Responsible Consumption and Sustainable Living: Insights from Indian Knowledge Systems

T.K. Latha Maheswari

Assistant Professor, PG & Research Department of Commerce, Fatima College (Autonomous), Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India

Email: lathamaheswari.commerce@fcmdu.edu.in

Abstract

Indian Knowledge Systems represent a rich traditional knowledge, values, beliefs, and practices that have been passed down from one generation to another. These traditions have shaped everyday life and the relationship between people and nature. In recent years, responsible consumption and sustainable living have gained increasing importance due to the growing use of natural resources, rising levels of waste, environmental degradation, and changing lifestyles. Indian traditions include several practices that encourage the careful use of resources, simple living, reuse of materials, local production, and respect for nature. These practices are particularly relevant to Sustainable Development Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), while also contributing to SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). The present study examines the relevance of Indian Knowledge Systems in promoting responsible consumption and sustainable living in contemporary society. It focuses on traditional practices related to food, farming, water management, resource use, reuse of materials, and community living. The study adopts a descriptive research design and proposes a structured questionnaire for 300 respondents in Madurai District. Percentage analysis, weighted mean, correlation analysis, and chi-square analysis are used to examine respondents' awareness and perceptions regarding IKS, responsible consumption, and sustainable living. To demonstrate the proposed statistical framework, the numerical analysis presented in this manuscript is based on a simulated dataset of 300 observations and does not represent actual field responses. The findings indicate positive associations between awareness of Indian Knowledge Systems, responsible consumption, and sustainable-living practices. The study highlights the relevance of values such as moderation, responsibility, cooperation, resource conservation, and respect for nature in encouraging more sustainable consumption habits. It further suggests that relevant elements of Indian Knowledge Systems can be considered alongside modern approaches to

sustainability, provided they are evaluated carefully within the appropriate social and contemporary context. Overall the study contributes primarily to SDG 12 while also highlighting its relevance to SDG 13 and SDG 11 through its focus on resource conservation, reduction of wastage, efficient resource use, and sustainable living.

Keywords: Indian Knowledge Systems; Responsible Consumption; Sustainable Living; Traditional Knowledge; Resource Conservation; Sustainable Development; SDG 12, SDG 13 and SDG 11

Introduction

Sustainable development has become an important concern across the world as economic growth and changing lifestyles continue to place greater pressure on natural resources. The increasing use of resources, generation of waste, depletion of natural resources, and environmental degradation have created a growing need for more responsible patterns of production and consumption. Responsible consumption is not only about what people purchase, but also about how products are used, reused, and disposed of. It encourages individuals to avoid unnecessary consumption, reduce wastage, and make thoughtful use of available resources. Sustainable living extends these ideas into everyday life. It includes simple activities such as making responsible choices about food, conserving water and energy, managing waste, choosing appropriate modes of transportation, and participating in community activities. These everyday choices can play an important role in reducing pressure on the environment and promoting a more sustainable way of life.

India has a rich and diverse tradition of knowledge that has developed over generations through observation, experience, practice, and transmission from one generation to another. These knowledge traditions have influenced several aspects of life, including agriculture, food, water management, architecture, health, crafts, social organisation, and the relationship between people and nature. Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) therefore represent not only traditional knowledge but also a way of understanding and interacting with resources and the natural environment.

Many traditional Indian practices emphasise moderation, conservation, cooperation, and careful use of resources. Examples include the use of seasonal and locally available food,

traditional agricultural practices, rainwater harvesting, reuse of household materials, repair and maintenance of products, traditional crafts, and community-based sharing of resources. Such practices reflect the idea that resources should be used thoughtfully rather than wasted. The relevance of Indian Knowledge Systems has also received attention in the field of education and sustainability. The Ministry of Education has recognised the importance of IKS in areas such as agriculture, environment, and conservation. The National Curriculum Framework also acknowledges the relevance of traditional knowledge and sustainable practices in developing environmental awareness and education.

The relationship between Indian Knowledge Systems and sustainability is particularly relevant to **Sustainable Development Goal 12 (SDG 12)**, which focuses on responsible consumption and production. Traditional practices that encourage resource efficiency, reuse, conservation, and reduction of waste can provide useful perspectives for promoting responsible consumption. The subject is also related to **SDG 13 (Climate Action)** through resource conservation and environmental responsibility, and **SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)** through community-based practices and locally relevant approaches to sustainable living. In this context, the present study seeks to understand how relevant aspects of Indian Knowledge Systems can contribute to responsible consumption and sustainable living in contemporary society. It focuses on the continuing relevance of traditional practices and explores their potential to support more responsible use of resources and more sustainable everyday lifestyles.

Statement of the Problem

Changes in modern lifestyles have brought noticeable changes in the way people consume goods and use resources. The increasing dependence on disposable products, packaged foods, energy-consuming products, and frequently replaced consumer goods has contributed to greater resource use and waste generation. These changes have also created concerns about the long-term sustainability of consumption practices. At the same time, several traditional Indian practices have encouraged people to use resources carefully, avoid unnecessary wastage, reuse materials, prefer locally available and seasonal products, and share resources within communities. Such practices reflect a more mindful approach towards consumption and the environment. However, in the context of changing lifestyles and modern consumption patterns, the relevance of these traditional practices needs to be understood more

carefully. There is a need to examine whether awareness and appreciation of Indian Knowledge Systems are connected with the way people practise responsible consumption and sustainable living in their everyday lives. Therefore, the present study focuses on understanding whether awareness and appreciation of relevant Indian Knowledge Systems are associated with responsible consumption and sustainable-living practices among contemporary consumers.

Review of Literature

Kumar (2026) examined the relationship between Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and sustainable living and found that Indian traditions place strong emphasis on harmony with nature, responsible use of resources, ethical living, and collective well-being. The study highlighted that traditional practices related to agriculture, health, and lifestyle continue to hold relevance in addressing contemporary sustainability challenges. It also pointed out certain issues, including inadequate documentation of traditional knowledge, weakening intergenerational transfer, and limited incorporation of IKS into formal education systems.

Yadav, Sridharan and Rajan (2025) conducted a systematic review on Indian indigenous knowledge systems in relation to sustainable production and consumption. Their study revealed that IKS contains valuable principles related to the sustainable use of essential resources such as food, clothing, and medicine. The authors discussed ideas and practices drawn from traditional sources including the Upanishads, Ithihasas, Puranas, and Upavedas. Their findings suggest that traditional Indian knowledge can offer meaningful insights and guidance for promoting sustainable production and consumption practices.

Sharma, Trivedi and Choudhary (2025) examined the contribution of Indian Knowledge Systems towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals from environmental, social, and economic perspectives. Their review indicated that traditional knowledge should be understood within a broader sustainability framework rather than being viewed only in terms of environmental conservation. This perspective is particularly important because consumption patterns have social, economic, and environmental implications.

Research gap

The existing literature shows a growing interest in Indian Knowledge Systems and their role in sustainable development. However, much of the available research is conceptual,

descriptive, case-based, or relies primarily on secondary data. Comparatively fewer studies have examined these issues from the perspective of consumers and their everyday practices. There is a need for more empirical studies that explore how awareness and appreciation of Indian Knowledge Systems influence responsible consumption and sustainable-living behaviour. In this context, the present study attempts to address this gap by developing a quantitative framework that focuses on consumers and their perceptions regarding IKS, responsible consumption, and sustainable living.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the level of awareness of Indian Knowledge Systems among respondents.
- To study the perceived relevance of Indian traditional practices to responsible consumption.
- To examine traditional food practices and their relationship with responsible consumption.
- To study the relationship between IKS awareness and responsible consumption behaviour.
- To examine the relationship between IKS awareness and sustainable-living practices.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive research design.

Study Area

The proposed study area is Madurai District, Tamil Nadu.

Population

The population consists of consumers residing in Madurai District.

Sample Size

The proposed sample size is 300 respondents.

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling technique was employed for selecting the respondents for the study.

Data Collection

Primary Data collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale.

Scaling Technique

Score	Response
5	Strongly Agree
4	Agree
3	Neutral
2	Disagree
1	Strongly Disagree

Statistical Tools

- Percentage analysis
- Mean
- Weighted mean ranking
- Correlation analysis
- Weighted mean ranking

Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Level of Awareness of Indian Knowledge Systems

Level of Awareness	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Very High	48	16.0
High	96	32.0
Moderate	91	30.3
Low	45	15.0
Very Low	20	6.7
Total	**300**	**100.0**

Interpretation

The table shows that 32.0 per cent of the respondents have a high level of awareness of Indian Knowledge Systems, followed by 30.3 per cent with moderate awareness. A further 16.0 per cent have very high awareness. Thus, **48.0 per cent of the respondents have high or very high awareness** of IKS, while 21.7 per cent have low or very low awareness. The result indicates that a considerable proportion of respondents are aware of Indian Knowledge Systems, although there is scope for increasing awareness among the remaining respondents.

Table II: Perceived Relevance of Traditional Practices to Responsible Consumption

Statements	Mean	Rank
Traditional practices encourage respect for Nature	4.27	1
Traditional practices encourage careful use of Resources	4.19	2
Traditional practices encourage community Cooperation	4.15	3
Traditional practices encourage reduction of Waste	4.12	4
Traditional practices encourage reuse of Materials	4.06	5
Traditional practices promote local Consumption	3.98	6
Traditional practices encourage Simple Living	3.94	7

Interpretation

The table indicates that “traditional practices encourage respect for nature” has the highest mean score of 4.27, followed by careful use of resources with a mean score of 4.19. Community cooperation also records a relatively high mean score of 4.15. The lowest mean score is recorded for simple living at 3.94. Overall, the mean scores indicate a positive perception regarding the relevance of Indian traditional practices to responsible consumption.

Table III: Traditional Food Practices and Responsible Consumption

Traditional Food Practices	Mean	Rank
I try to avoid food wastage	4.22	1
I prefer seasonal food whenever possible	4.05	2

Traditional Food Practices	Mean	Rank
I reuse suitable leftover food rather than wasting it	4.03	3
I prefer locally available food products	3.91	4
I avoid unnecessary purchase of food	3.88	5

Interpretation

The table shows that avoiding food wastage has the highest mean score of **4.22**, followed by preference for seasonal food with a mean score of 4.05. Reusing suitable leftover food also receives a high mean score of 4.03. The findings indicate that respondents generally show positive attitudes towards food practices associated with moderation, seasonal consumption and reduction of wastage. These practices are consistent with the broader concept of responsible consumption.

Table IV: Relationship between Traditional Food Practices and Responsible Consumption

Variables	Pearson Correlation (r)	p-value	Result
Traditional Food Practices and Responsible Consumption	0.571	<0.001	Significant

Interpretation

The Pearson correlation coefficient of **0.571** indicates a moderate positive relationship between traditional food practices and responsible consumption. The p-value is less than 0.001, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant in the simulated dataset. This suggests that respondents reporting stronger traditional food practices also tend to report stronger responsible-consumption behaviour.

Table V: Relationship Between IKS Awareness and Responsible Consumption

Variables	Pearson Correlation (r)	p-value	Result
IKS Awareness and Responsible Consumption	0.589	<0.001	Significant

Interpretation

The Pearson correlation coefficient of **0.589** indicates a moderate positive relationship between awareness of Indian Knowledge Systems and responsible consumption behaviour. The p-value is less than 0.001, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant in the simulated dataset. Therefore, higher levels of IKS awareness are associated with higher levels of responsible-consumption behaviour.

Hypothesis

H_0: There is no significant relationship between IKS awareness and responsible consumption behaviour.

Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is **rejected**.

Table VI: Relationship Between IKS Awareness and Sustainable Living

Variables	Pearson Correlation (r)	p-value	Result
IKS Awareness and Sustainable-Living Practices	0.590	<0.001	Significant

Interpretation

The Pearson correlation coefficient of **0.590** indicates a moderate positive relationship between IKS awareness and sustainable-living practices. The p-value is less than 0.001, showing that the relationship is statistically significant in the simulated dataset. This indicates that respondents with higher awareness of Indian Knowledge Systems tend to report stronger sustainable-living practices.

Table VII: Reuse and Waste-Reduction Practices

Statement	Mean	Rank
I reuse household materials whenever possible	4.08	1
I try to reduce household waste	4.05	2
I avoid unnecessary disposable products	3.91	4
I prefer durable products	3.94	3
I practise waste segregation	3.72	5

Interpretation

Reuse of household materials records the highest mean score of 4.08. Reduction of household waste follows with a mean of 4.05. Waste segregation records the lowest mean score of 3.72 among the listed practices, suggesting that implementation of waste-segregation practices may require additional awareness and infrastructure.

Table VIII: Sustainable-Living Practices

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
I conserve water in my daily life	4.18	0.84
I reduce food wastage	4.22	0.81
I reduce unnecessary electricity consumption	4.05	0.88
I reuse household materials	4.02	0.91
I reduce the use of single-use products	3.86	0.97
I practise waste segregation	3.72	1.02
I prefer environmentally friendly products	3.79	0.95
I am willing to learn sustainable practices from IKS	4.11	0.86

Interpretation

Reduction of food wastage receives the highest mean score of 4.22, followed by water conservation at 4.18. Willingness to learn sustainable practices from IKS also receives a relatively high mean score of 4.11. Waste segregation has a comparatively lower score of 3.72.

Weighted Mean Ranking

Table IX: Major Sustainable Practices

Practice	Weighted Mean	Rank
Reduction of food wastage	4.22	1
Water conservation	4.18	2
Avoiding unnecessary consumption	4.10	3

Reuse of materials	4.08	4
Electricity conservation	4.05	5
Preference for durable products	3.94	6
Reduction of single-use products	3.86	7
Waste segregation	3.72	8

Interpretation

Among the selected practices, reduction of food wastage ranks first with a weighted mean of 4.22, followed by water conservation with 4.18. Waste segregation records the lowest weighted mean of 3.72. The results indicate that everyday conservation activities receive comparatively stronger responses than some formal waste-management practices.

Major Findings

- 48.0 per cent of the respondents have high or very high awareness
- Traditional practices encourage respect for nature" has the highest mean score of 4.27

Avoiding food wastage has the highest mean score of 4.22, followed by preference for seasonal food with a mean score of 4.05. Reusing suitable leftover food also receives a high mean score of 4.03.

The Pearson correlation coefficient of **0.571** indicates a moderate positive relationship between traditional food practices and responsible consumption.

- The Pearson correlation coefficient of **0.589** indicates a moderate positive relationship between awareness of Indian Knowledge Systems and responsible consumption behaviour
- Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.590 indicates a moderate positive relationship between IKS awareness and sustainable-living practices.
- Reuse of household materials records the highest mean score of 4.08. Reduction of household waste follows with a mean of 4.05. Waste segregation records the lowest mean score of 3.72
- Reduction of food wastage receives the highest mean score of 4.22

- Among the selected practices, reduction of food wastage ranks first with a weighted mean of 4.22, followed by water conservation with 4.18. Waste segregation records the lowest weighted mean of 3.72.

Suggestions

- High Awareness about IKS is only 48.2 % hence still further methodologies must be followed to widespread awareness.
- Traditional practices encourage respect for nature" has the highest mean score of 4.27 hence remaining core factors must also be encouraged
- Reusing suitable leftover food also receives a high mean score of 4.03 instead of leftover healthy practices of accurate consumption can be followed
- Waste segregation records the lowest mean score of 3.72 proper aw**a**reness campaign and hands on workshop to be conducted to enrich the Waste segregation practices

Conclusion

Strengthening awareness and understanding of Indian Knowledge Systems can support responsible consumption and sustainable living. Integrating relevant traditional practices with modern sustainability initiatives can provide a culturally rooted approach to achieving sustainable development. Such integration can contribute to the broader objectives of Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). Thus, IKS can serve as a meaningful source of knowledge for promoting environmentally responsible, socially conscious, and sustainable lifestyles in the contemporary context.

References

Deep Science Research. (2026). Study on the impact of sustainable consumption principles in traditional Indian wisdom. DSR Catalog. (An empirical study tracking modern consumer behavioral shifts towards eco-friendly buying based on traditional values

Tripathi, A. (2026). IKS and the path to responsible consumption

Mohil, M. (2025). Indian Knowledge System as a catalyst for sustainable development. Inspira Journals. (Covers Vedic ecology, eco-architecture via Vastu Shastra, and regenerative paramparagat krishi)

Sheikh, M. M. (2025). Indian knowledge system and sustainable development: Alignment with global goals. International Journal of Studies in Development Research (ISDESR).

Sharma, S., & Bansal, A. (2021). Normative sustainability frameworks: Moving beyond growth-centric Western paradigms. Journal of Business Ethics



Open Access & Licensing

Dr. BGR Publications supports Open Access scholarly communication, enabling published works to be freely accessible online.

License: Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License CC BY 4.0

Copyright: © Author(s)

Published by Dr. BGR Publications | India