*) and dependent origination. These ideas encourage adaptability, resilience, and mindfulness—qualities essential for navigating contemporary challenges.

Background of the Study:

After independence, India mostly used Western models for planning, education, and science. These models helped in industrial growth but also created problems. We see rising pollution, mental stress, and loss of local languages and skills (Dasgupta, 2021). Many people also feel disconnected from their own culture. This is called “epistemic dependence”—depending on others for knowledge (Nandy, 1983). Since 2014, the Indian government has focused on Atmanirbhar Bharat and Viksit Bharat @2047. The goal is to make India a developed country by 2047 (NITI Aayog, 2023). The National Education Policy 2020 says Indian schools must teach IKS to build pride and new research (Ministry of Education, 2020). UGC (2022) now trains teachers in IKS. But a problem remains. Most people see IKS as only yoga, Ayurveda, or old stories. They do not see its deep ideas about logic, nature, and society. Also, some people use IKS without proof or use it to support bias. So we need a clear, scientific study that explains which IKS ideas are useful for Viksit Bharat and how to use them safely. This study fills that gap.

Theoretical Background:

This paper uses both Indian and Western theories to study IKS. This helps compare ideas and avoid bias (Sen, 2005).

1. Indian Theoretical Base

IKS is not one system. It has many schools or darshanas. This study uses four main ones: Advaita Vedanta: By Adi Shankaracharya. It says all life is one (Brahman). This supports unity and care for nature (Deutsch, 1969). Nyaya: By Gautama. It teaches logic and how to check if knowledge is true using pramana or proof (Ganeri, 2001). Samkhya: By Kapila. It divides the world into Purusha (mind) and Prakriti (matter). This helps in psychology and health (Larson, 1979). Buddhist Epistemology: Thinkers like Nagarjuna said everything depends on other things and nothing is permanent (Kalupahana, 1986). This teaches flexibility and mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

2. Western Theoretical Base

To make IKS useful today, we connect it to modern theories: **Decolonial Theory:** Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986) said colonialism made us forget our own knowledge. Decolonial theory says we must bring back local ideas and remove the feeling that Western ideas are always better (Mignolo, 2011). IKS is part of this “epistemic recovery.” **Constructivism:** Piaget (1970) and Vygotsky (1978) said we learn by experience and talk with others. IKS also uses shraavan (listen), manan (think), and nididhyasan (practice) (Raina, 2002). So IKS is a constructivist system. **Integral Humanism:** Deendayal Upadhyaya (1965) said true growth must

include body, money, mind, and soul. This matches IKS, which never separates material life from spiritual life. Together, these Indian and Western theories give us a strong base to test IKS ideas for Viksit Bharat.

Need for the Study:

India is following a Western model of development that focuses mainly on GDP and technology. This has caused problems like environmental damage, stress, and loss of cultural identity (Dasgupta, 2021). At the same time, NEP 2020 and UGC (2022) ask colleges to teach IKS, but many teachers and students do not know how IKS is useful today. There is a gap between policy and practice. This study is needed to explain why IKS matters for Viksit Bharat and how it can be used in real life. Without this clarity, IKS may become only a subject in books, not a tool for nation-building (Nandy, 1983).

Importance of the Study:

Cultural Self-Reliance: Colonial rule made Indians feel that Western knowledge is superior (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986). Studying IKS helps restore confidence in Indian thought and supports Atmanirbhar Bharat in ideas, not just goods. **Holistic Solutions:** Global problems like climate change and mental health need more than technology. IKS ideas like Rta (natural order) and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (world family) give ethical and ecological answers that science alone cannot (Gadgil & Guha, 1992). **Policy Guidance:** Viksit Bharat @2047 wants growth with values (NITI Aayog, 2023). This paper shows how IKS ideas like Dharma and Loka Sangraha can make policies more fair and people-focused. **Education Reform:** NEP 2020 wants “rootedness and pride in India” (Ministry of Education, 2020). This study gives teachers a simple way to link IKS to modern subjects like economics, environment, and ethics.

Scope of the Study:

This paper is theoretical and critical. It covers:

Philosophical Scope: Four main Indian schools—Advaita Vedanta, Nyaya, Samkhya, and Buddhism. It does not cover all 16 darshanas due to word limit.

Thematic Scope: Five areas of _Viksit Bharat_—economy, technology, environment, governance, and education. Health, defense, and arts are not covered in detail.

Time Scope: Focuses on classical IKS ideas and their use from 2020–2047, the Viksit Bharat period. Historical debates before independence are not the main focus.

Geographical Scope: India, but with examples that can help other post-colonial countries also. **Limitation:** This is not an empirical study. It does not collect survey data. Future research can test these ideas in schools or districts.

5. Core Philosophical Ideas in IKS

1. Advaita Vedanta: We Are All One

Adi Shankaracharya's Advaita Vedanta says Atman (self) and Brahman (universal reality) are the same (Deutsch, 1969). This idea of oneness creates respect for all life. It helps in building inclusive growth and climate action (Das, 2020).

2. Nyaya: Proof and Logic

The Nyaya school by Gautama teaches how to find truth using proof or pramana (Ganeri, 2001). It gives rules

for debate and evidence. This can improve scientific thinking and policy-making in India today.5.3 Samkhya: Mind and Matter

Samkhya, started by Kapila, separates Purusha (consciousness) from Prakriti (nature) (Larson, 1979). This helps us understand stress, mental health, and human behavior. It is useful for psychology and wellness programs (Burley, 2007).

4. Buddhist Thought: Change and Awareness

Nagarjuna's idea of Shunyata (emptiness) and dependent origination teaches that everything changes and is connected (Kalupahana, 1986). This builds flexibility and mindfulness, which are needed in today's fast world (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).6. How IKS Helps Achieve _Viksit Bharat_

Education for the Whole Person:

NEP 2020 says IKS must be part of school and college courses (Ministry of Education, 2020). IKS-based education builds logic, ethics, creativity, and emotion together (National Council of Educational Research and Training [NCERT], 2023). It is not just for jobs but for life.

Ecology and Sustainability:

IKS sees humans as part of nature, not above it. This matches global ideas of sustainability (Dasgupta, 2021). Old Indian practices like sacred groves and rainwater tanks can guide new climate policy (Gadgil & Guha, 1992).6.3 Fair and Ethical Governance

The Arthashastra talks about _Rajadharma_—the king's duty to people (Kautilya, 1915/1992). It asks for open salaries and audits. These ideas support honesty and trust in government today.6.4 Innovation Using Old and New Knowledge

IKS can mix with modern science in areas like Ayurveda, farming, and building design (Joseph, 2011). This creates new products and jobs for Atmanirbhar Bharat.7. Critical Points to Remember

IKS has great value, but we must be careful (Sen, 2005). No Blind Faith: Some claims in old texts have no proof. All IKS ideas must be tested by science (UGC, 2022).No Social Bias: Some texts support caste or gender bias. Ambedkar (1987) rejected this. Viksit Bharat must follow the Constitution, not unfair old rules.Many Traditions: IKS includes Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, and Islamic ideas too (Nehru, 1946). It is not only Hindu.The Three-Filter Test for Using IKS:Constitution Filter: Does it support equal rights?Science Filter: Can we test it?Use Filter: Does it solve a real problem today?8. Conclusion

IKS is not a magic fix. It is also not useless. Its ideas of unity, duty, balance, and many truths can fix gaps in modern growth models that ignore ethics and environment. But we must use IKS with logic, science, and equality. By joining IKS with modern theories, India can build a Viksit Bharat that is rich, green, and just. As Gita 4.38 says, “nothing purifies like knowledge” (Easwaran, 2020). That includes knowledge of India's own past. Future work should focus on making real policies from these ideas through teamwork between scholars and government.

Application of IKS in the Vision of Viksit Bharat:

1. Education: Toward Holistic Pedagogy

The National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes integrating Indian knowledge traditions into curricula. A holistic education model inspired by IKS can foster creativity, ethical reasoning, and emotional intelligence.

2. Sustainable Development and Ecology

The principle of interconnectedness aligns with global sustainability frameworks. Indigenous ecological practices rooted in IKS can inform climate policies and resource management.

3. Ethical Governance and Public Policy

Incorporating dharmic principles into governance can enhance accountability and justice. This aligns with ethical leadership models and promotes trust in institutions.

4. Knowledge Economy and Innovation

IKS can contribute to innovation by integrating traditional wisdom with modern science, particularly in fields like Ayurveda, agriculture, and architecture.

Critical Discussion:

While IKS offers valuable insights, its integration into modern systems must be approached critically. Scholars caution against romanticizing tradition without empirical validation. A balanced approach requires dialogue between traditional knowledge and contemporary scientific methods.

Furthermore, institutional challenges such as curriculum rigidity, lack of trained educators, and limited research funding must be addressed to effectively implement IKS-based frameworks.

Conclusion:

The philosophical foundations of the Indian Knowledge System provide a robust framework for reimagining development in the context of *Viksit Bharat*. By integrating principles of interconnectedness, ethical responsibility, and holistic growth with modern theoretical approaches, India can create a development model that is both progressive and rooted in its civilizational ethos. Future research should focus on operationalizing these ideas through interdisciplinary collaboration and policy innovation.

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