

Indian Knowledge Systems and Environmental Disclosure for Corporate Sustainability: A Conceptual Framework

Mr. Sanketkumar Babubhai Vachhani ¹, Dr. Dineshkumar Ramjibhai Chavda ¹, Ms. Harshitaben Dineshbhai Suva ¹

¹ Department of Commerce and Management, Bhakta Kavi Narsinh Mehta University, Junagadh, Gujarat, India.

Corresponding Author: dineshchavda@bknmu.edu.in

ABSTRACT

Environmental disclosure has become an important mechanism for companies to communicate information about environmental impacts, sustainability initiatives, and ecological responsibilities. At the same time, Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) offer ethical and ecological perspectives that emphasise harmony with nature, responsible resource utilisation, and social well-being. This conceptual study, based entirely on secondary sources including academic literature, policy documents, sustainability frameworks, and corporate sustainability reports, examines the integration of IKS with environmental disclosure practices in the Indian corporate context. The study discusses how principles such as *dharma*, *panchatatva*, *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, and *ahimsa* may strengthen stakeholder accountability, ethical governance, and environmental responsibility within sustainability reporting practices. It further develops a conceptual framework explaining how indigenous knowledge traditions can complement contemporary environmental disclosure mechanisms by supporting broader ecological awareness and long-term sustainability orientation. The study concludes that integrating traditional Indian values with modern sustainability reporting frameworks may contribute to more transparent, socially responsive, and ethically informed approaches to corporate sustainability while also presenting practical implementation and operational challenges.

Keywords: Corporate Sustainability, Environmental Disclosure, Indian Knowledge Systems, Sustainable Development Goals

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainability has emerged as a central concern in contemporary corporate governance and business strategy. Rapid industrialisation and economic expansion have significantly contributed to environmental challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and resource depletion. In response, corporations across the world are increasingly expected to disclose their environmental practices, impacts, and sustainability initiatives in a transparent and accountable manner. Environmental disclosure refers to the communication of environmental information related to a company's policies, resource utilisation, ecological impacts, sustainability performance, and risk management practices through annual reports, sustainability reports, and other corporate disclosures [1,10]. Such disclosures support stakeholder awareness, improve corporate accountability, and strengthen long-term sustainable development practices.

In the Indian context, discussions on sustainability can also be enriched through the perspective of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), which represent centuries of philosophical, ethical, and ecological wisdom embedded in Indian

traditions. Concepts such as dharma (ethical responsibility), panchatatva (the five elements of nature), and vasudhaiva kutumbakam (the world is one family) emphasise harmony between humans and nature, responsible consumption, and collective well-being. These principles provide an ethical foundation for sustainability and encourage a balanced relationship between economic activities, society, and the environment [2,6].

Although global reporting frameworks such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) framework introduced by the Securities and Exchange Board of India have strengthened the structure and comparability of environmental disclosure practices, they often emphasise technical and performance-based indicators. Such frameworks may not fully capture the cultural, ethical, and value-oriented dimensions of sustainability that are deeply rooted in Indian traditions. Integrating IKS principles into environmental disclosure practices can therefore provide a more holistic approach to corporate sustainability by combining measurable environmental performance with ethical responsibility and long-term ecological consciousness [5,12].

The present study aims to examine the role of Indian Knowledge Systems in strengthening environmental disclosure practices for corporate sustainability in India. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- develop a conceptual understanding of environmental disclosure and Indian Knowledge Systems;
- review existing literature on sustainability reporting and traditional ecological wisdom;
- explore the relevance of IKS principles within modern corporate sustainability frameworks;
- discuss corporate practices that reflect the integration of traditional values and environmental responsibility; and
- Analyse the implications of such integration for business strategy, policymaking, and sustainable development.

By integrating the analytical rigor of environmental disclosure with the ethical insights of Indian Knowledge Systems, Indian corporations can develop sustainability approaches that are transparent, culturally grounded, and socially responsible. Such an approach can contribute to the development of a sustainability model that aligns global reporting expectations with indigenous knowledge traditions, thereby offering both national relevance and broader global significance [2,6,12].

2. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Environmental Disclosure

Environmental disclosure refers to the process through which organisations communicate information regarding environmental policies, practices, risks, impacts, and sustainability performance to stakeholders. Such disclosures are commonly presented through annual reports, sustainability reports, integrated reports, and Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) disclosures. Environmental disclosure strengthens transparency, improves stakeholder confidence, and enables organisations to demonstrate their commitment to sustainable business practices [1,10].

Over the past two decades, environmental disclosure has become an increasingly important component of corporate governance and sustainability reporting. Investors, regulators, consumers, and civil society organisations now expect

companies to provide reliable information concerning carbon emissions, energy consumption, waste management, water utilisation, biodiversity protection, and climate-related risks. In response, several international reporting frameworks have emerged to standardise sustainability disclosures and improve comparability across industries and organisations.

Frameworks such as the Global Reporting Initiative, Integrated Reporting (<IR>), and the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) provide structured guidance for sustainability communication and environmental reporting. In India, the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) framework introduced by the Securities and Exchange Board of India has further strengthened environmental disclosure practices by encouraging listed companies to disclose environmental, social, and governance-related information in a systematic manner [7,12]. These frameworks support accountability while helping organisations align corporate activities with broader sustainable development objectives.

Despite these developments, environmental disclosure frameworks often remain strongly performance-oriented and compliance-driven. In many cases, sustainability reporting emphasises measurable indicators and regulatory requirements while giving comparatively limited attention to ethical responsibility, cultural values, and long-term ecological awareness. This limitation creates space for integrating indigenous perspectives such as Indian Knowledge Systems into contemporary sustainability discourse.

2.2 Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) represent a broad body of philosophical, ethical, ecological, and social knowledge developed through centuries of Indian intellectual traditions. These systems emphasise harmony between human beings, society, and nature and therefore provide an ethical foundation for sustainable living and responsible resource utilisation. Several principles within IKS offer perspectives that may strengthen environmental disclosure practices and sustainability-oriented governance.

The principle of dharma emphasises ethical responsibility and duty toward society and the environment. Within a corporate sustainability context, this principle encourages organisations to move beyond profit-centred decision-making and adopt more transparent and accountable reporting practices. Companies influenced by this perspective may provide sustainability disclosures that reflect broader stakeholder responsibility rather than focusing solely on regulatory compliance.

Similarly, the concept of panchatatva, which recognises earth, water, fire, air, and space as interconnected elements of existence, highlights the importance of ecological balance and environmental stewardship. This principle can support more comprehensive environmental disclosure by encouraging organisations to report on multiple dimensions of environmental performance, including resource utilisation, emissions, energy management, biodiversity protection, and conservation initiatives.

The idea of vasudhaiva kutumbakam, meaning “the world is one family,” promotes interconnectedness among individuals, communities, businesses, and ecological systems. Within sustainability reporting, this perspective supports broader stakeholder accountability by encouraging organisations to consider the environmental and social implications of their activities on communities, consumers, employees, and future generations.

Another important principle, ahimsa, or non-violence, advocates minimising harm to living beings and the natural environment. Applied within a corporate sustainability context, this principle encourages environmentally responsible production practices and greater transparency regarding pollution control, waste reduction, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable supply chain management.

Traditional Indian practices such as community-based water conservation, sustainable agriculture, and forest preservation further demonstrate the practical relevance of these principles in promoting environmental sustainability and collective ecological responsibility.

2.3 Linking Indian Knowledge Systems and Environmental Disclosure

The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) with environmental disclosure offers a broader and more ethically grounded approach to corporate sustainability. Contemporary environmental disclosure frameworks mainly emphasise measurable indicators such as emissions, energy consumption, waste management, and resource utilisation. Although these frameworks improve transparency and comparability, they often focus primarily on regulatory compliance and technical reporting requirements. Indian Knowledge Systems can complement these mechanisms by introducing ethical responsibility, ecological consciousness, and stakeholder-oriented values into sustainability reporting practices [2,5].

The relationship between IKS and environmental disclosure can be understood through their influence on governance orientation, reporting behaviour, and disclosure quality. Principles such as dharma encourage organisations to adopt responsible governance practices by emphasising ethical duty, accountability, and truthful communication. In the context of environmental disclosure, this may motivate companies to provide more transparent, balanced, and credible sustainability information rather than limiting disclosures to compliance-based reporting. As a result, governance decisions become more aligned with long-term environmental responsibility and stakeholder expectations.

Similarly, the principle of panchatatva promotes a holistic understanding of ecological interdependence by recognising the relationship between earth, water, air, fire, and space. This perspective can influence reporting behaviour by encouraging organisations to disclose environmental impacts across multiple ecological dimensions rather than focusing narrowly on selected performance indicators. Consequently, environmental disclosure quality may improve through broader reporting on resource utilization, biodiversity conservation, water stewardship, pollution control, and ecological balance.

The principle of vasudhaiva kutumbakam expands the scope of stakeholder accountability by emphasizing interconnectedness among businesses, society, and the natural environment. Organizations influenced by this perspective may adopt more inclusive sustainability reporting practices that recognize the interests of communities, future generations, and ecological systems alongside shareholder concerns. This can strengthen stakeholder engagement and improve the social relevance of environmental disclosures.

Likewise, ahimsa reinforces the importance of minimizing environmental and social harm. Within environmental disclosure practices, this principle may encourage organizations to communicate initiatives related to pollution reduction, renewable energy adoption, sustainable production processes, and environmentally responsible supply

chains. Such disclosures reflect not only measurable sustainability performance but also an ethical commitment toward environmental protection and responsible business conduct.

Through these mechanisms, the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems with environmental disclosure creates a more holistic sustainability framework in which reporting functions not merely as a regulatory requirement but also as an expression of ethical responsibility and ecological stewardship. This approach has the potential to strengthen stakeholder trust, improve corporate legitimacy, and support long-term sustainable development by aligning contemporary sustainability reporting practices with culturally rooted environmental values [6,12].

3. INSIGHTS FROM LITERATURE

Environmental disclosure has emerged as a significant area of research within sustainability, corporate governance, and stakeholder accountability literature due to growing global concerns regarding climate change, environmental degradation, and corporate environmental responsibility. Earlier corporate reporting systems were primarily designed to communicate financial performance and economic outcomes, often giving limited attention to the environmental consequences of business activities. Over time, increasing societal expectations, regulatory pressures, and investor awareness encouraged organisations to expand their reporting practices to include information related to emissions, energy consumption, waste management, resource utilisation, climate-related risks, and sustainability initiatives [8,11].

The development of international sustainability reporting frameworks such as the Global Reporting Initiative, Integrated Reporting (<IR>), and the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) significantly influenced the evolution of environmental disclosure practices [1,10]. Existing literature generally agrees that these frameworks improved transparency, comparability, and stakeholder communication by encouraging companies to disclose standardised environmental information. Scholars such as Adams (2015) and Kolk (2008) argue that sustainability reporting frameworks strengthened corporate accountability and broadened the scope of organisational disclosure beyond purely financial performance. However, other studies suggest that despite improvements in reporting structures, many sustainability disclosures remain heavily compliance-oriented and often prioritise reputational management over substantive environmental transformation.

Several studies have also examined the determinants and consequences of environmental disclosure practices. Clarkson et al. (2011) observed that proactive environmental strategies and transparent sustainability disclosures can positively influence stakeholder perceptions and corporate legitimacy. Similarly, Aggarwal and Singh (2019) found that improved environmental disclosure practices contribute to investor confidence and influence investment-related decision-making in the Indian context. These findings indicate that environmental disclosure increasingly functions not only as a reporting mechanism but also as a strategic tool for stakeholder engagement and corporate reputation management.

At the same time, scholars have identified important limitations within existing environmental disclosure practices. Grey (1992) argued that sustainability reporting frequently emphasises measurable and technical indicators while paying comparatively less attention to ethical responsibility and broader ecological consciousness. Similar concerns are reflected in Indian sustainability literature, where several studies note that environmental disclosures among Indian

corporations often remain uneven in quality, industry-specific in implementation, and primarily motivated by regulatory compliance rather than intrinsic environmental commitment [2,5,12]. This suggests that while reporting frameworks have strengthened disclosure practices structurally, they may not fully address the ethical and cultural dimensions of sustainability.

Within the Indian context, sustainability discourse has increasingly intersected with discussions concerning indigenous knowledge, traditional ecological practices, and culturally rooted approaches to environmental stewardship. Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) provide a philosophical framework emphasising harmony between human activity and nature, responsible resource utilisation, collective well-being, and ethical conduct [6]. Concepts such as dharma, panchatatva, vasudhaiva kutumbakam, and ahimsa encourage ecological balance, stakeholder responsibility, and long-term sustainability thinking. Unlike conventional reporting systems that focus primarily on measurable environmental indicators, IKS introduces moral and ethical considerations into sustainability discourse. Existing studies discussing Indian Knowledge Systems mainly focus on cultural philosophy, traditional ecological wisdom, sustainable lifestyles, and community-oriented environmental practices. Meanwhile, environmental disclosure research predominantly examines governance structures, reporting standards, regulatory compliance, financial implications, and stakeholder communication. Although both streams of literature address sustainability-related concerns, they have largely developed independently with limited conceptual integration.

A critical review of the literature therefore reveals an important research gap. Existing environmental disclosure studies provide strong technical and regulatory perspectives but offer limited discussion regarding ethical and culturally grounded sustainability approaches. Similarly, research on Indian Knowledge Systems highlights ecological ethics and traditional sustainability values but rarely examines their relevance within contemporary corporate reporting practices. Consequently, insufficient scholarly attention has been given to understanding how indigenous ethical principles may influence governance orientation, stakeholder accountability, reporting behaviour, and the broader quality of environmental disclosure.

This gap highlights the need for a more integrative conceptual framework that connects Indian Knowledge Systems with environmental disclosure practices in the Indian corporate context. The present study attempts to address this gap by exploring how traditional Indian philosophical principles can complement modern sustainability reporting frameworks and contribute to more ethically informed, culturally contextualised, and stakeholder-oriented approaches to corporate sustainability.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a conceptual and qualitative research design to examine the relationship between Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and environmental disclosure in the context of corporate sustainability. The study does not seek to test statistical relationships or generate empirical findings; instead, it aims to develop a conceptual understanding of how indigenous Indian philosophical principles can contribute to contemporary sustainability reporting practices. A conceptual research approach is considered appropriate because the study focuses on theoretical integration, interpretation of existing knowledge, and framework development.

4.2 Sources of Data

The study is entirely based on secondary data collected from academic and institutional sources. Relevant literature was obtained from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, conference papers, policy documents, sustainability reports, and corporate disclosure frameworks related to sustainability and environmental reporting.

Academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect were used to identify relevant scholarly literature. In addition, official reports and disclosure guidelines issued by organisations such as the Global Reporting Initiative and the Securities and Exchange Board of India were reviewed to understand the evolution of sustainability reporting frameworks and environmental disclosure practices.

The study also considered sustainability reports and Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) disclosures published by Indian companies operating in environmentally sensitive industries such as chemicals, energy, manufacturing, cement, and textiles.

4.3 Literature Selection Criteria

The literature selection process was guided by relevance, conceptual contribution, and academic credibility. The review focused on studies related to environmental disclosure, sustainability reporting, Indian Knowledge Systems, ecological ethics, corporate environmental responsibility, and indigenous sustainability perspectives.

Keywords such as “environmental disclosure,” “corporate sustainability,” “Indian Knowledge Systems,” “sustainability reporting,” “BRSR,” “traditional ecological knowledge,” “environmental accountability,” and “ESG reporting” were used during the search process. The review primarily covered literature published between 2005 and 2025 to capture both the development of modern sustainability reporting practices and recent discussions concerning indigenous knowledge and sustainability.

Preference was given to peer-reviewed and indexed journal articles, recognised sustainability frameworks, and official institutional publications. Sources lacking conceptual relevance, academic reliability, or direct connection to the objectives of the study were excluded from the review process.

4.4 Thematic Analysis

A thematic analysis approach was used to examine and synthesise the collected literature. The analysis was conducted systematically in multiple stages to identify recurring themes and conceptual relationships.

In the first stage, the selected literature was carefully reviewed to identify key concepts associated with environmental disclosure and Indian Knowledge Systems. In the second stage, related concepts were grouped into broader thematic categories such as ethical responsibility, stakeholder accountability, ecological balance, transparency, sustainability governance, and resource conservation.

In the final stage, the identified themes were interpreted and linked conceptually to understand how IKS principles could strengthen environmental disclosure practices. This process enabled the study to examine the ethical and cultural dimensions of sustainability reporting beyond conventional compliance-based approaches.

4.5 Development of the Conceptual Framework

Based on the thematic analysis, the present study develops a conceptual framework integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) with environmental disclosure practices in order to explain how indigenous ethical principles may influence corporate sustainability behaviour, governance orientation, and reporting quality. The framework is built around the idea that traditional Indian philosophical concepts can complement modern sustainability reporting mechanisms by strengthening the ethical and stakeholder-oriented dimensions of environmental disclosure.

The framework proposes that principles such as dharma, panchatatva, vasudhaiva kutumbakam, and ahimsa influence organisational behaviour through multiple conceptual pathways. Dharma contributes to responsible governance orientation by encouraging ethical accountability, truthful disclosure, and long-term decision-making. This may improve reporting credibility and encourage organisations to move beyond symbolic or compliance-based sustainability communication.

Similarly, panchatatva promotes a holistic understanding of ecological interdependence, encouraging companies to adopt broader environmental reporting practices that integrate resource utilisation, biodiversity, water conservation, emissions, and ecological balance. The principle of vasudhaiva kutumbakam strengthens stakeholder-oriented reporting by recognising the interconnected interests of businesses, communities, society, and the natural environment. This perspective may encourage organisations to provide more inclusive and socially responsive sustainability disclosures.

In addition, ahimsa reinforces environmental responsibility by emphasising the reduction of ecological and social harm. This principle can influence disclosure behaviour by encouraging greater transparency regarding pollution control, renewable energy adoption, sustainable production practices, and environmental risk reduction initiatives.

The framework therefore suggests that the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems with modern environmental disclosure mechanisms can improve disclosure quality by strengthening transparency, ethical responsibility, ecological consciousness, and stakeholder accountability. In this integrated approach, environmental disclosure functions not only as a regulatory reporting requirement but also as a reflection of organisational values and long-term sustainability commitment. Such a framework supports the development of a more culturally grounded, ethically informed, and socially responsible model of corporate sustainability.

4.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study is conceptual in nature and therefore relies exclusively on secondary data and theoretical interpretation. No primary survey, interview, or empirical testing was conducted as part of the research. The discussion mainly focuses

on the Indian corporate and sustainability context, particularly the relevance of Indian Knowledge Systems in strengthening environmental disclosure practices.

Although the study develops a conceptual framework, empirical validation of the proposed relationships remains beyond the scope of the present research. Future studies may extend this work through case studies, industry-level analysis, surveys, or empirical examination of sustainability disclosures among Indian corporations.

5. INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS AND ENVIRONMENTAL DISCLOSURE

PRACTICES: AN INTEGRATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Modern environmental disclosure frameworks provide organisations with structured mechanisms to communicate information related to environmental performance, emissions, resource utilisation, waste management, energy consumption, and sustainability initiatives [1,5]. These frameworks strengthen corporate transparency and stakeholder communication by encouraging systematic sustainability reporting. However, many disclosure systems continue to emphasise measurable indicators and regulatory compliance, often providing limited attention to ethical responsibility, cultural values, and ecological consciousness. In this context, Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) offer a broader sustainability perspective that can enrich environmental disclosure practices through ethical accountability, stakeholder orientation, and long-term ecological thinking [6].

5.1 Ethical Responsibility and Dharma

The principle of dharma, which emphasises ethical duty and responsible conduct, can influence corporate governance orientation by encouraging organisations to recognise accountability toward society, communities, and the natural environment in addition to shareholders. Within environmental disclosure practices, dharma supports governance structures that prioritise transparency, ethical decision-making, and long-term sustainability responsibility rather than short-term compliance objectives.

This principle may also influence reporting behaviour by encouraging companies to communicate environmental impacts and sustainability initiatives in a more balanced and credible manner. Organisations guided by such ethical orientation may place greater emphasis on disclosures related to environmental stewardship, renewable energy adoption, responsible resource utilisation, and community welfare. As a result, dharma can strengthen disclosure quality by promoting truthful sustainability communication, stakeholder accountability, and responsible corporate conduct [2].

5.2 Panchatatva and Ecological Balance

The concept of panchatatva, which recognizes earth, water, fire, air, and space as interconnected elements of existence, provides a holistic perspective on ecological sustainability. This principle reinforces the idea that environmental systems are interdependent and that sustainability decisions should consider multiple dimensions of ecological impact simultaneously.

In the context of environmental disclosure, panchatstva can influence reporting behaviour by encouraging organisations to adopt more comprehensive environmental reporting practices. For example, disclosures related to biodiversity conservation, land restoration, and soil protection may correspond to earth; water conservation and wastewater management to water; energy efficiency and emission reduction to fire and air; and waste management or sustainable spatial planning to space. Such an integrated perspective may improve disclosure quality by promoting broader ecological accountability rather than narrowly focusing on isolated environmental indicators [5].

5.3 Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and Stakeholder Accountability

The principle of vasudhaiva kutumbakam, meaning “the world is one family,” emphasises interconnectedness among businesses, society, communities, and ecological systems. This perspective broadens governance orientation by encouraging organisations to consider the interests of multiple stakeholder groups, including future generations, rather than focusing exclusively on shareholder value.

Within environmental disclosure practices, this principle may encourage companies to adopt more inclusive and stakeholder-oriented reporting behaviour. Organisations influenced by this perspective may provide greater transparency regarding environmental risks, community impacts, resource utilization, and sustainability initiatives affecting broader society. Consequently, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam can strengthen disclosure quality by improving stakeholder responsiveness, social accountability, and the ethical relevance of sustainability communication [7].

5.4 Ahimsa and Environmental Responsibility

The principle of ahimsa, or non-violence, advocates minimising harm to both living beings and the natural environment. In a corporate sustainability context, this principle supports governance approaches that prioritise pollution reduction, sustainable production processes, responsible supply chain management, and environmentally conscious operational practices.

This principle may also shape environmental disclosure behaviour by encouraging organisations to communicate their efforts toward reducing ecological and social harm. Disclosures concerning renewable energy adoption, green technologies, carbon reduction initiatives, waste minimisation, and sustainable sourcing practices can reflect this orientation. Through such reporting practices, ahimsa may strengthen environmental disclosure quality by connecting measurable sustainability indicators with ethical responsibility and environmental stewardship [6].

5.5 Integrating Modern Reporting Frameworks and Traditional Wisdom

Global sustainability frameworks such as GRI, ESG reporting standards, and Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) provide structured approaches for environmental disclosure and sustainability communication. These frameworks improve comparability, transparency, and regulatory standardisation; however, they are largely designed from technical and compliance-oriented perspectives.

Indian Knowledge Systems can complement these frameworks by introducing ethical, cultural, and stakeholder-centred dimensions into sustainability reporting. Principles such as dharma, panchatatva, ahimsa, and seva (service) may encourage organisations to interpret sustainability not merely as a reporting obligation but as a broader ethical commitment toward society and the environment. In this way, IKS can influence governance orientation and reporting behaviour by strengthening the moral and social foundations of environmental disclosure practices.

5.6 Toward a Holistic Sustainability Framework

The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems with environmental disclosure contributes to the development of a more holistic sustainability framework that combines measurable environmental performance with ethical responsibility, stakeholder accountability, and ecological consciousness. Such an approach encourages organisations to internalise sustainability as a core organisational value rather than treating disclosure solely as a regulatory requirement.

By linking traditional ecological wisdom with contemporary sustainability reporting mechanisms, organisations may improve disclosure quality through greater transparency, broader stakeholder engagement, and stronger long-term environmental commitment. This integrated framework therefore provides a culturally grounded and ethically informed approach to corporate sustainability that aligns Indian philosophical traditions with globally accepted environmental disclosure practices [2,5,6].

6. CORPORATE ILLUSTRATIONS AND PRACTICAL INSIGHTS

The relationship between Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and environmental disclosure remains primarily conceptual within existing academic literature. However, sustainability disclosures published by several Indian corporations contain measurable environmental and social performance indicators that reflect values broadly consistent with ethical responsibility, ecological stewardship, stakeholder accountability, and long-term sustainability orientation. The following illustrations are therefore presented as interpretive examples based on publicly disclosed sustainability information rather than as empirically validated evidence of direct IKS implementation.

6.1 Tata Steel

Tata Steel's sustainability reporting highlights initiatives related to carbon reduction, water conservation, renewable energy adoption, waste recycling, and community welfare. According to its 2024–25 sustainability disclosures, the company reported extensive water recycling and reuse practices across major operational units and continued progress toward reducing carbon intensity through energy-efficient technologies and renewable energy integration [13]. The company also disclosed investments in community healthcare, education, livelihood generation, and rural development initiatives in areas surrounding its operations. These disclosures reflect a governance orientation extending beyond regulatory compliance and may be conceptually associated with principles such as dharma and seva, particularly through the integration of environmental responsibility with broader stakeholder welfare.

6.2 ITC Limited

ITC Limited's sustainability reporting provides quantitative disclosures concerning afforestation, renewable energy usage, water stewardship, and waste management. The company reported maintaining its water-positive status for several consecutive years and meeting a significant proportion of its electricity requirements through renewable energy sources [9]. ITC also disclosed large-scale afforestation initiatives and solid waste recycling programs as part of its sustainability strategy. Its integrated reporting framework combines environmental, economic, and social performance indicators within a unified sustainability approach. Although the company does not explicitly reference Indian Knowledge Systems, its emphasis on ecological balance, responsible resource utilisation, and community-oriented sustainability practices may be interpreted as conceptually aligned with the holistic environmental perspective reflected in panchatatva.

6.3 UltraTech Cement

UltraTech Cement's sustainability reports disclose measurable information concerning carbon emissions, alternative fuel utilisation, renewable energy adoption, and water conservation practices. The company reported increasing its use of alternative fuels and renewable energy across manufacturing operations while continuing initiatives related to water positivity and energy efficiency [14]. Its sustainability disclosures also include information concerning biodiversity management, waste co-processing, and community engagement initiatives associated with operational locations. These practices indicate an increasing focus on environmental stewardship and stakeholder accountability that may conceptually resonate with sustainability perspectives similar to vasudhaiva kutumbakam, particularly through recognition of the interrelationship between industrial operations, ecological systems, and surrounding communities.

6.4 Cipla Limited

Cipla Limited's sustainability reporting includes disclosures related to renewable energy adoption, green infrastructure development, water conservation, waste reduction, and healthcare accessibility programs. The company reported sustainability initiatives focused on improving energy efficiency, strengthening environmentally responsible manufacturing processes, and expanding healthcare outreach programs [3]. Cipla also disclosed efforts toward reducing operational environmental impacts through waste management and resource conservation measures. These initiatives may conceptually reflect values associated with ahimsa through their emphasis on reducing environmental and social harm while integrating sustainability with broader public welfare objectives.

6.5 Key Practical Insights

The illustrative corporate examples indicate that several Indian companies increasingly combine measurable sustainability indicators with broader environmental and social responsibility initiatives. These disclosures suggest several practical implications for environmental disclosure and corporate sustainability practices:

- Environmental disclosure may become more stakeholder-oriented when sustainability reporting incorporates ethical responsibility alongside measurable performance indicators.

- Broader ecological and community-focused reporting practices can strengthen the credibility and social relevance of sustainability disclosures.
- Companies integrating environmental initiatives with long-term stakeholder welfare may improve organisational trust, stakeholder engagement, and corporate legitimacy.
- Indian Knowledge Systems can provide an interpretive ethical framework that complements existing sustainability reporting standards such as GRI and BRSR without replacing technical disclosure requirements.

Overall, the integration of structured environmental disclosure frameworks with culturally grounded ethical perspectives offers a promising pathway toward more socially responsible, environmentally conscious, and contextually relevant corporate sustainability practices in India.

7. IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY AND POLICY

The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into environmental disclosure has important implications for corporate sustainability, governance practices, and public policy in India. By combining traditional ethical perspectives with contemporary sustainability reporting frameworks, organisations can develop sustainability approaches that are not only measurable and transparent but also socially meaningful and culturally grounded. At the same time, the practical implementation of such integration presents several conceptual and operational challenges that require careful consideration.

7.1 Implications for Corporate Sustainability

Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into environmental disclosure can encourage corporations to adopt a broader and more long-term understanding of sustainability that balances economic growth, social responsibility, and environmental stewardship [6]. Principles such as dharma, ahimsa, and vasudhaiva kutumbakam may strengthen organisational commitment toward ethical decision-making, stakeholder accountability, and ecological responsibility.

From a managerial perspective, the incorporation of ethical and cultural dimensions into sustainability reporting can improve the quality and relevance of corporate disclosures. Rather than treating sustainability reporting solely as a compliance exercise, organisations may begin to view environmental disclosure as part of their broader social and ethical responsibility. This approach can contribute to stronger stakeholder trust, improved corporate reputation, and greater alignment between organisational values and sustainability practices [2,5].

In addition, culturally grounded sustainability initiatives may enhance employee engagement and community participation by connecting corporate environmental actions with familiar ethical and social values. Such integration can also encourage organisations to adopt more responsible approaches toward resource utilisation, environmental protection, and long-term ecological sustainability.

However, the practical application of IKS principles within corporate sustainability frameworks is not without challenges. One major concern is the possibility of symbolic or superficial use of traditional concepts without meaningful organisational integration. Companies may selectively use references to Indian values within sustainability

reports primarily for reputational purposes, while actual environmental practices remain unchanged. In such cases, IKS may function more as symbolic language than as a genuine guide for sustainability governance.

Another challenge relates to the operationalisation of philosophical principles within measurable disclosure frameworks. Concepts such as dharma or ahimsa are ethical and interpretive in nature, making it difficult to translate them into standardised reporting indicators or quantifiable sustainability metrics. As a result, organisations may face difficulties in integrating indigenous ethical values into formal environmental disclosure systems that are largely structured around measurable performance indicators.

Industry-specific barriers may also influence implementation. Environmentally intensive sectors such as chemicals, mining, energy, and manufacturing often operate under significant economic and operational pressures, which may limit the practical integration of broader ethical sustainability perspectives. Differences in organisational culture, management priorities, regulatory expectations, and resource availability can further affect the extent to which IKS-based sustainability approaches are adopted across industries.

7.2 Implications for Policy and Regulation

The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems into sustainability policy frameworks can strengthen India's contribution to global sustainability discourse by introducing culturally rooted and ethically informed approaches to environmental governance. Policymakers and regulatory institutions may encourage companies to incorporate broader social and ecological responsibility within environmental disclosure practices rather than focusing exclusively on technical compliance requirements.

Frameworks such as Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) introduced by the Securities and Exchange Board of India provide an important opportunity to integrate ethical sustainability perspectives into corporate reporting practices [12]. Policymakers may also recognise indigenous environmental practices such as traditional water conservation systems, community-based resource management, and ecological stewardship as valuable components of sustainability governance.

Furthermore, incorporating sustainability-oriented principles from Indian Knowledge Systems into higher education, management education, and corporate training programs can help develop future business leaders who are capable of combining global sustainability standards with culturally relevant ethical perspectives [7].

At the same time, policymakers must exercise caution in integrating philosophical concepts into formal regulatory frameworks. Excessive abstraction or lack of clarity in policy interpretation may create inconsistencies in implementation and reporting practices. Therefore, any integration of IKS within sustainability regulation should be supported by clear guidelines, contextual interpretation, and practical implementation frameworks to avoid ambiguity and symbolic compliance.

7.3 Broader Implications

The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems with environmental disclosure highlights the possibility of developing sustainability frameworks that combine measurable environmental performance with ethical consciousness and cultural relevance. Such an approach can help Indian corporations contribute a distinctive perspective to global sustainability discussions by aligning economic development with ecological responsibility and social well-being.

At the same time, the effectiveness of this integration depends on whether organisations move beyond symbolic adoption and meaningfully incorporate ethical principles into sustainability governance and operational practices. A balanced approach that combines modern disclosure standards with practical, context-sensitive interpretations of indigenous knowledge may therefore offer the most sustainable pathway forward.

Overall, IKS-informed environmental disclosure should not be viewed merely as a reporting mechanism but as an evolving framework that encourages organisations to connect sustainability performance with broader ethical, social, and ecological responsibilities [2,5,6].

8. CONCLUSION

Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into environmental disclosure offers a broader and more ethically informed approach to corporate sustainability by combining measurable sustainability performance with principles of social responsibility, ecological balance, and long-term environmental stewardship. Concepts such as dharma, ahimsa, and responsible resource utilisation may strengthen sustainability reporting by encouraging organisations to move beyond compliance-oriented disclosure toward more transparent, accountable, and stakeholder-oriented environmental practices [2,6].

From a corporate perspective, the inclusion of culturally rooted ethical values within sustainability strategies may strengthen organisational credibility, enhance stakeholder confidence, and support decision-making processes that consider both economic and environmental implications. Similarly, policymakers may explore the incorporation of indigenous sustainability perspectives within regulatory frameworks such as Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) and corporate social responsibility initiatives in order to encourage sustainability practices that are socially relevant and culturally contextualised [5,12].

However, integrating IKS into environmental disclosure also presents several practical and conceptual challenges. Philosophical principles rooted in traditional knowledge systems are often interpretive in nature and may be difficult to operationalise within standardised sustainability reporting frameworks. In addition, there is a possibility that organisations may reference Indian cultural values symbolically within sustainability reports without meaningfully embedding these principles into governance structures or operational practices. The extent of implementation may also differ across industries due to variations in organisational priorities, regulatory pressures, technological capabilities, and resource availability.

Despite these limitations, the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems with environmental disclosure provides a promising conceptual pathway for developing sustainability models that are ethically informed, culturally grounded,

and globally relevant. By combining indigenous knowledge traditions with contemporary sustainability frameworks, Indian corporations may contribute a distinctive perspective to global sustainability discourse while promoting responsible and resilient business practices that balance economic development with environmental and social responsibility.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors express their appreciation to Bhakta Kavi Narsinh Mehta University, Junagadh, for the academic support and research resources that contributed to the completion of this study.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

FUNDING

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Sanketkumar Babubhai Vachhani and Ms. Harshitaben Dineshbhai Suva contributed to the study's conceptualisation, literature review, development of the conceptual framework, and manuscript writing.

Dr. Dineshkumar Ramjibhai Chavda contributed to research supervision, methodological guidance, and critical review of the manuscript.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

This study adopts a conceptual research approach, drawing on a review of existing literature and secondary sources. It does not involve primary data collection or human participants. Therefore, ethical approval was not required.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The study is based on secondary data and existing literature. All relevant sources used in the study are properly cited within the article.

REFERENCES

1. Adams, C. A. (2015). Sustainability reporting and assurance: What's next? *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 28(1), 28–50. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AAAJ-12-2013-1554>
2. Aggarwal, S., & Singh, P. (2019). Environmental disclosures and investor perceptions: Evidence from India. *Journal of Sustainable Finance & Investment*, 9(3), 205–223. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20430795.2019.1578069>
3. Cipla Limited. (2025). *Business responsibility and sustainability report 2024–25*. https://www.cipla.com/sites/default/files/Business-Responsibility-Sustainability-Report_1.pdf

4. Clarkson, P. M., Li, Y., Richardson, G. D., & Vasvari, F. P. (2011). Does it really pay to be green? Determinants and consequences of proactive environmental strategies. *Journal of Accounting and Public Policy*, 30(2), 122–144. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaccpubpol.2010.09.013>
5. Datta, P. (2020). Environmental disclosure and corporate social responsibility in Indian companies. *Indian Journal of Corporate Governance*, 13(2), 107–125. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0974686220966807>
6. Gadgil, M., & Guha, R. (1992). *This fissured land: An ecological history of India*. Oxford University Press.
7. Goel, R. (2021). Integrating traditional knowledge with sustainability reporting: Insights for Indian companies. *Journal of Cleaner Production*.
8. Grey, R. (1992). Accounting and environmentalism: An exploration of the challenge of gently accounting for accountability, transparency and sustainability. *Accounting, Organisations and Society*, 17(5), 399–425. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0361-3682\(92\)90038-T](https://doi.org/10.1016/0361-3682(92)90038-T)
9. ITC Limited. (2025). *Sustainability and CSR report 2024–25*. ITC Sustainability
10. Kolk, A. (2008). Sustainability, accountability and corporate governance: Exploring multinationals' reporting practices. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 17(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.511>
11. Mathews, M. R. (1997). Twenty-five years of social and environmental disclosure research: Is there a silver jubilee to celebrate? *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 10(4), 481–531. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EUM000000004417>
12. Securities and Exchange Board of India. (2021). *Business responsibility and sustainability reporting (BRSR) guidelines*. SEBI Official Website
13. Tata Steel. (2025). *Sustainability report 2024–25*. Tata Steel Sustainability
14. UltraTech Cement. (2025). *Sustainability report 2024–25*. UltraTech Sustainability