

Applying The Triguna & Panchamahabhuta Concepts Of Iks To Organizational Culture & Employee Well-Being

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Abstract

Modern organisational ecosystems face paradoxes of productivity and fatigue, engagement and exhaustion, success and inner emptiness. Despite the surge in corporate wellness programmes, employee well-being remains elusive, signalling a deeper existential void in management paradigms. This paper integrates two cardinal constructs of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)- Triguna (Sattva, Rajas, Tamas) and Panchamahabhuta (Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Ether) to propose a holistic model of organisational balance and employee well-being. Using a dual-phase approach- philosophical synthesis and empirical contextualisation from recent Indian data- the study develops the IKS-Based Organisational Balance Model (IBOBM). The model posits that a Sattva-driven, Panchamahabhuta-balanced culture cultivates harmony, ethical clarity and sustainable productivity. Findings highlight IKS as a transformative lens for rehumanising management through consciousness-driven leadership and value-based well-being systems.

Keywords: Indian Knowledge Systems, Triguna, Panchamahabhuta, Organisational Culture, Employee Well-Being, Sattva Leadership, Conscious Management.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century's data-driven corporate landscape, managerial discourse is dominated by analytics, algorithms, and performance metrics. Beneath this veneer of efficiency lies an unsettling paradox: while productivity has soared, employee well-being has declined. The Gallup State of the Global Workplace Report (2024) reveals that only 14% of Indian employees describe themselves as "thriving," while 86% oscillate between struggle and suffering- an indicator of moral fatigue and inner dissonance. Western theories such as Maslow's hierarchy, Herzberg's two-factor model, and Seligman's positive psychology have deepened our understanding of motivation and satisfaction but remain primarily individualistic and material in orientation. Conversely, Indian philosophical systems view the human being as an inseparable triad of body, mind, and spirit. The Sāṃkhya, Yoga Sutras, and Upanishads emphasize samatva (balance), dharma (duty) and chaitanya (consciousness) as essential for harmony in work and life. Against this backdrop, this research integrates Triguna and Panchamahabhuta to construct a holistic framework for aligning performance with peace- an equilibrium between inner and outer dimensions of organisational life.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over the past two decades, the discourse on workplace spirituality and well-being has shifted from mechanistic managerialism to consciousness-oriented paradigms. Foundational studies by Ashmos and Duchon (2000) and Mitroff and Denton (1999) demonstrated that employees seek existential meaning beyond material rewards. Later, Fry (2003) articulated spiritual leadership based on altruistic love, faith, and hope, while Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2010) linked workplace spirituality to value alignment. However, these frameworks remain bounded by secular rationalism, overlooking consciousness as the substratum of existence- a core tenet of Indian Knowledge Systems.

The Triguna theory of Sāṃkhya categorizes human behaviour into Sattva (harmony), Rajas (activity), and Tamas (inertia), providing a psychospiritual lens for understanding motivation and ethics. Empirical research validates these linkages: Sharma and Misra (2023) found Sattva positively correlated with psychological well-being, while Rajas and Tamas were linked to stress and burnout. Indu et al. (2021) observed that Yogic practices elevate Sattva, improving life satisfaction and resilience.

Complementarily, the Panchamahabhuta framework-Prithvi (stability), Apah (adaptability), Agni (transformation), Vāyu (creativity), and Ākāśa (awareness) - symbolises organisational energy fields shaping culture and balance. While sustainability studies (Shrivastava & Kennelly, 2013) echo similar notions, explicit IKS integration remains limited.

Western analogues like mindfulness (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2015), emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2011), and ethical leadership (Brown & Treviño, 2006) acknowledge awareness as a performance driver but lack its metaphysical

foundation. The Triguna-Panchamahabhuta synergy transcends such instrumentalism by merging inner equilibrium (antarik shanti) with outer harmony (bahya samriddhi).

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To develop an IKS-based framework for organisational culture and employee well-being.
- To examine interrelations between Triguna attributes and organisational outcomes.
- To interpret Panchamahabhuta as metaphors for environmental and cultural balance.
- To conceptualise and illustrate the IKS-Based Organisational Balance Model (IBOBM).
- To explore leadership and HR implications of IKS alignment.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a dual-mode design:

Phase I- Theoretical Construction: A hermeneutic analysis of primary IKS texts- Sāṃkhya Kārikā, Bhagavad Gītā, and Taittirīya Upanishad- to extract managerial implications of Triguna and Panchamahabhuta, mapped to behavioural and cultural variables.

Phase II- Empirical Grounding: Secondary datasets from Gallup (2024), IMARC Group, and ET HR (2023-24) contextualise the Indian workplace. A conceptual Guna-Bhūta Workplace Assessment Tool is proposed for future mixed-method validation.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Indian workplaces exhibit pronounced Rajas-Tamas dominance- manifesting as overactivity, stress and inertia. Only 14% of employees report thriving (Gallup, 2024) and 77% express dissatisfaction with wellness programmes (ET HR, 2024). Conversely, mindfulness and yoga-based interventions show 18-22% productivity gains (Pazcare, 2023). These trends affirm the value of Sattva-driven organisational consciousness.

The Panchamahabhuta mapping reveals an overemphasis on Agni (aggression, performance) with depletion of Ākāśa (awareness) and Apah (empathy). The proposed IBOBM mandala positions Triguna as the inner sphere (individual consciousness) and Panchamahabhuta as the outer sphere (environmental culture) with Sattva-aligned equilibrium at the core.

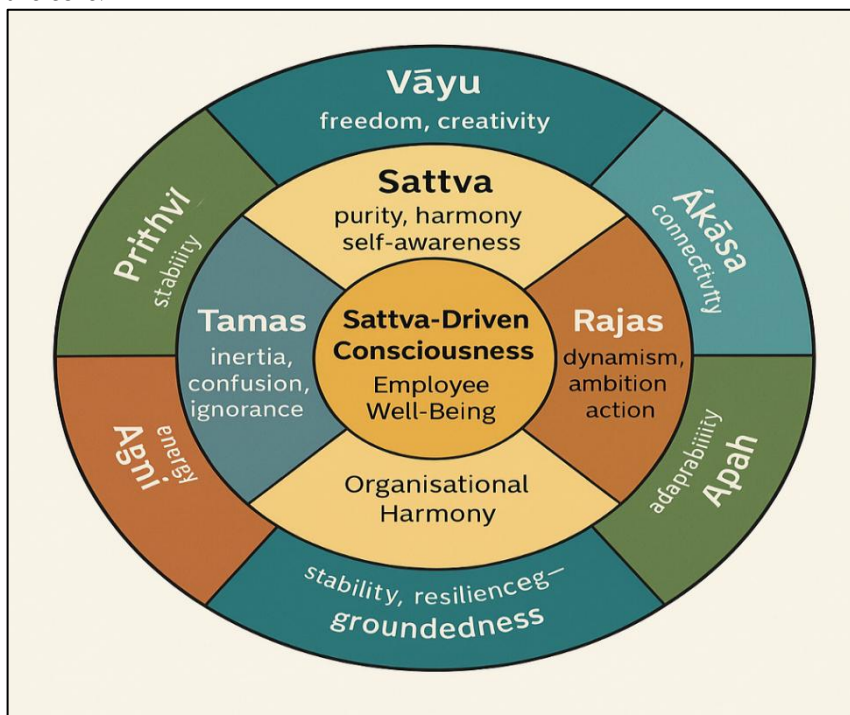


Figure 1: IKS-Based Organisational Balance Model (IBOBM)

The above model (Figure 1) is represented as a concentric mandala. The inner circle symbolises Triguna- Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas- governing individual consciousness and behavioural tendencies. The outer ring embodies Panchamahabhuta- Prithvi (Earth) for stability, Apah (Water) for empathy, Agni (Fire) for transformation, Vāyu (Air) for creativity and Ākāśa (Ether) for awareness. The core nexus signifies Sattva-driven consciousness, radiating ethical leadership and emotional balance, which permeate outward to shape organisational harmony and employee well-being. The balanced alignment between the inner and outer spheres represents a state of holistic equilibrium and sustainable organisational performance.

Table 1. Empirical Context Supporting the IKS-Based Organisational Balance Model (IBOBM)

S. No.	Statistic / Finding (India)	Source (Year)	Interpretation	Relevance to IKS Conceptual Model (Triguna + Panchamahābhūta)
1	Only 14% of Indian employees report “thriving” at work; 86% are struggling or suffering.	Gallup “State of the Global Workplace 2024”, India Today (2024)	Indicates a deep well-being crisis and disengagement across Indian workplaces.	Reflects Tamas (inertia, dissatisfaction). Need for Sattva-enhancing practices and balanced Prithvi-Vāyu elements for stability + creativity.
2	80% of Indian employees experienced mental health challenges in 2021; 47% reported stress or anxiety.	India Briefing (2022)	Demonstrates high emotional strain and lack of psychological resilience.	Highlights imbalance of Agni (energy) and Ākāśa (awareness). Suggests need for mindfulness and value-based HR.
3	44% of Indian corporate wellness programs are reactive; 77% of employees dissatisfied with them.	Economic Times HR (2024)	Corporate wellness is fragmented and reactive.	Reactive systems mirror Rajas-Tamas imbalance; a Sattva-centric proactive culture is needed.
4	Only 26.4% of Indian organisations track wellness outcomes formally.	AmazingWorkplaces Survey 2024	Wellness lacks strategic integration.	Absence of Ākāśa (space/awareness) element; calls for a holistic, conscious HR system.
5	India’s corporate wellness market: USD 2.5 billion (2024) → USD 4.0 billion (2033); CAGR ~ 5.1%.	IMARC Group Report 2024	Rapidly expanding sector seeking innovative frameworks.	Opportunity to embed IKS-based wellness grounded in Panchamahābhūta harmony.
6	Sattva correlates positively with psychological well-being; Rajas and Tamas with anxiety and stress.	IERJ Journal (2023)	Empirical validation of Triguna in psychological outcomes.	Supports using Triguna assessment in employee well-being frameworks.
7	Yogic interventions increased mean Sattva scores and improved quality of life.	AIMDR Journal (2021)	Behavioural change toward inner balance is measurable.	Demonstrates that Sattva cultivation can enhance organisational harmony and morale.
8	India ranks 140 / 143 in the global happiness index 2024.	World Happiness Report 2024	National-level indicator of well-being deficiency.	Reinforces need for indigenous, meaning-based frameworks such as IKS.
9	53% of Indian employees report lack of work-life	LinkedIn Workforce	Cultural and managerial imbalance prevalent.	Suggests over-dominance of Rajas (hyper-activity). Need for balance via

S. No.	Statistic / Finding (India)	Source (Year)	Interpretation	Relevance to IKS Conceptual Model (Triguna + Panchamahābhūta)
	balance and high burnout levels.	Confidence Index 2023		Apah (fluidity) and Prithvi (groundedness).
10	Organisations practising mindfulness & yoga-based programs report 18–22% improvement in productivity and retention.	Pazcare Corporate Wellness Study 2023	Direct link between holistic wellness and performance.	Shows quantifiable benefits of Sattva-aligned, Panchamahābhūta-balanced practices in workplace.

The above data reveal:

- ❖ A predominantly Rajas-Tamas organizational climate (stress, burnout, disengagement).
- ❖ Deficiency of Sattva qualities such as mindfulness, ethical clarity, and collective purpose.
- ❖ Missing Panchamahābhūta balance: excess Agni (over-drive) and lack of Ākāśa (awareness) and Apah (empathy).

Hence, introducing IKS-based Organisational Balance Model (IBOBM) can re-orient Indian firms toward equilibrium-Sattva-driven consciousness coupled with five-element harmony- leading to measurable gains in well-being, culture and performance.

6. DISCUSSION

Modern organisational malaise is not managerial but metaphysical. Excess Rajas and Tamas produce haste, ego, and disengagement, eroding moral and emotional capital. The IBOBM offers a pathway to recalibrate consciousness and culture:

- ✓ **Leadership:** Sattvik leadership aligns moral intent with pragmatic action, fostering trust and empathy.
- ✓ **Human Resources:** Guna profiling in recruitment and appraisal enhances role congruence and retention.
- ✓ **Team Dynamics:** Elemental balance fosters complementary collaboration—Agni for innovation, Apah for empathy, Vāyu for creativity, Prithvi for stability, Ākāśa for vision.
- ✓ **Conflict Resolution:** Awareness-based mediation reduces authority dependence.
- ✓ **CSR:** Dharma-driven stewardship transforms compliance into seva (conscious service).

The NEP 2020's call for IKS integration legitimises the incorporation of such consciousness-based frameworks in business education and practice.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The IKS-Based Organisational Balance Model (IBOBM) represents a culturally resonant, psychospiritually grounded blueprint for rehumanising work. By harmonising Triguna dynamics with Panchamahabhuta balance, organisations can transcend transactional paradigms and cultivate ecosystems of conscious excellence. The recommendations are as follows:

- Institutionalise Sattva practices- reflection, mindfulness and ethical dialogues.
- Balance workplace design and culture using elemental harmony.
- Integrate IKS metrics to assess Guna- Bhūta equilibrium.
- Disseminate IKS frameworks globally as models of sustainable management.
- Extend empirical testing through mixed-method studies across sectors.

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