

Acquiring Analytical Vedantic Views and Administrative Science

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Abstract

Contemporary administrative science prioritizes efficiency, institutional procedures, performance indicators, and rule-based compliance. While these dimensions are indispensable for governance, they often remain inadequate in addressing deeper human concerns such as ethical judgment, emotional maturity, moral responsibility, and public trust. This paper argues that ancient Vedic methods of learning—grounded in analytic Vedantic thought—offer a complementary and human-centered framework capable of strengthening modern governance.

In the Vedic tradition, learning was treated as a public and ethical responsibility rather than a private or purely technical achievement. Knowledge was validated through open discourse, scriptural reasoning, logical coherence, and disciplined conduct. Using Sudhamangala as an illustrative example, this study demonstrates how Vedic knowledge systems evaluated learning holistically by integrating intellectual depth, ethical consistency, and lifelong accountability. When examined alongside classical administrative principles articulated in Kautilya's Arthaśāstra, these methods reveal a governance philosophy rooted in transparency, public welfare, and moral leadership. The paper concludes that integrating Vedantic learning principles with administrative science can contribute to more humane, trustworthy, and sustainable public institutions.

Keywords: Vedic Education, Analytic Vedanta, Administrative Science, Ethical Governance, Public Accountability, Sudhamangala

I. Introduction: Knowledge as a Public Trust

Ancient Indian civilization did not conceive knowledge as a private possession or a marketable skill. In the Vedic worldview, learning was a transformative social process intended to refine intellect, character, and responsibility simultaneously. Education unfolded in public spaces—gurukulas, vidvat sabhās, and tarka sabhās—where scholars were expected to defend their understanding before society

using authoritative sources, rigorous reasoning, and ethical discipline.

This civilizational orientation is succinctly captured in the traditional verse:

विद्या विवादाय धनं मदाय,
शक्तिः परेषां परिपीडनाय ।
खलस्य साधोर्विपरीतमेतत्,
ज्ञानाय दानाय च रक्षणाय ॥

The verse clearly distinguishes between destructive and constructive uses of knowledge, wealth, and power. While the unethical misuse learning for dominance and contention, the wise employ it for understanding, generosity, and protection of society. This ethical distinction formed the foundation of the Vedic learning model and shaped leadership ideals across generations.

II. Why Contemporary Systems Require Traditional Learning Models

Modern administrative and educational systems are predominantly shaped by standardized curricula, closed evaluations, and credential-based assessments. These systems are effective in measuring technical competence and procedural knowledge. However, they exhibit critical limitations when applied to public leadership and governance.

First, contemporary systems are event-centric, evaluating individuals at isolated moments rather than through sustained conduct. Leadership, however, manifests over time—through repeated decisions, ethical dilemmas, and responses to social pressure.

Second, ethical judgment cannot be adequately measured through closed examinations or interviews. Qualities such as patience, moral courage, emotional steadiness, and service orientation emerge only through continuous engagement with society.

Third, modern frameworks often treat knowledge as value-neutral. This separation of competence from conscience produces technically efficient institutions that struggle to command legitimacy and public trust.

Traditional Vedic systems addressed these deficiencies by embedding ethics into the learning process itself. Knowledge was considered incomplete unless it transformed conduct. Authority was not legitimized by certification alone but by public confidence earned over time. In an era marked by declining trust in institutions and ethical fatigue in leadership, revisiting these traditional learning principles offers a corrective framework that restores moral depth and human sensitivity to governance.

III. Analytic Vedanta and the Vedic Method of Knowledge

Analytic Vedanta provides a rigorous epistemological foundation for understanding how knowledge should be acquired, examined, and lived. Unlike instrumental models that prioritize utility alone, Vedanta insists that knowledge (jñāna) must culminate in ethical clarity and disciplined action.

Three interdependent principles define the Vedantic method of learning:

A. Pramāṇa – Valid Sources of Knowledge

Knowledge must be grounded in reliable and authoritative sources rather than opinion or convenience. This insistence on epistemic legitimacy prevents arbitrariness, intellectual inconsistency, and ideological distortion. In governance, such grounding safeguards decision-making from impulsive or interest-driven choices.

B. Tarka – Analytic Reasoning

Vedantic reasoning emphasizes logical coherence, internal consistency, and clarity. Reasoning is not speculative but disciplined and purpose-oriented. This analytic rigor is directly relevant to administrative decision-making, where inconsistency and contradiction can produce far-reaching social consequences.

C. Ācāra – Ethical Discipline

Vedanta asserts that knowledge attains authenticity only when reflected in conduct. Intellectual brilliance divorced from ethical restraint is considered incomplete. This integration of knowing and being ensured that learning remained socially responsible and morally grounded.

This epistemic framework closely parallels Kauṭilya's administrative method of āgama (authoritative guidance), yukti (rational analysis), and anubhava (experience), revealing a continuous intellectual lineage between Vedic learning and classical governance thought.

IV. Sudhamangala as an Illustrative Example of Vedic Learning

Within the broader Vedic educational framework, Sudhamangala serves as a representative example of how knowledge was publicly validated. Rather than functioning as

a one-time examination, it reflects the Vedic assumption that learning must withstand continuous public scrutiny.

Sudhamangala emphasizes:

Open presentation and defense of knowledge

Scriptural grounding supported by logical clarity

Ethical consistency sustained across one's lifetime

This principle is articulated in the traditional verse:

अग्नेः परीक्षा समुपेति यान्ति
सुवर्णशुद्धिं खलु शोभमानाः ।
तथैव विद्वान् जनमध्यपरीक्ष्य
सत्संगमध्ये भवति प्रमाणम् ॥

Just as gold is purified through fire, a scholar becomes authentic only when tested among people. This verse encapsulates the Vedic conviction that authority arises from transparent engagement rather than concealed validation.

V. Governance, Dharma, and Kauṭilya's Vision

Ancient Indian administrative thought did not regard governance as a technical function limited to policy execution. Governance was understood as a moral responsibility anchored in dharma, where authority existed solely to ensure social harmony and collective well-being. Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra articulates this vision with exceptional clarity.

Kauṭilya unequivocally places public welfare above personal or institutional preference:

प्रजासुखे सुखं राज्ञः,
प्रजानां च हिते हितम् ।
नात्मप्रियं हितं राज्ञः,
प्रजानां तु प्रियं हितम् ॥

This formulation establishes governance as a trust rather than an entitlement. Authority must be continuously justified through conduct, restraint, and ethical clarity. This perspective aligns seamlessly with Vedantic learning, where knowledge carries inherent moral obligation.

The Vedic tradition further clarifies the ethical use of power through the earlier cited verse on knowledge, wealth, and strength. When anchored in dharma, power protects society; when divorced from ethics, it destabilizes it. Kauṭilya's insistence on self-discipline, vigilance, and restraint mirrors the Vedantic emphasis on ācāra.

Evaluative traditions such as Sudhamangala reinforce this governance philosophy by ensuring that intellectual authority cannot exist independently of moral credibility. Public validation, rather than secrecy, becomes the source of legitimacy. For contemporary administrative science, this

insight is crucial: external controls and audits cannot substitute for internal ethical discipline.

This dharma-centric framework avoids both authoritarian rigidity and moral relativism. Decisions may at times appear strict, but their legitimacy rests on long-term public welfare rather than short-term popularity. Such governance demands leaders who are intellectually rigorous, emotionally steady, and ethically grounded.

VI. Implications for Administrative Science

Integrating Vedic learning principles into administrative science yields three critical insights:

1. Transparency as Practice: Transparency emerges from ethical conduct, not merely procedural disclosure.
2. Accountability as Continuity: Responsibility is lifelong and societal, not episodic or institutional alone.
3. Leadership as Moral Stewardship: Authority is sustained through service and restraint rather than control.

These principles anticipate contemporary ideals such as people-centric governance and ethical leadership, demonstrating that they are not modern innovations but civilizational inheritances.

VII. Comparative Perspective

Table 1: Vedic Learning Methods and Contemporary Administrative Models

Dimension	Vedic Learning Approach	Contemporary Administrative Approach
Nature of Learning	Ethical and public	Institutional and procedural
Mode of Evaluation	Open dialogue and scrutiny	Closed examinations/interviews
Basis of Authority	Knowledge with conduct	Credentials and position
Accountability	Social and moral	Institutional
Time Orientation	Lifelong learning	Event-based assessment

VIII. Conclusion

Ancient Vedic methods of learning recognized that knowledge, ethics, and public responsibility are inseparable. By treating education as a moral and social process, these traditions produced scholars and leaders capable of sustaining trust and social harmony.

Sudhamangala, understood as an illustrative example, demonstrates how these principles were operationalized in practice. Integrating such Vedantic approaches with contemporary administrative science does not reject modern

systems; rather, it humanizes governance by balancing efficiency with ethics and authority with accountability.

In an era marked by ethical uncertainty and declining institutional trust, revisiting these ancient learning traditions offers a robust and pragmatic pathway for the renewal of governance and leadership.

References

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