



Drishti | Dharma | Disha

Concept Note:

Indian Knowledge Systems for Good Governance and Public Leadership

Brief Summary:

- India, under the leadership of Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, is undergoing significant changes in the idea of Governance through initiatives like 'Surajya' and 'Mission Karmayogi.'
- Surajya, or good governance, is about treating the common people of India as one's own and making governance more participative and accessible to citizens.
- Mission Karmayogi aims to build the capacities of civil servants, making governance more citizen-centric and empathetic.
- To achieve these changes, the focus is on reviving Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), and thus transforming both Institutions and Individuals.
- Brhat, a knowledge organization, is committed to positioning IKS as a universal episteme and integrating it into public policy and leadership.
- The first course, 'Design Thinking for Excellence in Public Services,' combines design thinking with IKS frameworks like Panca R̥ṇa-s, Puruṣārtha-s and Sevā, fostering empathetic and citizen-centric public service.
- The second course, 'Nitividhāna: Indic Public Leadership,' delves into political philosophy, public policy and leadership. It links policy to culture, emphasizing the importance of Indian civilizational values and IKS in decision making to any public leader.

Detailed Concept Note:

India, under the leadership of the honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, is going through great institutional changes. Two key initiatives to implement these changes are the idea of 'Surajya'; and the movement of Mission Karmayogi.

Talking to the very first batch of IAS officers, post-independence, Home Minister Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel said: "Your predecessors were brought up in the traditions in which they kept themselves aloof from the common run of the people. It will be your duty to treat the common men in India as your own." That, in capsule, is the idea of Surajya - good governance.

More than seventy years later, the Government of India, under the leadership of the honourable Prime Minister, has started the initiative of Mission Karmayogi, which seeks to build the capacities of civil servants, aiming at making governance more participative and accessible to every citizen.

The means to achieve the institutional changes indicated by Surajya and Mission Karmayogi is to take inspiration from India's rich and powerful tradition of Good Governance which is a part of the vast ocean of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). Relegated to the background during the colonial times, it is now time for IKS to be revived, and to take inspiration from good governance and administration from them.

While there is a need to expose the interplay between power, knowledge (epistemology) and being (ontology) and how the imbalances of power created during colonialism had epistemic-ontological dimensions, it is also necessary that we conceptualize Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) as a universal episteme. If bureaucracy and policymakers are informed on an episteme rooted in our culture, their connection to Surajya and its delivery would be remarkably more citizen-centric. It would create a more empathetic citizen-centric public servant - a Karyakarta Adhikari.

For us, it is as much about providing an alternative to Western ontologies and epistemologies as about turning the gaze.

Bṛhat, as a knowledge organization, is deeply committed to positioning the IKS as a universal episteme. Our unwavering commitment is to harmoniously blend ancient wisdom with contemporary governance by integrating IKS perspectives into public policy and leadership.

Through this inclusive and culturally sensitive approach, we aspire to create a more sustainable and equitable governance paradigm for India's bright future. We aim to do this by creating online and offline courses, workshops, and content creation on the same lines in other modes.

To make governance more participative and accessible, changes have to be made at both institutional (समष्टि “Samashti”) and individual (व्यष्टि “Vyashti”) levels.

It is important that at the institutional and systems level, governance should become more empathetic and innovative. For this, we propose an IKS-based course: **Design Thinking for Excellence in Public Services.**

It is also important to strengthen the very DNA of the public leader. For this, we propose another IKS-based course: **Nitividhāna: Indic Public Leadership.**

A: Design Thinking for Excellence in Public Services

This course on Design Thinking aims for efficient identification and resolution of policy problems, taking inspiration from civilizational principles, rooted in Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS).

Systems and Design Thinking involves perceiving meta-principles and identifying fundamental frameworks on which a system runs. Once the underlying principles become visible, it is easier to introduce and implement institutional changes. The course aims to build the capacity of this perception in participants. The course navigates through the complex nature of challenges in public services and offers design solutions to create desired outcomes.

The course introduces design thinking as a mental framework to be utilised by Civil Servants in governance challenges of unequal development, unfettered growth, climate change, unequal distribution of resources, and increasing strains on institutional delivery of social goods.

It walks the participants through the core framework of Design in these steps: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test.

The course covers an understanding of the western outlook of design thinking as pūrva pakṣa. It then proposes a framework based on the idea of Panca R̥ṇa-s, Puruṣārtha-s and Sevā based on ideas in Indian texts like Arthaśāstra and other texts. This framework, though Indian, is universally applicable. It seeks to fulfil the fundamental needs of man, but at the same time, it aligns his life in a way that fulfils the highest purpose of living - to realize Sat and Rta. The components of the framework cater to social cohesion as well as individual evolution and fulfilment. The course will seek to connecting the bureaucrat more fundamentally with his sense of duty, leading to a more empathetic and citizen-centric service.

B. Nitividhāna: Indic Public Leadership

This course opens with an introduction to political philosophy (राजनैतिक दर्शन) as seen through an examination of some of the major texts and thinkers of both the Eastern and Western traditions. It attempts to provide a global overview of political philosophy and how these philosophical traditions developed and evolved within a context, and how the politics of those times established dominant intellectual traditions.

The course seeks to create a well-grounded understanding of political philosophy with a multi-dimensional understanding of contemporary issues. It also links politics to diverse ideologies in political philosophy, fostering independent thinking amongst participants on contemporary challenges in India.

Since the concepts of individual, community, society, and state (व्यक्ति, समुदाय, समाज, एवं राज्य) hold the central positions in the political philosophy of India, the course will provide a comparative overview of these concepts and how these play a critical role in our everyday lives.

The course also seeks to provide Indian bureaucrats with a deep exploration of Indian civilizational values and Indian knowledge systems (IKS), which will develop the faculties to perceive meta frameworks and underlying principles in the participants. It will significantly impact their governance practices and decision-making processes.

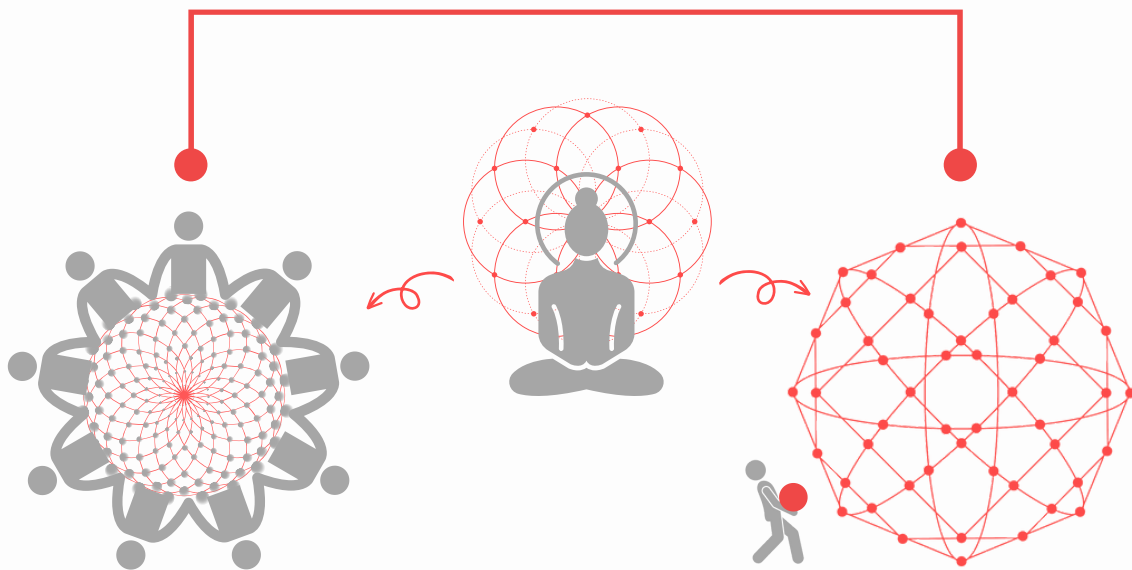
The course will employ a variety of teaching methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of Indian cultural heritage and its relevance to governance. Lectures will serve as a foundation, providing participants with a theoretical framework and historical context. Through these lectures, participants will learn about the philosophical, moral, and ethical principles that underpin Indian civilizational values.

Interactive discussions and activities will encourage active engagement and foster critical thinking. Participants will have the opportunity to reflect on how Indian civilizational values and IKS align with their current governance practices and explore the potential areas for integration.

This course aims to strengthen the character of public leaders, and empower Indian bureaucrats with profound insights into Indian civilizational values and IKS, enabling culturally sensitive governance decisions leading to sustainable solutions.

Surajya -
Bṛhat for
Institutions/Governance

Karma Yogi -
Bṛhat for
Individuals



Dhanyavāda

