

FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM AND GOVERNANCE

ROOTED IN WISDOM • GUIDED BY VALUES • EMPOWERING FUTURES



—❖— Dr. Harshvardhan Singh ❖—

Foundations of
Indian
Knowledge System
— • — and — • —
Governance



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Knowledge System
— • — and — • —
Governance



Dr. Harshvardhan Singh



First Edition



BOOKSKART WORLD

New Delhi, India
2026

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Foundations of Indian Knowledge System and Governance

Dr. Harshvardhan Singh

First Edition, 2026

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ISBN: 978-81-995663-0-9

Edition: First Edition

Language: English

Format: Single-component retail product — digital download and online

Year of Publication: 2026

Publisher: BOOKSKART WORLD

Place of Publication: New Delhi, India

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Suggested Citation

Singh, H. (2026). *Foundations of Indian Knowledge System and Governance*. BOOKSKART WORLD.

Author Profile

About the Author

Dr. Harshvardhan Singh is an education researcher, author, and policy-oriented academic working in the areas of Indian Knowledge System, educational research, governance studies, teacher education, inclusive education, psychometric tool development, and evidence-based educational reform. His academic and professional work focuses on connecting civilizational knowledge traditions with contemporary educational, institutional, and governance challenges.

His writings engage with themes such as value-based education, Indian philosophical foundations of learning, public ethics, curriculum reform, educational measurement, inclusive pedagogy, teacher capacity building, and policy-relevant research. He is particularly interested in how ancient Indian concepts such as Dharma, Nyaya, Rajadharma, Lokahit, Yogakshema, Jñāna, and Viveka can be interpreted meaningfully for modern education, public administration, citizenship, and social responsibility.

Dr. Singh's work reflects an interdisciplinary approach. It brings together education, psychology, research methodology, governance, Indian thought, and public policy. He has contributed to academic writing, research tool development, educational publishing, and knowledge dissemination through books, monographs, teaching resources, and digital academic platforms.

In this book, he examines Indian Knowledge System not merely as a historical inheritance but as a living intellectual tradition. He argues that IKS can offer ethical, philosophical, educational, and governance-oriented insights for contemporary India. His approach emphasizes critical engagement, academic responsibility, cultural rootedness, and practical relevance.

Preface

The Indian Knowledge System is one of the richest civilizational knowledge traditions in the world. It is not limited to religious belief, ritual practice, or historical memory. It includes philosophy, ethics, education, governance, law, ecology, medicine, language, logic, mathematics, community life, public conduct, and spiritual inquiry. It represents a long tradition of thinking about the relationship between the individual, society, nature, knowledge, and ultimate purpose.

This book, *Foundations of Indian Knowledge System and Governance*, has been written to introduce readers to the foundational ideas of IKS and their relevance to governance, public life, education, ethics, and contemporary policy. The central argument of the book is that Indian knowledge traditions provide more than cultural pride. They offer conceptual resources for responsible governance, ethical leadership, public welfare, social harmony, ecological balance, and holistic education.

Modern governance often focuses on institutions, laws, procedures, efficiency, technology, and administrative structures. These are important, but governance cannot be reduced only to systems and mechanisms. Governance also requires values. It requires ethical orientation, public responsibility, justice, accountability, and sensitivity toward the welfare of all. In Indian thought, concepts such as Dharma, Rajadharma, Nyaya, Lokahit, Yogakshema, Rita, Ahimsa, Aparigraha, and Viveka provide a deeper moral vocabulary for understanding public duty and collective life.

The book begins by explaining the foundations of Indian Knowledge System and its relationship with governance. It then moves to the sources of IKS, including Vedic, Upanishadic, philosophical, linguistic, educational, and traditional knowledge streams. The later chapters discuss the Indian view of society and public life, the concept of governance in Indian thought, the relationship between knowledge and ethical decision-making, the relevance of IKS for contemporary governance, the integration of IKS in the National Education Policy 2020, and the continuing significance of IKS in the twenty-first century.

This book does not argue for a mechanical return to the past. The past cannot be copied as it is. Historical contexts change, institutions change, societies change, and new challenges emerge. At the same time, modern systems cannot afford to ignore accumulated civilizational wisdom. A thoughtful society must be able to learn from the past, evaluate it critically, adapt its enduring principles, and apply them creatively to present and future challenges.

The purpose of this book is therefore neither romanticization nor rejection. It follows a balanced approach. It respects Indian knowledge traditions while recognizing the need for critical interpretation, evidence, constitutional values, scientific reasoning, and contemporary relevance. It attempts to show how IKS can contribute to discussions on ethical governance, education reform, sustainability, community participation, decision-making, and national development.

The book may be useful for students, teachers, researchers, teacher educators, policy scholars, civil service aspirants, curriculum developers, educational administrators, and readers interested in Indian thought. It may also help institutions seeking to integrate IKS into curricula in a meaningful and responsible way. The discussion is written in accessible language so that readers from different academic backgrounds can engage with the subject.

At a time when India is rethinking its educational and governance frameworks in relation to cultural rootedness, global participation, technological change, and sustainable development, the Indian Knowledge System deserves serious and systematic study. Its value lies not only in what it tells us about the past but also in how it can help us think more deeply about the future.

I hope this book encourages readers to approach IKS with curiosity, humility, critical reflection, and a sense of responsibility. The future of knowledge depends not on choosing between tradition and modernity, but on creating a wise dialogue between them.

Dr. Harshvardhan Singh

2026

Acknowledgement

I express my sincere gratitude to the rich intellectual heritage of India, whose knowledge traditions have inspired generations of seekers, teachers, scholars, reformers, and public thinkers. The Indian Knowledge System, with its deep concern for truth, ethical conduct, social responsibility, ecological harmony, and human flourishing, forms the larger intellectual background of this book.

I respectfully acknowledge the ancient teachers, philosophers, commentators, practitioners, and knowledge communities who preserved and transmitted India's civilizational wisdom across centuries. The traditions of oral transmission, textual interpretation, debate, contemplation, community practice, and applied knowledge have together shaped the intellectual landscape from which this work draws inspiration.

I am grateful to the contemporary scholars, educators, policy thinkers, and institutions that have contributed to renewed interest in Indian Knowledge System. The growing academic and policy engagement with IKS has opened important pathways for rethinking education, governance, ethics, sustainability, and social development in India.

I also acknowledge the role of the National Education Policy 2020 in bringing Indian Knowledge System into the mainstream of educational discourse. Its emphasis on cultural rootedness, multidisciplinary learning, holistic development, and knowledge integration provides an important context for this book.

I extend my appreciation to BOOKSKART WORLD and MYJRF for supporting the publication of this work. Their contribution to educational and academic publishing has made it possible to bring this book to readers interested in Indian Knowledge System, governance, education, and public ethics.

I am thankful to all students, teachers, researchers, and readers whose questions and intellectual curiosity continue to motivate my work. Their engagement with Indian thought, education, and public life strengthens the purpose behind this book.

Finally, I express gratitude to my family, colleagues, well-wishers, and academic community for their encouragement and support. Any limitations or errors that remain in this work are entirely my own.

Dr. Harshvardhan Singh

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Abbreviations

ADR — Alternative Dispute Resolution

AI — Artificial Intelligence

AYUSH — Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy

CSR — Corporate Social Responsibility

DPI — Digital Public Infrastructure

GDP — Gross Domestic Product

GeM — Government e-Marketplace

ICT — Information and Communication Technology

IKS — Indian Knowledge System

NEP — National Education Policy

NGO — Non-Governmental Organization

PIL — Public Interest Litigation

SDG — Sustainable Development Goal

TKDL — Traditional Knowledge Digital Library

UNESCO — United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UPI — Unified Payments Interface

Note on Transliteration and Sanskrit Terms

This book uses several Sanskrit and Indic terms that are central to the Indian Knowledge System and Indian governance thought. Terms such as Dharma, Rita, Rajadharma, Nyaya, Jñāna, Vijñāna, Viveka, Pratyaksha, Anumana, Shabda, Aparigraha, Ahimsa, Lokahit, Yogakshema, Sabha, Samiti, Prakriti, and Guru-Shishya Parampara carry meanings that cannot always be fully captured through a single English equivalent.

For readability, a simplified transliteration style has been used throughout the book. Diacritical marks have been kept minimal unless required for clarity. For example, both “Jñāna” and “Jnana” may be understood as referring to knowledge or wisdom, depending on context. Similarly, “Rita” is used in a simplified form for the Vedic idea of cosmic order, while “Dharma” is used to indicate ethical duty, moral order, righteousness, social responsibility, and context-sensitive obligation.

The meanings of important terms are explained either in the text or in the glossary. Readers are encouraged to understand these terms in their wider philosophical and cultural context rather than only through literal translation. Many of these concepts are layered, interpretive, and historically developed. Their meaning may vary across Vedic, Upanishadic, philosophical, legal, ethical, social, and contemporary policy contexts.

The purpose of retaining key Sanskrit and Indic terms is not to make the text difficult, but to preserve conceptual accuracy. Translation can make ideas accessible, but it can also reduce the depth of certain terms. Therefore, this book uses original terms where necessary and provides explanatory meanings for wider understanding.

Methodological Note / Source Note

This book is a conceptual, interpretive, and educational work on Indian Knowledge System and governance. It draws upon broad themes from Indian civilizational thought, classical knowledge traditions, governance concepts, public ethics, education, social life, sustainability, and contemporary policy discourse.

The book does not claim to provide a philological edition of classical texts, nor does it attempt to offer a sectarian interpretation of Indian knowledge traditions. Instead, it presents selected ideas from IKS in a manner suitable for students, teachers, researchers, policy learners, and general readers. Its objective is to explain how foundational concepts of Indian thought can be meaningfully understood in relation to governance, education, public responsibility, ethical decision-making, and twenty-first-century challenges.

The discussion is organized thematically rather than chronologically. Classical ideas such as Dharma, Rita, Nyaya, Rajadharma, Lokahit, Yogakshema, Jñāna, Vijñāna, Viveka, Sabha, Samiti, and Panchayat are interpreted in relation to contemporary questions of governance, public welfare, ethical leadership, institutional responsibility, sustainability, education, and national development.

The book uses an interdisciplinary approach. It brings together insights from philosophy, education, public administration, ethics, Indian political thought, policy studies, traditional knowledge systems, and contemporary governance discourse. This approach reflects the holistic character of Indian Knowledge System, where knowledge is not treated as fragmented information but as an interconnected framework of life, society, nature, and ethical action.

Where classical concepts are discussed, they are used as interpretive frameworks rather than rigid historical prescriptions. The book does not argue that ancient systems should be copied mechanically in the present. Instead, it emphasizes thoughtful adaptation. Many traditional principles may offer contemporary relevance, but their application must be guided by constitutional values, democratic norms, gender justice, social inclusion, scientific reasoning, human dignity, and the needs of a plural society.

The book also recognizes that Indian Knowledge System is diverse. It includes Vedic, Upanishadic, philosophical, Buddhist, Jain, linguistic, medical, ecological, artistic, community-based, and regional knowledge traditions. Therefore, IKS should not be reduced to a single text, school, language, community, or period. It is better understood as a broad and evolving knowledge ecosystem.

The policy-related discussion, especially in relation to NEP 2020 and contemporary governance, is intended to encourage critical reflection. It does not substitute for official policy documents, legal interpretation, or specialized administrative guidance. Readers are encouraged to consult original sources, official documents, academic studies, and classical texts for deeper inquiry.

In summary, this book should be read as a bridge between civilizational knowledge and contemporary governance thought. It seeks to promote meaningful dialogue between tradition and modernity, ethics and administration, knowledge and action, cultural rootedness and global responsibility.

Glossary of Key Terms

Ahimsa

Ahimsa means non-harm or non-violence. In Indian thought, it is not limited to physical non-violence but also includes restraint in speech, intention, policy, and social conduct. In governance, Ahimsa may be interpreted as a principle requiring policies to minimize avoidable harm to people, communities, nature, and future generations.

Anumana

Anumana means inference. It is one of the accepted means of valid knowledge in Indian epistemology. Through Anumana, knowledge is obtained by reasoning from observed signs to unobserved facts, such as inferring fire from smoke.

Aparavidya

Aparavidya refers to lower or worldly knowledge. It includes empirical, technical, ritual, linguistic, scientific, and practical knowledge needed for social and material life. It is not considered unimportant; rather, it is distinguished from Paravidya, which concerns ultimate knowledge or self-realization.

Aparigraha

Aparigraha means non-possessiveness or restraint in accumulation. In contemporary terms, it can be connected with sustainable consumption, ethical economics, ecological responsibility, and moderation in resource use.

Arthashastra

The Arthashastra is a classical Indian text associated with Kautilya or Chanakya. It deals with statecraft, administration, economy, law, diplomacy, security, taxation, welfare, and governance. It is one of the important sources for understanding political and administrative thought in ancient India.

Dharma

Dharma is one of the central concepts of Indian thought. It may mean duty, righteousness, moral order, ethical responsibility, law, social obligation, and context-sensitive right conduct. In governance, Dharma refers to the moral limits of power and the responsibility of rulers, institutions, and citizens to uphold justice and welfare.

Dharmashastra

Dharmashastra refers to a body of classical Indian literature dealing with duties, social conduct, law, ethics, governance, rights, obligations, and social order. These texts are important for understanding traditional legal and moral frameworks, although their contemporary interpretation requires critical and contextual reading.

Guru-Shishya Parampara

Guru-Shishya Parampara refers to the traditional teacher-disciple relationship in Indian education. It emphasizes close guidance, moral development, disciplined learning, oral transmission, experiential understanding, and lifelong respect for knowledge.

Gurukul

A Gurukul was a traditional residential learning system in which students lived with the teacher and received education through study, discipline, practice, service, observation, and character formation. It represented a holistic educational approach rather than merely classroom instruction.

IKS — Indian Knowledge System

Indian Knowledge System refers to the broad body of knowledge developed in the Indian civilizational context. It includes philosophy, language, grammar, logic, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, governance, ethics, ecology, arts, education, spirituality, community knowledge, and practical wisdom traditions.

Jñāna / Jnana

Jñāna means knowledge, wisdom, or understanding. In Indian thought, it may refer to intellectual knowledge, spiritual insight, or deeper awareness depending on context. It is often distinguished from Vijñāna, which refers to applied or discriminative knowledge.

Lokahit

Lokahit means public welfare or the good of the people. In governance, it refers to the responsibility of rulers and institutions to work for collective well-being rather than private interest or narrow power.

NEP 2020

The National Education Policy 2020 is India's major education policy framework that emphasizes holistic, multidisciplinary, inclusive, flexible, and culturally rooted education. It recognizes the importance of Indian Knowledge System and Indian languages in education.

Nyaya

Nyaya means justice, reasoning, or logic depending on context. As a philosophical school, Nyaya is associated with logic and epistemology. In governance, Nyaya refers to justice that is fair, reasoned, ethical, and oriented toward social order and welfare.

Panchayat

Panchayat refers to a local self-governance institution traditionally associated with village-level decision-making and dispute resolution. In modern India, Panchayati Raj institutions form a constitutional framework for decentralized governance.

Paravidya

Paravidya refers to higher knowledge or spiritual knowledge. It concerns ultimate reality, self-understanding, and liberation. It is contrasted with Aparavidya, though both have significance in a holistic knowledge framework.

Prakriti

Prakriti means nature, material reality, or the creative principle of the natural world. In ecological and philosophical contexts, it points toward the interconnectedness of human life and nature.

Pramana

Pramana means a valid means of knowledge. Indian philosophical systems discuss different Pramanas such as Pratyaksha, Anumana, Shabda, Upamana, Arthapatti, and Anupalabdhi to explain how reliable knowledge is obtained.

Pratyaksha

Pratyaksha means direct perception. It is knowledge gained through direct sensory experience or immediate awareness. It is one of the primary means of valid knowledge in Indian epistemology.

Rajadharma

Rajadharma means the duty of the ruler or ethical responsibility of political authority. It requires leadership to be guided by justice, welfare, protection, discipline, accountability, and moral restraint.

Rita / Rta

Rita refers to cosmic order, natural order, or the principle of harmony that sustains the universe. In governance thought, it provides a deeper background for understanding order, justice, and moral responsibility.

Sabha

Sabha refers to an assembly or council. In ancient Indian contexts, it is associated with deliberation, consultation, and collective decision-making. It can be linked with participatory traditions in governance.

Samiti

Samiti refers to a collective body or assembly involved in discussion and decision-making. Along with Sabha, it is often discussed in relation to early consultative and participatory traditions.

Shabda

Shabda means verbal testimony or authoritative word. In Indian epistemology, it refers to knowledge received through reliable testimony, including scripture, teachers, experts, and trustworthy sources.

Svadharmā

Svadharmā means one's own duty or context-specific responsibility. It recognizes that ethical action may depend on role, capacity, stage of life, and social situation.

TKDL — Traditional Knowledge Digital Library

The Traditional Knowledge Digital Library is a knowledge repository created to document and protect India's traditional knowledge, particularly in areas such as Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and traditional formulations, from misappropriation and inappropriate patenting.

Upanishads

The Upanishads are philosophical texts that explore consciousness, ultimate reality, self-knowledge, liberation, and the deeper meaning of existence. They represent one of the highest philosophical expressions of Indian thought.

Veda

The Vedas are among the oldest foundational texts of Indian knowledge traditions. They include the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda. They contain hymns, rituals, philosophical insights, cosmological ideas, and knowledge relevant to early Indian civilization.

Vijñāna / Vijnana

Vijñāna refers to applied knowledge, analytical understanding, scientific insight, or discriminative knowledge. It complements Jñāna by connecting wisdom with practical application.

Viveka

Viveka means discriminative wisdom. It is the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, beneficial and harmful, temporary and enduring, ethical and unethical. In decision-making, Viveka is essential for responsible judgment.

Yogakshema

Yogakshema refers to welfare, security, well-being, and protection of people. In governance, it can be understood as the responsibility of the state to ensure both material welfare and social security.

Reader's Note

This book has been written for readers who wish to understand Indian Knowledge System in relation to governance, ethics, education, public life, and contemporary society. It is intended for students, teachers, researchers, civil service aspirants, teacher educators, policy scholars, educational administrators, and general readers interested in Indian thought.

The book should not be read as a narrow religious text, nor as a purely historical account of ancient India. It is a conceptual and educational work that interprets selected ideas from Indian Knowledge System for present-day relevance. It discusses how concepts such as Dharma, Nyaya, Rajadharma, Lokahit, Yogakshema, Jñāna, Vijñāna, Viveka, and Prakriti can help us think about public responsibility, ethical leadership, social harmony, sustainability, and governance.

Readers are encouraged to approach the book with both respect and critical inquiry. Indian Knowledge System is vast, diverse, and layered. No single book can cover it completely. The purpose of this work is to provide a foundation for further reading, reflection, teaching, research, and policy discussion.

The book uses simplified explanations for many complex terms so that readers from different backgrounds can engage with the material. At the same time, it retains important Sanskrit and Indic terms where English translation may not fully capture the original meaning.

This book supports a balanced understanding of tradition and modernity. It does not suggest that ancient systems should be copied without change. Instead, it argues that enduring principles from Indian knowledge traditions can be studied, interpreted, and adapted responsibly in light of constitutional values, democratic governance, scientific thinking, social justice, and contemporary human needs.

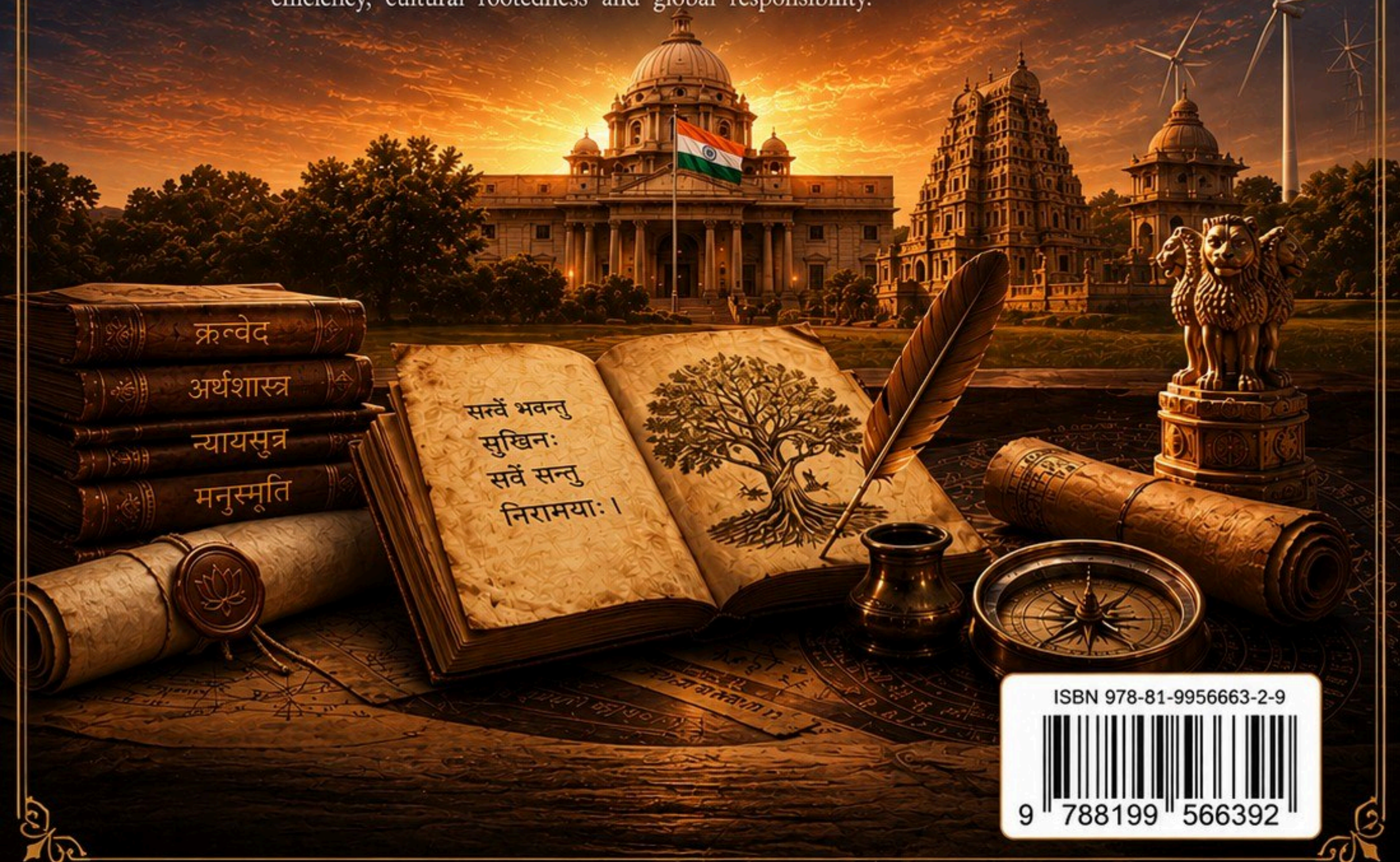
The reader is invited to treat this book as a starting point for deeper engagement with Indian Knowledge System and its relevance for ethical and inclusive governance in the twenty-first century.

Foundations of Indian Knowledge System and Governance introduces readers to the deep relationship between Indian civilizational wisdom and public life. The book explores how concepts such as Dharma, Rita, Nyaya, Rajadharma, Lokahit, Yogakshema, Jñāna, Vijñāna, Viveka, Sabha, Samiti, and Prakriti can help us rethink governance, ethics, education, sustainability, and social responsibility.

Moving beyond a narrow view of Indian Knowledge System as only ancient or symbolic, the book presents IKS as a living intellectual tradition with contemporary relevance. It discusses Vedic and Upanishadic foundations, classical sources of knowledge, Indian views of society, public ethics, governance models, ethical decision-making, NEP 2020 integration, digital preservation, and the role of IKS in addressing twenty-first-century challenges.

Written in an accessible yet academically grounded style, this book is useful for students, teachers, researchers, civil service aspirants, policy scholars, teacher educators, educational administrators, and general readers interested in Indian thought and governance.

The book does not call for a mechanical return to the past. Instead, it argues for a thoughtful dialogue between tradition and modernity, civilizational wisdom and constitutional values, ethical leadership and administrative efficiency, cultural rootedness and global responsibility.



ISBN 978-81-9956663-2-9



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