

Relevance of Kautilya's Philosophy in Contemporary Era

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Abstract

Great administration is a term has turned into a plan of practically all advancement establishments. Great administration has various meanings to various associations. However, Kautilya's Arthashastra is an epochal composition managing the craft of government, its usefulness, the obligations and obligations of the lord and his priests or more every one of the worries of his subjects. The paper intends to investigate the different parts of good administration reflected in Kautilya's Arthashastra.

The Arthashastra

The Arthashastra is an ancient Indian Sanskrit treatise on statecraft, economic policy and military strategy. Kautilya, also identified as Vishnugupta and Chanakya, is traditionally credited as the author of the text. The latter was a scholar at Takshashila, the teacher and guardian of Emperor Chandragupta Maurya. Some scholars believe them to be the same person, while a few have questioned this identification. The text is likely to be the work of several authors over centuries. The Arthashastra was influential until the 12th century, when it disappeared. It was rediscovered in 1905 by R. Shamasastri, who published it in 1909. The first English translation, also by Shamasastri, was published in 1915.¹

The term 'Artha' cannot be merely translated as wealth because it includes the material wellbeing of the individual beings. Basically, the term Arthasāstra often described as the science of political economy as it contains ideas based on economics and politics. Arthashastra is the Kautilyan magnum opus composed approximately around the 4th century BCE,² however, the exact year remains an issue in contention amongst scholars till date. Kautilya, is said to have recorded all his policies and guidelines in this grand treatise acting on which, Chandragupta Maurya overthrew the Nanda dynasty thereby establishing Mauryan Empire that spread across Bengal to Afghanistan extending all the way to the border of Persia, being the first and largest-ever politically united Bharat. The original manuscripts or the palm leaves on

which it was written were discovered in 1905 by a Sanskrit scholar and the librarian, named Rudrapatna Shamshastri, of Oriental Research Institute (ORI) of Mysore which was founded by the city's Wodeyar Kings in 1891. Prof. Shamshastri went on to write the first English translation of Arthashastra in 1915, following which, only 2 more translations in the language came up, by Dr. R.P. Kangle and Prof. L.N. Rangarajan.

Philosophy of Kautilya

Covering a plethora of subjects, Arthashastra can be said to be a compendium of 15 Adhikaran or books out of which first five deal with "tantra" or state's internal administration, the next eight on "avapa" or state's relations with other neighbours and the last two are miscellaneous in character. The theories and models that are contained in these 15 Adhikaran appear to be devised with a considerate abstraction without any historical reference which ensures their applicability even today thus attributing Arthashastra as a timeless political resource.

Dharma (moral behavior), Artha (wealth), Kama (worldly pleasures) and Moksha (salvation) are considered as the objectives of human life in the Indian society. Moksha is the liberation that can be considered as the highest goal of one's life. The fulfilment of Dharma, Artha and Kāma is a pre requirement for achieving the final goal of liberation.

Dharma is not only a spiritual and absolute concept, but a concept of righteousness. Thus, it includes the idea of duty which every human being owes to oneself, to one's ancestors, to society as a whole and to universal order. Therefore, it is clear that performing dharma means performing one's duty to the best of their ability for the benefit of their spiritual wellbeing and for the wellbeing of the whole world.

Arthashastra has indicated the duties of a ruler on maintaining the administrative system of the kingdom as following.

1. 'Rakshā (Protection of the state from external aggression)'
2. 'Pālana (maintenance of law and order within the state)'
3. 'Yogakshema (safeguarding the welfare of the people)'³

Kautilya rightly remarks that all under the kings depend upon Kosha, i.e., finance. He expresses the view that treasury is more important than the army. The latter can be raised and maintained only with the help of a well filled treasury. Sound finances are essential for any state. Agriculture yields the most important part of revenue. The state is entitled to the produce of the crown land and

one sixth of the produce of other land. Shulka or custom duty is levied not only on export or import, but it also on indigenous products. The rates of excise vary from one sixth to one twentieth except on foreign goods which are charged at the rate of one fifth of their value. When the goods were brought along the waterways, they had to pay duties and other charges at the port. The state also maintains a fleet on its own that is to be out on hire to traders and fishermen.⁴ The taxes should be neither heavy nor excessive, they should be moderate.

He further advised the king to never to forget that nothing would expose him to greater danger than oppressive taxation. The taxation should be equitable which means, both the state on its side and the agriculturist and the trader on their side feel that they got a fair and reasonable deal. When for some reason, such a costly military adventure, the treasury gets depleted, efforts become necessary for its reenlistment. Kautilya recommends the following measures to fill the treasury:

- A levy in agriculturists ranging from one-fourth to one-third of the stocks with them,
according to the productivity of the soil.

- If this is found insufficient, farmers are to be induced to grow crops as directed by the state and give part of the produce to the state.⁵

The Mandala Theory

The Rajmandala theory, or the theory of the circle of states, is the most celebrated Kautilyan theory primarily focussing on a state's relations with its neighbours. Kautilya's stratagem that lies underneath this theory is "enemy of the enemy is a natural ally". But this is often taken to be a static and rigid statement which is only contrary to Kautilya's explanation where he states that these relationships are dynamic in nature with all space for exceptions and situational abnormalities.

The formation of Rajmandala starts with a Vijigishu or conqueror in the centre. Kautilya will call a king vijigishu if and only if he has the ambition as well as the potential strength to go on to conquest. This Kautilyan concept divides the border of the vijigishu's state in two parts- front and the rear.

Moving rightwards, that is in the front, the immediate neighbour is called Ari or the enemy. Mitra, being ari's immediate neighbour, is its enemy and therefore a natural ally of the vijigishu. Next lies the

Ari-Mitra or the state adjacent to the mitra and therefore the enemy of vijigishu and his allies. The adjacent state to Ari-Mitra is Mitra-Mitra which is mitra's friend and vijigishu's ally as well. And the last state towards the front in the rajmandala is Ari-Mitra-Mitra which again is the part of Ari's friend circle and holds enmity with the vijigishu. Hence, in the front, the vijigishu is in alliance with the Mitra and Mitra-Mitra. On the other hand, the Ari, Ari-Mitra and Ari-Mitra-Mitra are allied together and are enemies of the vijigishu and his allies.

Towards the left of the vijigishu are the states that lie in the rear. The same pattern of mandalas applies to the rear. The immediate state adjacent to vijigishu in the rear is called Parshnigraha or the rear enemy. The next state, the ally in the rear, is called the Aakranda. Adjacent to Aakranda there lies Parshanigrahaasara which is the rear enemy's ally and at the end there lies situated Aakrandaasara which is rear ally's friend. Therefore, in the rear, the vijigishu is allied with Aakranda and Aakrandaasara and is opposed to Parshanigraha and Parshanigrahaasara.⁶

Arthashastra's Relevance to Contemporary Strategic Studies

The normative setting of Kautilya's Arthashastra is the political unification of common cultural Indian subcontinent. Within this, the Arthashastra has a twofold aim. First, it seeks to show how the ruler should protect his territory. Second, is how territory should be acquired. The end or primary goal in the Arthashastra is Yogakshema – protection, security and stability of the State. Today, political unification of common cultural Indian subcontinent as in the text is no more applicable as India is a sovereign nation-state less parts of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh. However, many theoretical concepts and ideas in the text can be applied in internal and external matters related to strategic studies and also contribute to strengthen the Global International Studies from enduring Indian traditions. The concepts that need to be realised, are not only for waging war/application of force, but can also be used in strategic vocabulary in all disciplines of social science including peace research – a task yet to be undertaken by contemporary scholars.⁷

In recent times, there has been a steady growth in literature on the defence, security, and international related aspects of Kautilya's Arthashastra. This trend has now made it possible to go beyond the primary stage of just introduction to the various basic concepts

and vocabulary in the text. The topic of Comprehensive National Power also has been analysed by many scholars satisfactorily. As the study, debate and scholarship on revisiting and reinterpreting Indian heritage gains momentum, other levels of analysis emerge, which now need to be examined. In this regard, strategic thinking and 'how to think' assumes importance and to introduce this aspect related to contemporary strategic studies. It explains issues and concepts on learning, the intellectual part of strategic thinking, Warcraft and hybrid warfare, and understanding strategy and how it resides in the dynamic Mandala theory.⁸

Unlike in the Sinic traditions of Seven Military Classics which include Sun Tzu's Art of War, there is: 'Hardly any literature dealing exclusively with military science or the art of war during ancient and medieval periods. But it has to be remembered that warcraft was then regarded as of statecraft and so the various works on statecraft deal also with the art of war.'⁹

In the 21st Century, interestingly the context of what Kautilya wrote for his times now assumes importance as the very character of war has changed to war amongst the people and emergence of non-state actors and so on, and cyber wars. Surely war-craft, statecraft

and diplomacy are now conjoined as was in the time of Kautilya in the 4th Century BCE. Yet, as India has ongoing territorial disputes it may be dangerous to assume that capture or defence of territory will not be expected. We need to understand that this is an ongoing issue of janapada/rastra or territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Hybrid Warfare or Matching Old with the New

In a recent research, Kautilya's core concepts about war are analysed to be a mixture of warfare and diplomacy. The foreign policy operations discussed seem not to refer to a classical war. Rather it appears that Kautilya has a combination of diplomatic pressure, political subversion, covert operations and military threats in mind. Such an approach for achieving foreign policy objectives is clearly favoured by Kautilya. Key for the successful conduct of foreign policy are

- (a) adequate intelligence on the adversary state,
- (b) rapid information about the execution of one's own operations and
- (c) collective deliberation and the ruler's decision-making based upon (a) and (b).¹⁰

In the above points, three standards stick out. The first and focal is knowledge. It isn't just its assortment yet examinations in a time of 'humungous' over-burden of information. The second is similar to the understand OODA (Observe, Orient, Decide and Act) circle - speculated by a military pilot in the Korean War during the 1950s. The third, there is a requirement for an input and aggregate thought. Kautilya in like manner presses for a comparable proactive contention and his popular sutras at the finish of his Book VIII on The Six Measures of Foreign Policy as : 'He, who is knowledgeable in the study of legislative issues, should utilize every one of the means, viz., headway , decay, and stable circumstances also debilitating and killing. He who sees the six proportions of strategy as being reliant thusly, plays, however he sees fit, rulers tied by the chains of his insight.'

Role of War in Arthashastra

In the first verse of (6.2) of Kautilya's Arthashastra—Sama vyayamau yogakshem ayoryonih—the welfare of a state [ensuring the security of the state within its existing boundaries and acquiring new territories to enlarge it] depends on adopting a policy of 'non-intervention or overt action'; this establishes the basis for all foreign policy.¹¹ Non-intervention is not a policy of doing nothing, but the deliberate choice of a

policy of keeping away from foreign entanglements in order to enjoy the fruits of past acquisitions by consolidating them. Vyayama, as interpreted by Rangarajan, implies an active foreign policy; Yoga, the objective of enlargement of one's power and influence, and through these, one's own territory.¹²

Kautilya's categorisation of wars is also based on political rationality. Prakashayuddha or 'open fight' is in the place and time indicated; kutayuddha or 'concealed fighting' involves the use of tactics in the battlefield; and tusnimyuddha or 'silent fight' implies the use of secret agents. It is stated that when the vijigishu is superior in strength, and the season and terrain are favourable to him, he should resort to open warfare (10.3.1). In fact, a fight about the place and time of which notice has been given, is considered righteous—dharmishtha (10.3.26).¹³

In Kautilya's Arthashastra, while war is an inevitable phenomenon, the decision to wage war is a well-considered one, based on many inputs. Prime among the considerations is that the action should be legitimate and 'righteous'. It is important here to highlight the distinction that Kautilya makes between political normativity and 'general ethics'. If

fundamental state interest is at stake, unethical state actions gain a different normative quality. If state actions violate general ethical standards but are congruent with *raison d'état*, they are legitimate for Kautilya. In external relations, the ultimate expression of *danda* is war. This too is not without normative constraints. Wars fought for political unification, which is identified as the political goal to further state interest, are considered 'righteous'; and those which cause destruction are labelled 'demoniacal'.¹⁴

To sum up, while war is a relatively frequent phenomenon in the conduct of human affairs, whether one goes to war or not depends on the adversary, and the threat it poses. It is the enemy's disposition that determines the level of threat.

One may argue that in a constantly changing conflict situation, with identities of states in the *mandala* swiftly transforming, a strategist must be prepared to adapt to dangers and opportunities that suddenly appear. For such a situation, Kautilya has laid down a number of military and non-military strategies to respond flexibly to the enemy, and thus create conditions for victory. The preference for non-military strategies is sufficiently validated in the text. Also, it is the welfare of his subjects too, and not the augmentation of the state's power alone that drives the king's

decision to go to war, harbour hostility or make peace with his adversary, or use military and non-military measures in carrying out his duty.

Grand Strategic Preferences

The grand strategic categorisation proposed by Johnston seems to fit the Indian context well. The range of strategies mentioned in the text (*sadgunya*) collapse into these three categories of grand strategic choice. The next question to deal with is how these grand strategic choices are ranked in KA and whether the ranking convincingly represents the central assumptions or not. While the text clearly states that going to war as the least preferable option, there are a number of strategies suggested which fall under the 'accommodationist' and 'defensive' categories. Their use in very specific circumstances is prescribed keeping all the logistical and operational factors in mind. Kautilya sets forth the *sadgunya* theory: a state has six policy options for the conduct of its foreign policy—no more, no less. 'These are really six measures, because of differences in the situations', says Kautilya.¹⁵

Out of the six foreign policy methods suggested, *samdhi* (peace) and *samsraya* (seeking protection when threatened by a stronger king or taking refuge in a fort) clearly

belong to the 'accommodationist' category. Vighraha (war) is outrightly 'offensive'. Yana (augmentation of power) and dvaidhibhava (dual policy) belong to the 'defensive' category. The latter is the policy of making peace with a neighbouring king in order to pursue, with his help, the policy of hostility towards another. Both these policies relate to the enhancement of state factors (prakritis), including through the help of an ally. However, when yana and dvaidhibhava are combined with vighraha, these policies acquire an offensive orientation. Asana (neutrality), which is a method used in connection with both war and peace, does not neatly belong to any one category. Johnston does express the plausibility of a mix of accommodationist and defensive strategies, and defensive and offensive strategies.¹⁶

Conclusion

Arthashastra is the earliest and the greatest manual for leadership, development, education and training. Preeminent is its rich collection of the 'study of enquiry' or how to think. It shows that scholarly trustworthiness is gotten from logical reasoning. Its emphasis on warcraft is important today seeing the obscuring changes in the personality of war where both utilization of military power with discretion cross-over. Its most novel commitment is the idea of a Mandala Theory

which should be progressively applied to issues of legislative issues, strategy, statecraft, and even business and the board. This hypothesis isn't simply just 'India-driven' however has all-inclusive application.

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