THE ESSENCE OF INDIAN KNOWLEDGE



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Bharatiya Jnana Parampara or Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), denotes to the systematic, rigorous bodies of knowledge developed on the Indian subcontinent over thousands of years, encompassing science, technology, philosophy, medicine, governance, arts, ecology, ethics, and aesthetics. In practice today, IKS shapes the Indian worldview through concepts of Dharma, Rta, cyclical time, guru-shishya parampara, samskaras, family values, and festivals tied to astronomy and seasons. (seo1, 2025)

The essence of the Indian Knowledge is a holistic, sustainable, and conscious approach to life, integrating science (Vignyan), wisdom (Gnyan), and philosophy (Jeevan Darshan). It encompasses thousands of years of intellectual tradition originating in the Indian subcontinent, focusing on harmony with nature, ethical living, and the interconnectedness of all beings through concepts like Dharma (duty) and Yoga. Its core written and oral traditions began by the second millennium BCE and developed continuously through the first millennium CE and later, giving the tradition a recorded and living history of roughly 3,000–4,000 years. The Indian Knowledge System spans several millennia: its formative Vedic layers began by the second millennium BCE, philosophical and technical texts such as the Upaniṣads and Pāṇini's grammar emerged in the first millennium BCE, and medical, mathematical and astronomical treatises were consolidated and expanded through the early medieval period, producing a continuous intellectual tradition across roughly 3,000–4,000 years (*Timeline of Indian Knowledge Systems | PDF*, n.d.)



The Bhagavad Gita is one of the most important texts in Indian philosophy and spiritual thought. It forms a part of the Indian epic Mahabharata and contains a dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. The Gita presents deep

insights into human life, duty, morality, self-realization, and the relationship between the individual and the Divine. The Bhagavad Gita teaches three complementary paths—

1. Jnana-yoga (knowledge),
2. Karma-yoga (selfless action) and
3. Bhakti-yoga (devotion)—

as practical ways to remove ignorance, reduce ego-attachment, and realise the Self; the text presents these paths as suitable to different temperaments while ultimately aiming at the same goal of liberation (moksha).



Jnana-yoga (knowledge):

न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचिन्

नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः ।

अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो

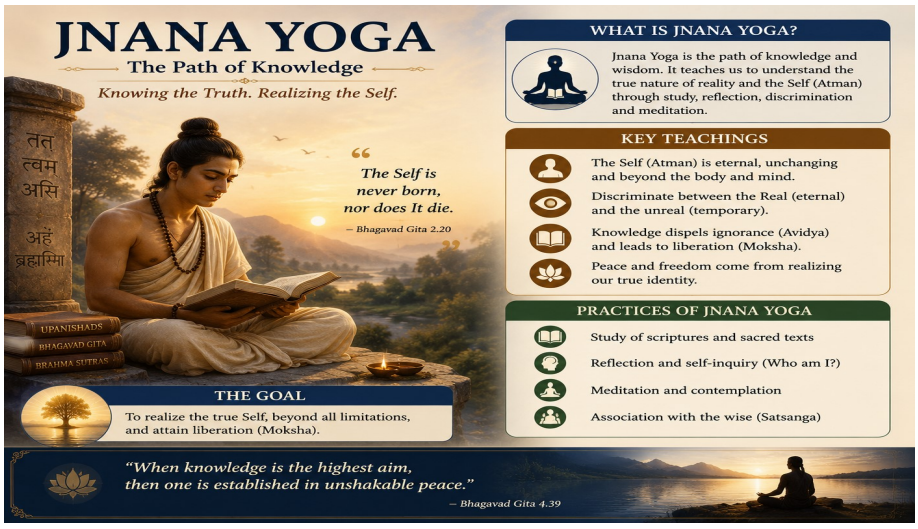
न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥ २.२० ॥

“The soul is never born, nor does it die; having once existed, it never ceases to be. The soul is unborn, eternal, everlasting, and ancient. It is not destroyed when the body is destroyed.”

(Bhagavad Gita 2.20)

Jnana Yoga emphasizes knowledge, wisdom, and self-realization. According to the Bhagavad Gita, ignorance is the main cause of human suffering. Through true knowledge, a person realizes the difference between the temporary body and the eternal soul (Atman). Jnana Yoga encourages individuals to seek truth through study, reflection, and meditation.

Lord Krishna explains that the wise person understands that the soul is immortal and cannot be destroyed. The body may perish, but the soul remains eternal. This knowledge helps a person overcome fear, attachment, and sorrow.



Jnana Yoga develops critical thinking, self-awareness, and spiritual understanding. It teaches that liberation (Moksha) can be achieved through wisdom and realization of the true self.

Karma Yoga (Path of Action):

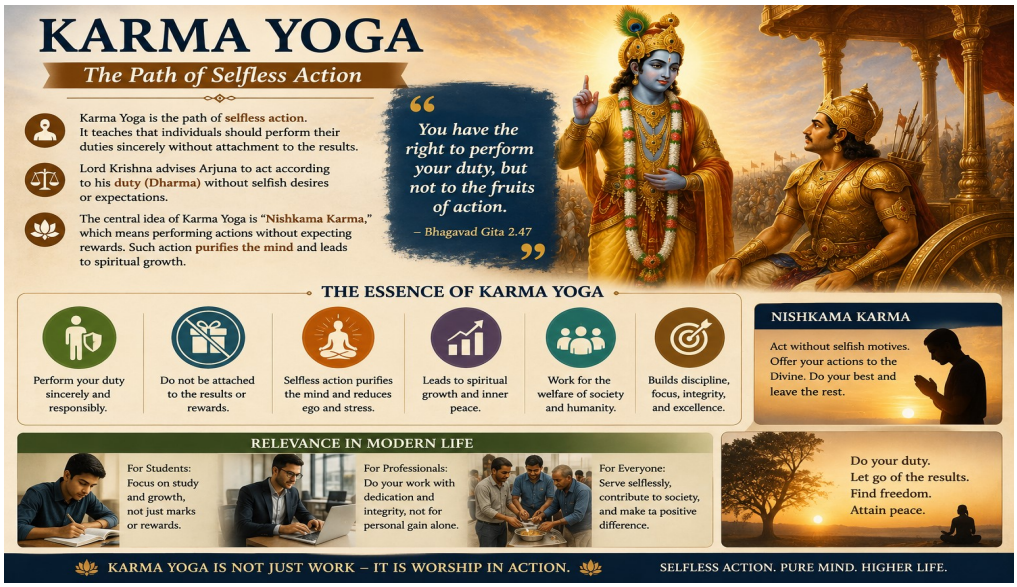
कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

“You have the right to perform your duty, but not to the fruits of action.” (Bhagavad Gita 2.47)

Karma Yoga is the path of selfless action. It teaches that individuals should perform their duties sincerely without attachment to the results. Lord Krishna advises Arjuna to act according to his duty (Dharma) without selfish desires or expectations. The central idea of Karma Yoga is “Nishkama Karma,” which means performing actions without expecting rewards. Such action purifies the mind and leads to spiritual growth.

Karma Yoga promotes discipline, responsibility, honesty, and social welfare. It encourages people to work for the benefit of society while remaining detached from personal gain. This teaching is highly relevant for students and professionals in modern life, as it inspires dedication and ethical conduct.



Bhakti Yoga (Path of Devotion):

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।
तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमश्नामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥

"Whoever offers Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water, I accept it."
(Bhagavad Gita chapter 9. Verse *26)*

Bhakti Yoga is the path of love, devotion, and surrender to God. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna explains that pure devotion is one of the easiest and most powerful ways to attain spiritual liberation. Bhakti Yoga teaches that through faith, prayer, chanting, and complete surrender to the Divine, one can achieve peace and union with God.

A devotee develops qualities such as humility, compassion, love, and forgiveness. Bhakti Yoga emphasizes emotional connection with God rather than intellectual knowledge alone.

Bhakti Yoga is universal because it is based on love and devotion rather than social status, education, or wealth. It teaches that every individual can attain divine grace through sincere devotion.



The Bhagavad Gita does not treat these yogas as separate or opposing paths. Instead, they complement one another. Knowledge guides action, action purifies the mind,

and devotion brings spiritual fulfilment. Together, they help individuals lead a balanced and meaningful life.

Niṣkāma karma Duty (Dharma)

Niṣkāma karma literally means "action without desire for the fruit." In the Bhagavad Gītā it is taught as performing one's duty (dharma) with full effort but without ego-centred longing for results; this attitude removes bondage caused by attachment to outcomes. The ethical core is that moral worth lies in the orientation of the agent (intent and detachment), not solely in external consequences.(*Understanding Nishkama Karma | PDF | Kama | Religion & Spirituality*, n.d.). Niṣkāma karma (selfless action) and dharma (duty/ethical order) form a central ethical teaching in the Indian knowledge system: act rightly according to your duty without attachment to rewards, because such action purifies the agent, sustains social order, and leads toward freedom (mokṣa).

Law of Karma

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥
(Bhagavad Gita 2.47)

Translation:

"You have the right to perform your duty, but not to the fruits of your actions."

This verse teaches that individuals should focus on righteous action rather than becoming attached to rewards or success. Such detachment helps in reducing ego, greed, and anxiety while promoting inner peace and self-discipline (Easwaran, 2007). The Law of Karma is one of the foundational principles of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). The term karma is derived from the Sanskrit root kri, which means "to act" or "to do." In Indian philosophy, karma refers to all actions performed by an individual—physical, verbal, and mental—and the consequences that arise from them. The law of karma explains that every action produces an effect, and individuals are responsible for the outcomes of their deeds (Radhakrishnan, 2008).

The concept of karma is widely discussed in Indian philosophical and spiritual traditions, especially in the Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, Buddhism, and Jainism. According to the Indian worldview, the universe operates through a moral law in which good actions lead to positive consequences and wrong actions lead to suffering. Thus, human beings shape their own destiny through their thoughts, intentions, and actions (Sharma, 2013).

In modern society, the law of karma remains relevant in personal, educational, and professional life. It inspires individuals to work sincerely, act responsibly, and contribute positively to society. The principle encourages accountability and ethical conduct, which are essential for peaceful social living.

Freedom of will:

इति ते ज्ञानमाख्यातं गुह्याद्गुह्यतरं मया ।
विमृश्यैतदशेषेण यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु ॥
(Bhagavad Gita 18.63)

Translation:

"Thus, I have explained to you this knowledge, which is more secret than all secrets. Reflect on it fully, and then act as you choose."

This verse clearly highlights the principle of freedom of will. Even after receiving divine wisdom, Arjuna is free to make his own decision.

Indian philosophy also teaches that freedom of will should be guided by dharma (righteous duty). Freedom does not mean acting without responsibility; rather, it means choosing actions that are ethical, balanced, and beneficial for oneself and society. According to the law of karma, every choice produces consequences, and therefore individuals must act wisely (Sharma, 2013).

The concept of Freedom of Will occupies an important place in the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). It refers to the ability of human beings to think, choose, and act according to their own understanding and moral judgment. Indian philosophy accepts that although human life is influenced by past karma, individuals still possess the freedom to make choices and shape their future through conscious action.

In Indian thought, freedom of will is closely connected with the concepts of karma, dharma, and self-realization. Human beings are not viewed as completely controlled by fate or destiny. Instead, they are considered responsible agents capable of choosing between right and wrong actions. This moral responsibility is essential for spiritual growth and ethical living (Radhakrishnan, 2008).

Svadharma:

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् ।
स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः ॥
(Bhagavad Gita 3.35)

Translation:

"It is better to perform one's own duty imperfectly than to perform another's duty perfectly. Better is death in one's own duty; another's duty is dangerous."



The Bhagavad Gita explains Svadharma through the dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Arjuna becomes confused and unwilling to fight against his relatives and teachers. Lord Krishna advises him to perform his duty as a warrior because protecting justice and righteousness is his Svadharma.

The concept of Svadharma is an important ethical and philosophical principle in the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). The word Svadharma is derived from two Sanskrit words: sva meaning "one's own" and dharma meaning "duty," "righteousness," or "moral responsibility." Thus, Svadharma refers to an individual's own duty or the responsibilities that arise according to one's nature, abilities, role, and stage of life.

In Indian philosophy, especially in the Bhagavad Gita, Svadharma is considered essential for maintaining personal harmony and social order. It teaches that every individual has a unique role in society and should perform that role sincerely and ethically. Following one's Svadharma leads to inner growth, self-discipline, and spiritual development (Radhakrishnan, 2008).

Sādhāraṇa Dharma

अभयं सत्त्वसंशुद्धिर्ज्ञानयोगव्यवस्थितिः ।
दानं दमश्च यज्ञश्च स्वाध्यायस्तप आर्जवम् ॥
(Bhagavad Gita 16.1)

Translation:

"Fearlessness, purity of mind, steadfastness in knowledge and yoga, charity, self-control, sacrifice, study of sacred texts, austerity, and honesty are divine qualities."

The term Sādhāraṇa Dharma is derived from two Sanskrit words: *sādhāraṇa* meaning "universal" or "common," and *dharma* meaning "duty," "righteousness," or "moral law." Thus, Sādhāraṇa Dharma means the universal duties applicable to everyone (Hiriyanna, 2002). Sādhāraṇa Dharma refers to the universal moral duties and ethical values that are expected from all human beings regardless of caste, profession, gender, religion, or social status. In the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), it represents the common principles of righteous living that promote individual character, social harmony, and spiritual growth.

According to Indian tradition, the important qualities of Sādhāraṇa Dharma include:

1. Truthfulness (Satya)
2. Non-violence (Ahimsa)
3. Compassion (Daya)
4. Forgiveness (Kshama)
5. Self-control (Dama)
6. Purity (Shaucha)
7. Charity (Dana)
8. Patience (Dhriti)

Sādhāraṇa Dharma is different from Svadharma, which refers to personal or role-based duties. While Svadharma changes according to one's profession or stage of life, Sādhāraṇa Dharma remains the same for all human beings. It provides the ethical foundation for social life and human relationships.

In modern society, the principles of Sādhāraṇa Dharma remain highly relevant. Values such as honesty, compassion, tolerance, respect, and self-discipline are essential for peaceful coexistence and responsible citizenship. For students, these teachings encourage ethical behavior, empathy, and character development.

Lokasamgraha:

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः ।
लोकसंग्रहमेवापि संपश्यन्कर्तुमर्हसि ॥
(Bhagavad Gita 3.20)

Translation:

"Indeed, kings like Janaka attained perfection through action alone. You should also act for the welfare and maintenance of the world (Lokasaṃgraha)."

Lokasaṃgraha is an important concept in the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), especially in the philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita. The term is derived from two Sanskrit words: loka meaning "world" or "society," and saṃgraha meaning "holding together," "welfare," or "protection." Thus, Lokasaṃgraha refers to the welfare, stability, and harmony of society and the world.

In Indian philosophy, human life is not viewed only from an individual perspective. Individuals are considered part of a larger social and cosmic order. Therefore, every person has a responsibility to act in ways that support social well-being, justice, and collective harmony. Lokasaṃgraha emphasizes selfless action for the benefit of others and society as a whole (Radhakrishnan, 2008).

Sthitaprajña:

प्रजहाति यदा कामान्सर्वान्पार्थ मनोगतान् ।
आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः स्थितप्रज्ञस्तदोच्यते ॥
(Bhagavad Gita 2.55)

Translation:

"When a person completely gives up all desires of the mind and becomes satisfied in the Self alone, then that person is called Sthitaprajña."

Sthitaprajña is an important concept in the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), especially in the philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita. The term comes from two Sanskrit words:

sthita meaning “steady” or “stable,” and prajña meaning “wisdom” or “intelligence.” Thus, Sthitaprajña refers to a person of stable wisdom, self-control, and mental balance.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna asks Lord Krishna about the qualities of a person who possesses steady wisdom and inner peace. Lord Krishna explains that a Sthitaprajña is free from excessive desires, emotional disturbances, fear, anger, and attachment. Such a person remains calm and balanced in both success and failure (Radhakrishnan, 2008).

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