

Governance & Morals: In Perspective of Kautilya's Arthashastra

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Abstract—Kautilya, also known as Chanakya or Vishnugupta is one of the most prominent Indian political philosopher. Chanakya played a pivotal role in the formation of the Maurya empire and in the promotion of all round development within the empire. Chanakya policy of Indian history and culture is a treasure-trove. The Chanakya Niti consists of expert knowledge regarding surveillance, maintenance and mobilization of army, general administration, diplomacy, management of agriculture, industrial production and so forth. His contribution in the field of politics and governance is definitely impressive. The Chanakya Niti is still read today by aspiring corporate strategists trying to understand the qualities of a good leader. He assign his opinion regarding the elements of sovereignty, remedies against external and internal troubles of the government, enforcement of rights and duties amongst various grades of administrative staff, etc. For the enforcement of law and order in the empire, criminal and civil laws were also prescribed. Kautilya's Arthashastra is one of the ancient Indian literature which had provided some insights to management, although the context it was written was for kings to govern the state. There are many Strategic management concepts from Arthashastra, which are still applicable in today's organizational development. Kautilya's Arthashastra was written for kings to govern the state. Good governance and stability are intricately linked. If rulers are responsive, accountable, removable, recallable, there is stability. If not, there is instability. This is even more relevant in the present democratic setup. Some of the guidelines of Arthashastra, regarding management and economy are equally relevant and can be helpful in solution of so many problems that the today's modern corporate world is facing. Kautilya made a great contribution to governance and challenging the Hindu religious thinking by vilifying morals in war and justifying the end. Kautilya's ideologies on state, statecraft and ethics are very realistic and vastly applicable in today's context. I feel Kautilya's work on diplomacy is greatly underrepresented in the western world.
Keywords: Treasure-trove, Diplomacy, Intricately, Governance and Vilifying.

1. PROLOGUE

The Arthashastra is a treatise of political advice to the king, written by the Indian philosopher, Kautilya, in the 4th century B.C.E. Kautilya divided 'Arthashastra' into 15 books, sub divided into 150 chapters in which 180 topics running into 5391 sections (slokas) are discussed containing inter alia institutions of ruler ship, State, administration, law, suppression of criminals, trade, industry, commerce, spying, war, peace, foreign policy, Social Structures, Diplomacy, Ethics, Politics and Statecraft. The first five books arthashastra deal amongst others, with administration of state and law, the next eight with foreign relations, while the last two are miscellaneous in character.

Kautilya, also known as Chanakya or Vishnugupta is one of the most famous Indian political Philosopher. He was a very learned scholar at the Takshashila University, an ancient Hindu university, currently located in Pakistan. He had mastery over political science, economics, accounting, and governance, and he was the dynamic force behind the creation of the Maurya empire. The word, artha, itself, translates to "material well-being"-- in effect, it is the study of economics. The work is, thus, sometimes referred to as "the Science of Material Gain" (Kosambi, 1994 and Raja 2005). In fact as Tisdell has argued there was no parallel in economic philosophy to the Arthashastra until Adam Smith published The Wealth of Nations (Tisdell, 2006). It has also been translated as the "Scripture of Wealth." Because of its focus on power, accrued via the sharp instruments of politics, public policy analysis, and administration, the Arthashastra, is also sometimes known as "The Science of Polity," "Treatise on Polity," and the "Science of Political Economy (Singh, 1993; Kosambi, 1994; Boesche 2002 and Boesche, 2003). The study and practical applications of the book lost its importance since the British rule. Arthashastra, dealing with the governance of a country it also consist three parts of state affairs, namely, state security issues, administration of justice and financial development policies.

Apart from Arthashastra, Kautilya wrote several other books such as Chanakya-Sutras (Rules of Science) and Chanakya-Rajanitisastra (Science of Government Policies). He is India's most illustrious political economist of all time. Numerous scholars and journalists have highlighted the brilliant gap between word and act in India today - between budgetary outlays and developmental outcomes, between what is recorded in official documents and the ground reality. Governance experts of the World Bank, for instance, say there are numerous weaknesses in the "institutions of accountability". kautilya was a true statesman who bridged the gap between experience and vision. For him, good governance was dominant. The discussion in Arthashastra is as relevant today as it was in Kautilya's time. He was

well-versed with the characteristics of bureaucrats and statesmen and laid down rules to prevent misuse of power. He explained that no amount of rules and regulations or auditing can prevent immoral behavior and that character-building and action-oriented moral values were essential (Bentham 1789). He explains the necessity of having strong government, finances and an able army. It states that the moral duty of the king is to increase prosperity, ensure judicial fairness, and provide national security.

2. KAUTILYA'S GOVERNANCE

Governance refers to "all of processes of governing, whether undertaken by a government, market or network, whether over a family, tribe, formal or informal organization or territory and whether through the laws, norms, power or language (Bevir and Mark 2013). Arthashastra, one is struck by the political intelligence of its writer, Kautilya, who can be termed one of the shrewdest policy wonks the world has ever known. We need to learn from Indian experience in governance, and Kautilya's Arthashastra is a valuable classic in this regard. The purpose of the Arthashastra was to be a comprehensive guide for government in the Mauryan Empire, and to aid its ruler to increase the wealth, power and security of the kingdom. Without government, rises disorder as in the Matsya nyayamud bhavayati (proverb on law of fishes). In the absence of governance, the strong will swallow the weak. In the presence of governance, the weak resists the strong (Olivelle and Patrick 2013).

Kautilya emphasized to maintain the standards of public governance in the Mauryan Empire. According to Kautilya, attainment of good governance entails that the objectives of the state are fulfilled and realized. This principle is relevant even today. The three important internal issues for the ruler to attend to are: Raksha—or protection of life and liberty within the state; Palana or law and justice; and, Yogakshema or welfare of the people. These three characteristics are also to be seen to be subsumed in the constitutions of all modern states as—preservation of Life, Liberty, Justice, Equality and Property. The root of happiness is Dharma (ethics, righteousness), the root of Dharma is Artha (economy, polity), the root of Artha is right governance, the root of right governance is victorious inner-restraint, the root of victorious inner-restraint is humility, the root of humility is serving the aged (J. S. Rajput 2012). Governance relates to "the processes of interaction and decision-making among the actors involved in a collective problem that lead to the creation, reinforcement, or reproduction of social norms and institutions (Hufty and Marc 2011). The concept of Raja-rishi envisaged by Kautilya is very important for a good King. This concept is very close to the concept of "Philosopher King" by Plato. In this concept, Kautilya has identified

indicators of good governance. Good governance and stability are inextricably linked. If rulers are responsive, accountable, removable, recallable, there is stability. If not, there is instability. This is even more relevant in the present democratic setup.

3. KAUTILYA'S "MORALITY"

Dharma-sutra teaches morality and lays down duties of the individual and regards deviation from them as sin. Kautilya is a realist and deals with duties, violation of which are regarded as crimes and punished by the state. Prior to Kautilya, law and religion were intermixed Kautilya separated it into the two parts.

The Arthashastra then posits its own theory that there are four necessary fields of knowledge, the Vedas, the Anvikshaki (philosophy of Samkhya, Yoga and Lokayata) the science of government and the science of economics (Varta of agriculture, cattle and trade). It is from these four that all other knowledge, wealth and human prosperity is derived. The Kautilya text, thereafter asserts that it is the Vedas that discuss what is Dharma (right, moral, ethical) and what is Adharma (wrong, immoral, unethical), it is the Varta that explain what creates wealth and what destroys wealth, it is the science of government that illuminates what is Nyaya (justice, expedient, proper) and Anyaya (unjust, inexpedient, improper), and that it is Anvishaki (philosophy) that is the light of these sciences, as well as the source of all knowledge, the guide to virtues, and the means to all kinds of acts (Kangle, R. P. 1969).

Kautilya asserted "Philosophy is ever thought of as the lamp of all sciences, as the means of all actions and as the support of all laws (and duties). The root of any state and welfare of people remains in its philosophy and it is also important to maintain ethical standards in every respect. The Arthasashtra was an appealing document in its emphasis on anvishaki, materialism and values at a time when India was worried with issues of spirituality and focus on moksha—the freedom of the soul from the bonds of karma. The values are the lighthouse like lamp, which provide proper direction.

The Raja-rishi has self-control and does not fall for the temptations of the senses, he learns continuously and cultivates his thoughts, he avoids false and flattering advisors and instead associates with the true and accomplished elders, he is genuinely promoting the security and welfare of his people, he enriches and empowers his people, he practices ahimsa (non-violence against all living beings), he lives a simple life and avoids harmful people or activities, he keeps away from another's wife nor craves for other people's property (Rangarajan 1992). The greatest enemies of a king are not others, but are these six: lust, anger, greed,

conceit, arrogance and foolhardiness. A just king gains the loyalty of his people not because he is king, but because he is just.

4. CONCLUSION

The Arthashastra is/was the science of wealth and warfare, a handbook on efficient statecraft for kings and high-level ministers and officials for whom good governance was to provide the basis for „sustainable“ development, welfare, and splendor. The Arthashastra is an excellent reminder of the circular motion of the history of states and governance and a reflection upon the fluidity of their rise and fall. Before Kautilya there were other philosophers in India who composed the Shastras but his work was vigorous and encompassed all the treaties written earlier. Kautilya’s work is primarily a book of political pragmatism where State is dominant and King shall carry out duties as advised in his book to preserve his state. He made a great contribution to statecraft and challenging the Hindu religious thinking by vilifying morals in war and justifying the end, I think his key weakness was that he was not a imaginative. He was a great thinker with unlimited imagination as his treatise is not written with experiences or drawn from empirical evidences but out of myths and possibilities. I well thought-out Kautilya for three reasons. Firstly, I wanted to highlight the patterns of thinking in the east. Secondly Kautilya’s ideologies on governance and morals are very rational and greatly applicable in today’s context. Thirdly, I feel Kautilya’s work on diplomacy is significantly underrepresented in the western world. Kautilya’s work is so deep rooted in realism that he goes to describe the gory and brutal means a King must adopt to be in power. This could have been one reason why Ashoka, the grandson of Chandragupta Maurya whom Kautilya advised renounced violence and war thus taking the path of Dharma or Morals. In this paper, I shall primarily focus on Kautilya’s thoughts on good governance and morals. I would conclude by his note on statecraft which says, “A wise king trained in politics, will, even if he possesses a small territory, overpower the whole earth with the help of the best fitted elements of his independence and will never be conquered. Some of the guidelines of Arthashastra, regarding governance and morals are equally relevant and can be helpful in solution of so many problems that the today’s contemporary world is facing.

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