

Review Article

From Sanatan Thought to Sustainable Futures: Philosophical Anchors of Viksit Bharat 2047

Dr. Sheo Kumar Rana

Principal, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan Teachers Training College, Lari, Ramgarh (VBU)

Accepted 18th October, 2024

Abstract

The word “Sanatan” in Sanskrit means eternal, timeless, or without beginning and end, while “Dharma” means that which upholds or sustains moral law, duty, and right conduct. Thus Sanatan thought points to universal truths and ethical norms believed to be valid for all beings, beyond changing social or political systems. The Vision 2047 of Viksit Bharat is the Government of India’s comprehensive blueprint to transform the nation into a fully developed country by its centenary of independence in 2047. This vision addresses economic growth, social progress, environmental sustainability, and good governance, aiming to ensure prosperity and opportunity for every citizen. Key principles such as Dharma (Universal Order), Ahimsa (Non-Violence), Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (“the world is one family”) and Sarvodaya (upliftment of all), provide both ethical guidance and practical frameworks for harmonious coexistence with nature and society. These anchors underlie the holistic, inclusive, and balanced approach needed to achieve Viksit Bharat, which aspires to combine economic prosperity, social cohesion, and environmental stewardship.

Modern sustainability movements and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) echo ancient Indian practices of conservation, reverence for nature, and social justice. Philosophers from the Rig Veda, Upanishads, and epics like the Bhagavad Gita have articulated ecological ethics and personal responsibility. Movements such as Gandhian Sarvodaya and Chipko draw directly from these traditions, shaping Indian environmentalism and progressive policy making. The integration of classical Dharmic principles with modern developmental paradigms offers a robust philosophical foundation for innovation, decentralized governance, ethical leadership, and equity in India’s future trajectory. This article examines the spiritual, philosophical, and practical linkages between Sanatan thought and sustainable futures, analyzing their implications for education, governance, ecology, and the lived reality of Viksit Bharat. Bridging ancient wisdom with contemporary challenges, it explores how India’s philosophical heritage can inform global debates on environmental ethics, responsible growth, and inclusive progress.

Key-Points: “Viksit Bharat 2047”, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, Ahimsa (Non-Violence), Sarvodaya (Universal Welfare), Swaraj, Satyagrah, Ahimsa etc.

Introduction:

Sanatan thought generally refers to the spiritual–philosophical worldview of Sanatan Dharma, the “eternal” way of righteous living and truth that underlies what is today called Hinduism. It is not just a sectarian religion, but a vision of reality and life based on timeless principles like dharma (cosmic and moral order), karma (action and consequence), and moksha (liberation). India’s sustainable

development vision for “Viksit Bharat 2047” (Developed India) draws deeply from its philosophical and civilizational foundations, especially rooted in Sanatan thought. Sanatan Dharma, a comprehensive spiritual and cultural worldview, sees the cosmos, Earth, and all life as fundamentally interconnected—an understanding that foreshadows today’s sustainability discourse. The quest to build Viksit Bharat 2047—a

prosperous, just, and sustainable nation by 2047—necessitates a careful balancing of material pursuits with spiritual and ecological wellbeing. Indian civilization’s oldest philosophies, Sanatan Dharma, offer time-tested principles that directly align with modern ideas of sustainability. The concept of Dharma, understood as the cosmic order and duty, underpins all facets of life—social, economic, and ecological. This worldview, with its unique grounding in interconnectedness, lays the foundation for a society that is innovative yet mindful, progressive yet compassionate.

Sanatan Thought: Philosophical Foundations

Sanatan Dharma, often referred to as the “eternal way,” embodies principles that transcend religion and philosophy. At its core, it views all creation as interdependent, emphasizing harmony between humans, nature, and the divine.

Interconnectedness and Ecological Ethics: Sanatan texts emphasize the unity of all beings, urging respect and compassion for plants, animals, rivers, and mountains. Rig Veda hymns and Upanishadic teachings repeatedly stress stewardship, gratitude, and non-exploitative use of resources.

Dharmic Principles: Dharma guides ethical conduct, social responsibility, and justice, reminding individuals to act in ways that sustain the broader world and future generations.

Ahimsa (Non-violence): Not merely absence of violence, Ahimsa encompasses non-harm to the environment and living beings, prescribing an ethic of care, restraint, and eco-protection.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: The Upanishadic phrase—“the world is one family”—establishes a basis for cosmopolitanism, tolerance, and global stewardship.

Ancient Practices and Environmental Wisdom

Indian ecological consciousness is evident in historic practices—sacred groves, river worship, agricultural rituals, and sustainable resource management. The tradition of planting trees, animal protection linked to nakshatras (as seen in Sanatan practices), and reverence for all life forms fostered biodiversity and ecological balance.

Classical texts advocated responsible consumption, minimization of desire, and self-discipline, principles echoed by modern sustainable development goals. Mahatma Gandhi’s vision of self-reliant villages and “Hind Swaraj” drew from these ideas, emphasizing local economies, simple living, and Sarvodaya—the welfare of all.

Sanatan Dharma and Modern Sustainability

The United Nations’ SDGs mirror many of Sanatan values, such as justice, equity, inclusivity, peace, and the protection of resources. Indian philosophy encourages an integrated approach:

Ethics and Economy: Economic progress is harmonized with ethical stewardship, advocating a balance between profit and ecological/social responsibilities.

Inclusive Development: Concepts like Sarvodaya (universal upliftment) and Satyagraha (truth-based action) prioritize the needs of the weakest and most marginalized, ensuring that no one is left behind in India’s development.

Philosophical Anchors in Practice

Gandhian and Post-Gandhian Movements

Gandhi’s Sarvodaya and Satyagraha reinterpreted Sanatan principles for contemporary society, promoting decentralization, non-violent activism, and community-driven initiatives—critical for Viksit Bharat’s inclusive model.

The Chipko Movement, centered on women’s eco-leadership and tree conservation, exemplifies the spiritual and practical power of Sanatan-derived action.

Educational Implications

Inculcating Sanatan values in curricula—compassion, self-restraint, reverence for nature—can foster responsible citizens and innovative leaders for Viksit Bharat. Education that blends modern science with indigenous wisdom empowers youth to address climate, social, and economic challenges holistically.

Governance and Policy

Decentralized governance, advocated by ancient Rajas, Panchayats, and Gandhian Swaraj, aligns with contemporary calls for local empowerment and community participation in sustainable development.

Legal and policy frameworks inspired by Dharma enforce protection for the environment, universal human rights, and economic equity, providing philosophical roots for India’s democratic and sustainable aspirations.

From Ancient Wisdom to Contemporary Action

Indian philosophical traditions offer actionable frameworks for sustainability:

- **Sarvodaya (Universal Welfare):** Advocates upliftment for all, critical for social cohesion and inclusive growth in Viksit Bharat.
- **Swaraj (Self-rule and Self-reliance):** Promotes decentralized decision-making, local production, and resilience—values central to sustainable development.
- **Satyagraha (Truth Force):** Emphasizes non-violence and moral persuasion, fostering unity and peaceful transformation in the face of environmental and social crises.
- **Viksit Bharat: Bridging Tradition and Modernity**

In contemporary discourse, Sanatan thought is often understood as an inclusive, adaptive framework that can absorb new knowledge while holding to core values like respect for all paths, ecological responsibility, and inner spiritual growth. Many modern expositions stress that its “eternal” character lies not in fixed socio-cultural customs, but in its universal principles of consciousness, duty, and compassion. Viksit Bharat’s philosophical north-star is the synthesis of ancient Sanatan wisdom with contemporary goals of economic, technological, and social progress. This ensures that development is ethical, inclusive, sustainable, and responsive to the ecological challenges of the future.

Case Studies

- **Community Forestry:** Inspired by Dharmic reverence for nature, community-managed forests have reversed degradation and empowered rural populations.
- **Biodiversity Preservation:** Ancient customs of protecting sacred groves, species linked to spiritual beliefs, have preserved ecosystems amidst growing development pressures.
- **Philosophical Challenges and Contemporary Reflections**

There are challenges in translating ancient ideals into today’s complex realities—consumerism, climate pressures, and global inequalities. Yet the Sanatan worldview encourages adaptive evolution, reflexivity, and reform, making it relevant for changing times. Sanatan thought is rooted in the Vedas, Upanishads, and other Hindu śāstras, which speak of one ultimate reality (Brahman) expressing as all forms, and of the Atman (Self) in each being as of the same essence as that reality. It teaches that life is a journey through cycles of birth and death (samsara) shaped by karma, with the highest aim being realization of this true Self and freedom from ignorance.

Critical discourse now focuses on reinterpreting tradition for innovation, rather than mere revivalism, enabling Viksit Bharat to remain forward-looking, equitable, and sustainable.

Conclusion

As a way of life, Sanatan Dharma emphasizes virtues like truthfulness, non-violence, purity, compassion, self-restraint, generosity, and service to all beings as intrinsic duties of the soul. It upholds the four puruṣārthas—dharma (righteousness), artha (prosperity), kāma (balanced enjoyment), and moksha (liberation)—as the integrated goals of human life, to be pursued in harmony rather than in conflict. India’s transition from Sanatan thought to sustainable futures represents more than continuity—it is active transformation. By anchoring Viksit Bharat in inclusive, ecological, spiritual, and philosophical traditions, India asserts a development paradigm distinct from the-profit centric models of the West. These anchors foster not only prosperity and progress, but deep ecological stability, inclusive growth, ethical leadership, and a sense of unity with all existence. The journey ahead for Viksit Bharat, inspired by Sanatan Dharma, promises a template for humanity seeking sustainable futures in a rapidly changing world.

References

1. Harikrishnan, S. (2023). "Sanatana Dharma: A Holistic Approach to Sustainable Development."
2. Vaishali. "Incorporating Concepts of Indian Philosophy in Vision Viksit Bharat 2027." *Library Progress International*, Vol.44 No.3, 2024.
3. Swadeshishodh. "Analysing Sustainability Movements through Indian Thoughts." (2024).
4. Kathmandupost. "Sanatana Dharma for Sustainability." (2024).
5. Bengal Chronicle. "Dharma is all about Sustainable and Responsible Development." (2019).
6. Gandhian Vision for Viksit Bharat - Research & Reinforcement. (2023).
7. IIPA. "Viksit Bharat @2047 Governance Transformed." (2023).