



SADVRITTA AND SOCIOLOGY: AN AYURVEDIC FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICAL LIVING IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL THEORY

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ABSTRACT

Modern societies are facing rising fragmentation and a decline in ethical values. Classical and contemporary sociological theories such as Durkheim's social facts, Weber's rationalization, Marx's alienation, Bourdieu's habitus, Foucault's discipline, and Putnam's social capital provide powerful explanations of social order and change, yet they rarely articulate proactive and systematic frameworks for individual ethical conduct. Ayurveda, through its principle of *Sadvritta* (righteous living), offers a holistic model that integrates personal behavior with community well-being. This study uses hermeneutic analysis of classical Ayurvedic texts, alongside comparative review of sociological theories, to examine the relevance of *Sadvritta* as a socio-ethical framework. By situating *Sadvritta* within the discourse of social practice, the paper highlights its potential to bridge gaps between individual responsibility and collective harmony. Implications for social policy, mental health, and sustainable living are discussed, positioning *Sadvritta* as a valuable resource for sociological thought and application.

Key-words: *Sadvritta; Sociology; Ayurveda; Ethics; Social well-being; Sustainable living*

INTRODUCTION: The twenty-first century is characterised by rapid technological advancement, globalisation, and profound social transformation. Despite material progress, contemporary societies face increasing stress-related disorders, ecological degradation, declining trust, and fragmentation of shared moral values. Sociology has long attempted to understand these conditions through theories of social structure, agency, and change. Classical thinkers such as Durkheim, Weber, and Marx analysed morality, rationalisation, and material relations as determinants of social order and disorder^{1,2,3}. Later theoretical developments, including social capital theory, practice theory, and moral sociology, further examined trust, habitus, and values within social life.

However, a persistent limitation remains: sociological theories are largely descriptive or critical, explaining how societies function or malfunction, rather than prescribing structured ethical practices for everyday conduct. This lacuna becomes particularly significant in the context of contemporary crises of meaning, mental health, and sustainability. Ayurveda, an ancient Indian knowledge system, offers a complementary perspective through *Sadvritta*-a codified framework of ethical, behavioural, and mental discipline aimed at sustaining individual and collective well-being. Unlike abstract moral philosophy, *Sadvritta* provides concrete guidelines governing diet (*ahara*), behaviour (*acara*), and mental discipline (*vicara*). While classical Ayurvedic texts discuss these principles primarily in medical and

preventive contexts, their relevance as a socio-ethical framework has not been systematically examined within sociological theory. This study seeks to address this gap by situating *Sadvritta* within contemporary sociological discourse.

AIM OF THE STUDY:

To explore how *Sadvritta* can enrich sociological theory by foregrounding ethical self-discipline as a driver of social health and cohesion.

METHODS:

This study adopts a qualitative hermeneutic methodology appropriate for conceptual and textual analysis. Classical Ayurvedic texts, primarily the *Caraka Samhita* and *Susruta Samhita* were analysed to identify core principles of *Sadvritta*. These principles were then comparatively examined alongside classical and contemporary sociological theories to identify conceptual convergence, divergence, and integrative potential. This approach aligns with interpretive sociology and philosophy of social science, allowing contextual understanding rather than empirical generalisation.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Classical sociological theories provide foundational insights into the structure and dynamics of society. Durkheim focused on the macro-level shift from mechanical to organic solidarity and the anomie that arises from a breakdown of norms ⁽¹⁾. Weber analysed the Protestant ethic as a belief system that fostered the discipline necessary for modern capitalism ⁽²⁾, while Marx highlighted the alienating effects of capitalist economic structures on the individual ⁽³⁾. A key limitation of these foundational theories, however, is that they are primarily descriptive and historical, explaining how society functions or came to be, but they stop short of providing a proactive, prescriptive "code of conduct" for individuals to navigate or improve

modern social life. This descriptive gap is also present in more contemporary sociological theories. Putnam demonstrated that social networks and trust ("social capital") are critical for civic health and economic efficiency ⁽⁴⁾, a concept later refined by scholars like Lin (2001), who further defined social capital as a resource embedded in social networks ⁽⁵⁾. Goffman's dramaturgical analysis of everyday interactions as performances remains influential in micro-sociology and Foucault explored how individuals actively turn themselves into subjects through practices of the self, a concept that intriguingly prefigures but differs from *Sadvritta* in its emphasis on power ⁽⁶⁾. More recently, practice theory (e.g., Bourdieu's habitus ⁽⁷⁾, Schatzki (2001) ⁽⁸⁾) has shifted focus to the routines and embodied habits that constitute social life, a focus which aligns closely with *Sadvritta* as a framework for cultivating a specific, ethical habitus. Furthermore, the growing subfield of Moral Sociology explicitly argues for reintegrating morality and virtue into sociological research, moving beyond seeing values as merely epiphenomenal and directly creating a scholarly space for frameworks like *Sadvritta* ⁽⁹⁾.

Despite these advances, a persistent limitation remains: while these theories are powerful analytically, they are largely observational or critical. Practice theory describes how habits are formed, but not which ones are optimal, and moral sociology calls for the reintegration of virtue but does not provide a structured system for its cultivation. This identifies a central gap: sociological frameworks, both classical and contemporary, rarely codify intentional virtues as daily practices that sustain collective harmony. They describe the structure of society or the nature of action but offer little proactive, normative guidance for individual living that leads to collective well-being.

It is precisely within this conceptual gap that Ayurvedic scholarship on *Sadvritta* offers a comprehensive resolution by codifying ethical virtues such as truthfulness, non-violence, compassion, moderation, and self-restraint as systematic daily practices integrated with *dinacharya*, *ritucharya*, and *achara rasayana*, thereby transforming morality from an abstract ideal into a lived discipline. By linking ethical conduct with physiological and psychological balance, Ayurveda redefines virtue not merely as a moral imperative but as a therapeutic and preventive determinant of health, reinterprets discipline as voluntary self-regulation rather than external coercion, and establishes a direct continuum between individual ethical transformation and collective social well-being, thus providing a holistic, normative, and operational framework that transcends the limitations of sociological theories and positions *Sadvritta* as a unique model of preventive social medicine and sustainable human flourishing.

Classical sources, including the *Charaka Samhita* and the *Sushruta Samhita*, describe *Sadvritta* as a comprehensive

code encompassing hygienic, moral, and ecological conduct^(10,11). Modern scholarship has begun to explore its relevance beyond medicine; *Sadvritta* as a foundational element for positive health and psychological well-being, positioning it as a form of preventative medicine and ethical living⁽¹²⁾. Furthermore, studies have shown that traditional practices based on yogic and Ayurvedic principles contribute to improved mental health and pro social behaviour, thereby providing an empirical link with modern psychological research⁽¹³⁾. This body of work highlights *Sadvritta's* holistic integration of health, psychology, and ethics, making it a potent tool for addressing the very "social pathologies" that sociology identifies but struggles to remedy

Results / Analysis

Sadvritta as an Ethical Framework

Sadvritta comprises three interrelated domains: *Ahara* (dietary conduct), *Acharya* (moral and behavioural conduct), and *Vichara* (mental discipline). Together, these domains integrate personal health, social trust, and ecological sustainability.

Comparative Analysis with Sociological Theory

Table 1: Compares *Sadvritta* with major sociological concepts, demonstrating how it complements existing theories by providing prescriptive ethical practices at the individual level.

Sociological Concept	Key Idea	Limitation	<i>Sadvritta</i> Contribution
Durkheim Anomie ⁽¹⁴⁾	Normlessness leads to alienation and social breakdown.	Diagnoses the problem but does not offer a prescriptive ethical framework.	Provides concrete norms (truthfulness, moderation, compassion) that restore <i>swasthyam</i> (balance) at the individual level, reducing collective anomie.
Weber Protestant Ethic ⁽¹⁵⁾	Individual discipline supports macro-structures (capitalism, rationality).	Links values to economics but tied to a specific cultural-religious context.	Offers a universal, health-centered ethic not bound to economics, applicable across cultures for sustainable living.
Putnam Social Capital ⁽¹⁶⁾	Networks and trust build social cohesion.	Focuses on structures, not on the moral quality	Grounds social capital in virtue-trust and cooperation arise from ethical living (<i>satya</i> , <i>ahimsa</i> ,

		of individuals.	<i>daya</i>).
Foucault Technologies of the Self ⁽¹⁷⁾	Self-discipline as a mechanism of power and control.	Often portrays discipline as subjugation.	Re-envision discipline as self-chosen, liberatory, and health-promoting, empowering individuals rather than controlling them.

This comparative analysis reveals that while major sociological theories excel at diagnosing social problems or analysing the structures of society, they consistently fall short of providing a prescriptive, actionable framework for individual ethical conduct. *Sadvritta* complements Durkheim's concern with anomie by offering concrete ethical norms. It also extends and universalizes Weber's insight that modern social structures depend upon a disciplined ethical orientation, as he argued that capitalism requires a form of regulated conduct rather than undisciplined individual will. For Weber, the Protestant ethic-particularly shaped by Calvinist ideas of vocation, asceticism, and moral self-discipline-provided the ethical

orientation necessary for the emergence of modern capitalism ⁽¹⁸⁾. By sacralising disciplined labour, frugality, and systematic conduct as signs of moral worth, this religious ethic fostered a rational, self-regulated workforce suited to capitalist economic organisation. *Sadvritta*, however, offers a universal, health-centred ethic of discipline based on daily ethical self-regulation that is not bound to economic rationality but extends to ecological and social harmony ⁽¹⁹⁾.

Furthermore, *Sadvritta* grounds Putnam's social capital in personal virtue and reframes Foucault's self-discipline as liberatory self-care

Table 2: Addressing Social Pathologies (Anomie, Alienation, Consumerism, and Erosion of Social Capital).

Social Pathology (Sociological Concept)	Sociological (Descriptive) Analysis	Sadvritta (Proactive) Prescription
Anomie / Normlessness (Durkheim)	Breakdown of social norms regulating behaviour, leading to deviance and despair.	Adherence to a personal, internalized code of conduct (<i>Achara</i>). Become the source of one's own stability ⁽¹¹⁾ .
Alienation (Marx)	Separation of the worker from the product of labour, leading to loss of self and meaning.	Practice of <i>Santoṣha</i> (contentment) and mindfulness in all actions, re-infusing work with purpose and presence ⁽²⁰⁾ .
Hyper-consumerism / Materialism	Capitalism generates false desires and endless consumption, creating dissatisfaction and ecological strain.	<i>Mitahara</i> (moderation) and <i>Aparigraha</i> (non-possessiveness), encouraging need-based, sustainable consumption ⁽¹¹⁾ .
Erosion of Social Capital (Putnam)	Decline in community participation, trust, and collective efficacy.	Active practice of <i>Dhana</i> (charity, sharing) and <i>Daya</i> (compassion), building trust through personal virtue.

This table illustrates the transition from sociological diagnosis to Ayurvedic

intervention. For each major social pathology identified by sociological

theory, *Sadvritta* provides a corresponding proactive and prescriptive remedy aimed at the individual level. It effectively re-frames these macro-social problems as issues that can be addressed through micro-ethical practices. Where sociology describes the symptoms of anomie, alienation, hyper-consumerism, and eroding social capital, *Sadvritta* offers a

tangible toolkit of virtues and behaviours—such as *Achara*, *Santoṣha*, *Mitahara*, and *Dana*—to directly combat them. This demonstrates the framework's utility in empowering individuals to become active agents in restoring personal meaning and collective well-being, thereby addressing the root causes of social dysfunction through disciplined, ethical living.

Table 3: Conceptual Bridging: Micro–Macro Integration.

Level of Analysis	Sociological Concept	Sadvritta Concept	Integrated Interpretation
Micro (Individual)	Agency	<i>Swasthyam</i>	Agency is not merely the capacity to act but the capacity to act in ways that sustain physical, mental, and moral health.
Meso (Community)	Social Capital	<i>Dharma</i>	Social capital (trust, networks) emerges as the fruit (<i>phala</i>) of communities practicing <i>Dharma</i> through <i>Sadvritta</i> .
Macro (Society)	Social Structure	<i>Loka–Puruṣa Samya</i>	Social structures mirror the collective health of individuals; a diseased society reflects diseased individuals. (21)
Process (Across Levels)	Socialization	<i>Sadvritta Abhyasa</i>	Socialization is not just passive norm-internalization but the conscious, daily practice (<i>Abhyasa</i>) of ethical routines that build character.

This synthesis demonstrates how the Ayurvedic concept of *Sadvritta* provides a seamless, integrated framework that bridges all levels of sociological analysis. It enriches the sociological understanding of agency at the micro-level by tethering it to holistic health (*Swasthyam*), positing that true individual power is the capacity to act ethically and sustainably. At the meso-level, it explains the genesis of social capital by arguing that it is the natural outcome (*Phala*) of a community collectively living according to ethical principles (*Dharma*). The macro-level concept of *Loka-Puruṣa Samya* provides a powerful reciprocal model, asserting that social structures and individual health are reflections of one another, thereby rejecting a purely structuralist view. Finally, it redefines the process of socialization as an active, lifelong

practice (*Sadvritta Abhyasa*), where individuals consciously build their character and, by extension, the moral fabric of society through daily ethical routines. This integration positions *Sadvritta* not merely as a set of rules, but as a dynamic process that connects personal conduct to the health of the entire social organisms.

DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this study was to examine how the Ayurvedic concept of *Sadvritta* can enrich sociological theory by foregrounding ethical self-discipline as a foundational mechanism for social health and cohesion. The analysis demonstrates that *Sadvritta* directly addresses a persistent limitation within sociological thought: while sociology is highly effective at diagnosing social pathologies such as anomie, alienation, and erosion of

social capital, it offers limited prescriptive guidance for everyday ethical conduct at the individual level.

Sadvritta contributes to sociological theory by shifting the focus from sociological critique to ethical construction. Through practices such as daily disciplined routines, it operationalises ethical self-regulation as a lived social process rather than an abstract moral ideal. In doing so, *Sadvritta* provides a concrete mechanism through which individual behaviour becomes a driver of collective stability. For example, the sustained practice of *satya* (truthfulness) and *daya* (compassion) cultivates interpersonal trust, directly reinforcing the social capital that Putnam identifies as essential for cohesive communities. Similarly, *madhyama marga* (moderation) functions as an ethical response to hyper-consumerism, addressing both psychological distress and ecological degradation.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study demonstrates that *Sadvritta* complements and extends sociological explanations of social order by introducing ethical self-discipline as a mediating link between individual agency and social structure. Rather than viewing social cohesion solely as an outcome of institutional regulation or structural constraints, *Sadvritta* emphasises the role of consciously cultivated virtues in sustaining social life. This perspective enriches sociological understandings of agency by grounding it in *swasthyam*-holistic physical, mental, and moral well-being.

Furthermore, by situating *Sadvritta* within sociological discourse, the study introduces a non-Western normative framework into a predominantly Eurocentric theoretical landscape. This does not reject modern sociological insights but expands them by offering an alternative epistemology in which individual well-being (*swasthyam*) and social harmony (*loka-puruṣa sāmīya*) are

inseparable. Such an approach avoids rigid dualisms between mind and body or individual and society, thereby offering a more integrated model of social health.

Finally, the analysis confirms the universal relevance of *Sadvritta* for contemporary societies. Although rooted in Ayurveda, its core ethical principles—truthfulness, non-violence, moderation, cleanliness, and compassion—are not culturally exclusive. Instead, they represent shared human virtues that can be adapted across diverse cultural and institutional contexts. By foregrounding ethical self-discipline as a driver of social cohesion, *Sadvritta* offers sociology a practical, normative framework for addressing global challenges such as mental health crises, social fragmentation, and environmental instability.

Policy and Applied Research Implications

The translational potential of *Sadvritta* is vast across several domains:

1. Education

Contemporary school curricula mainly focus on academic achievement, knowledge acquisition, and control of behaviour through external rules rather than holistic development of the child. Most education systems emphasise examination performance, grades, and measurable learning outcomes, which encourage memorisation and cognitive skills more than moral values or emotional development. Curriculum frameworks and policies prioritise subject knowledge and discipline, while ethical education and character building are often treated as secondary or optional components. Studies in education and sociology have shown that schools reward obedience, conformity, and academic success more than self-discipline and moral reasoning. Therefore, modern curricula largely promote

intellectual and behavioural regulation, with limited systematic training in virtues, self-awareness, and holistic well-being.

Ethical education is often limited to abstract moral instruction, emotional regulation is addressed only after behavioural or psychological difficulties arise, and environmental education remains largely informational rather than conduct-oriented. What is missing is a structured, practice-based framework that systematically cultivates ethical behaviour, emotional self-regulation, and ecological responsibility as daily habits.

Integrating *Sadvritta*-inspired modules can address this gap by introducing:

(i) **Acharya**-daily ethical routines such as truthfulness, respect, non-harm, cleanliness, and social responsibility, taught through lived practice rather than moral exhortation;

(ii) **Vicara**-emotional regulation skills including mindfulness, contentment (*santoṣa*), and restraint, enabling students to manage stress, impulses, and interpersonal conflict proactively; and

(iii) **Ecological mindfulness**-conduct-based environmental ethics grounded in moderation (*Madhyama marga*) and non-possessiveness (*aparigraha*), fostering sustainable consumption patterns from an early age. Such an approach shifts education from rule compliance to character formation, promoting prosocial behaviour, psychological resilience, and long-term social well-being.

2. **Corporate Ethics**: Move beyond perfunctory Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to embed *Sadvritta* principles into organizational culture. Practices grounded in *satya* (transparency), *ahimsa* (non-harmful leadership), and *santoṣa* (contentment, countering burnout) can redefine workplace well-being and sustainable business models.

3. **Public Health**: Champion a paradigm shifts from reactive treatment to proactive,

preventive health. Public health campaigns can promote *Sadvritta* as a lifestyle medicine for stress management (*vichara*), combating the epidemic of lifestyle disorders through dietary conduct (*Ahara*).

4. **Environmental**

Sustainability: *Sadvritta* provides an ethical foundation for sustainable consumption. The principles of moderation and non-possessiveness align perfectly with movements towards minimalism, circular economies, and reducing ecological footprints.

Challenges and Limitations:

Implementing *Sadvritta* in a pluralistic, globalized world presents challenges. Its Sanskrit terminology and origins in a specific cultural context may raise concerns about universal applicability, potentially being perceived as dogmatic or foreign. The key lies in hermeneutic adaptation-focusing on the underlying ethical principles rather than the specific cultural forms. The goal is not to prescribe a rigid code but to inspire the development of context-sensitive, modern-day *Sadvrittis* that resonate with diverse populations.

Future Research Directions:

To solidify *Sadvritta*'s place in contemporary discourse, future research should focus on:

1. **Empirical Validation**: Designing and testing evidence-based interventions in community settings (e.g., *Sadvritta* for stress reduction, for enhancing social cohesion in urban neighbourhoods).

2. **Comparative Ethics**: Conducting systematic comparative studies between *Sadvritta* and other virtue ethics traditions, such as Confucian role ethics or Aristotelian virtue ethics, to identify synergies and unique contributions.

3. **Interdisciplinary**

Integration: Fostering research collaborations between sociologists, psychologists, public health experts, and

Ayurvedic scholars to develop integrated models for holistic well-being

CONCLUSION

Sadvritta provides a distinctive lens for rethinking the relationship between individual conduct and collective well-being. While sociology has offered descriptive and critical accounts of modern crises, Ayurveda's ethical framework supplies normative dimension-concrete practices for sustainable, balanced living. By integrating these perspectives, scholars and policymakers can move toward models of society that are not only efficient but also compassionate and resilient. Further research should focus on empirical evaluation of *Sadvritta*-based interventions in areas such as stress management, community health, and social cohesion.

Self-Declaration

The author declares that no AI or AI-based tools were used for the creation, content development, or analysis of this manuscript. ChatGPT was used solely for grammar correction and language refinement. All content, analysis, and interpretations presented in this article are the original work of the author.

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