

Saptanga theory of the state in Kautilya's Arthashastra

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Abstract

This study analyzes Kautilya's Saptanga theory of the state as delineated in the Arthashastra, a seminal work in Eastern political philosophy by applying secondary data. Kautilya's Arthashastra is widely regarded as a cornerstone of Eastern political science due to its comprehensive examination of various aspects of governance, ranging from statecraft and warfare to diplomacy, ethics, and geopolitics. The text portrays a realistic governance portrayal, depicting a complex administrative structure, taxation systems, and an advanced intelligence apparatus. Kautilya advocated a strong state with a combination of seven limbs; every element is equally important for successive states. Kautilya posits that the state's primary objective is to elevate humanity from its natural state, allowing individuals to practice their religion and maintain private property rights. In Kautilya's conception, the king assumes the role of a moral guardian, ensuring his subjects' justice and welfare. Moreover, Arthashastra advocates for a decentralized governance model, wherein the state exercises control over autonomous organizations, and prevents absolute authority.

Keywords: Swami, Amatya official, Janpadh, Durga, Kosha, Bala-police force, Mitra

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Introduction

The Eastern philosopher, Vedic Brahman Kautilya (4th century B.C.) is also known as Chanakya and the Vishnu Gupta. Kautilya idealized the country of the Aryas as much politically as religiously. He was a philosopher and a teacher for Chandra Gupta Maurya. Kautilya was born in Taxila and received his education at the University of Nalanda, a world-renowned university. Chanakya was an Indian Statesman, a Great philosopher, Advisory of the King, and the first prime minister of the Mauryan Empire. He brought all kings and dynasties under one Empire through diplomacy and politics. He helped Chandragupta Mauryan defeat two of the era's biggest powers: Alexander of Macedonia and King Nanda of Magadh, ruler of India's largest empire. Bindusar, Chandragupta's son, and Ashoka, his grandson, are recognised for their large and beneficent empires. Ashoka's empire was the most accurate representation of Kautilya's ideal empire. He was recognized as one of his generation's most talented ministers. In 321 B.C., Chandragupta Maurya established the Mauryan Empire (Sen, 1993).

Kautilya's Arthashastra belongs to Danashastra and is also known as Nitishastra. Arthashastra was written around 325 B.C. and published in 1909 after discovering more than 2200 later. Arthashastra consists of 15 books, 150 chapters, 6000 shlokas, and 180 topics. Kautilya described well-organized state, Kingship, the quality of the ideal ruler, the principle of practical politics, war, diplomacy, politics, and statecraft administration, the ethical and moral order of the society and social structures, domestic and foreign policy, law, justice and legal system, warfare, criminology, intelligence & espionage, etc. The first five books describe internal matters of the state. The 6 to 13

books define external matters or diplomacy, and the other two describe other issues. It classified 34 independent departments of government. Statecraft is the main focus of Arthashastra. It also discusses Dharma and the continuity between Manu and Kautilya (Liebig, 2013; Edu Seeker, 2019).

Kautilya handed his expertise to the governing artist two thousand years ago. In the Arthashastra, Kautilya explains how to govern a state, hold rulers accountable, decentralise power, conduct foreign policy, aid the poor, and maintain the state's morals (Eastern philosophy). In today's democratic states, such as Nepal, leaders, on the other hand, are not answerable to the public (EduSeeker, 2019).

Statement of the problem

Kautilya, India's most illustrious political economist, and true statesman, combined experience with a visionary inside. As outlined in his treatise Arthashastra, Kautilya's theory of state is a comprehensive framework for governance and statecraft, an ancient Eastern treatise on politics, economics, military tactics, and statecraft. He envisioned a strong, centralized monarchy as the ideal form of government, emphasizing the king's role as the ultimate authority. Kautilya's comprehensive framework regarding statecraft is sought to be studied. What is Kautilya's Saptanga theory on statecraft in Arthasatra? This study aims to discuss Kautilya's theory of the state in Arthashastra (Saptanga theory). He was a famous Indian philosopher and strategic thinker who used a realistic approach. Kautilya was a political adviser of Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of the Mauryan empire.

Method of the study

This study is based on secondary data. To study Kautilya's theory of the state in Arthasatra, various scholarly articles and intellectual architectures have been analysed without engaging primary data. It used a qualitative approach to identify the philosophy of state by Eastern political philosopher Kautilya.

Result and Discussion

"Arthashastra" comes from Sanskrit and means "Science of politics." Kautilya defines statecraft as Arthashastra. 'Arth' refers to material well-being. The king's most important goal is to ensure his people's material well-being. "Dharma", or moral-related to spirituality; "Artha", or money-related to wealth as the basis of the states "Kama" pleasure-related to happiness; and "Moksha" or serialization/salvation-related to self-satisfy, are the four pillars of the Arthasatra. "Artha" or material well-being is supreme over other aspirations: Dharma, Kama, and Moksha, which ultimately depend on Artha. The land was the primary source of ensuring material well-being in ancient times. The central theme of Arthashastra was how to obtain land. A state's desire to acquire territory is a natural thing. Because neighbours are natural enemies, the first land to be acquired is a neighbour's land. As a result, the ties between the two states are oriented toward war. Thus, Arthashastra is concerned with the art of battle. Arthashastra is regarded as the first geopolitical textbook (EduSeeker, 2019). The science of capturing land is known as geopolitics. In Eastern philosophy, Kautilya is compared to Machiavelli. Kautilya was a revisionist, and his theories confined the Indian subcontinent's territory. The majority of people are unaware of what Kautilya

says in the Arthashastra. They only remember the 'mandala' idea, founded on the notion that 'any neighbouring state is an enemy, and the enemy's enemy is a friend' (Rangarajan, 1992). Arthashastra is concerned with collection-centric and action-centric and he has preferred intelligence (Tanwar, 2014).

Kautilya, like Thucydides, Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Sun Tzu, is recognised as a classic in the history of political thinking. Kautilya's Arthasatra is a practical work that could have been written only by one who had implemented the tactics that he delivered. The ideal state, or perfect state, is described in Plato's philosophy. The real state or practical utility remains central to Kautilya's philosophy. The book has enough evidence to show how to form alliances, attack a powerful monarch, deal with front-line revolts, and perform tricks on innocent people (Rangarajan, 1987). Arthashastra opens a new phase in the development of our ancient political literature.

According to Rao (1958), Kautilya's contribution is more similar to Aristotle's than Machiavelli's. Aristotle (in Politics) and Kautilya (in Arthashastra) have defined a 'state'. Interestingly, both belong to the same era and were teachers of the two clashing titans - Aristotle of Alexander and Kautilya of Chandragupta.

The political part of the Arthashastra concentrates on the meaning of kingship and how a ruler should comfort himself. True kingship is described as a ruler's willingness to put the needs of his people ahead of his interests and aspirations. A King's policy should show a desire to serve the maximum number of his subjects/people. He was a great statesman who could bring together competence and vision. Good governance was crucial to him. The debate in Arthashastra is just as relevant now as it was when Kautilya wrote it.

Kautilya's Saptanga Theory of state

According to Kautilya, the state was founded because people were weary of the Fish Law (**Matsyanayay**). The state is an institutional obligation for human development. The state's prime function was maintaining laws for using wrong protecting subjects. The most noticeable aspect of the Arthashastra is its emphasis on the public welfare. The principle of preserving the social order and promoting Dharma was at the very root of society. The principle of Dharma was the basis of the state, and Kautilya thought adherence to Dharma was essential to the state's existence (Sing, 2004). Kautilya describes 'Saptang', i.e... Seven elements of the state or sovereignty and the role of the king in Arthashastra (Rao, 1958, Horo, n. d.): Swami (King), Amatya (Ministers), Janapada (Population and Territory). Durga (Fort), Kosa (Treasury). Bala (Military) Mitra (Allies). Just as the state's components are indispensable, the body's limbs are vital. Each of them is described in brief.

Swami (King)

The king, according to Kautilya, is the center of the state. The King is the master key to the administrative machine's operation, appointing, defending, correcting, strengthening, and shaping various factors. Kautilya emphasizes that the king should not be arrogant. King is the sovereign

head of the state and is accorded the uppermost place in politics. According to Kautilya, the king is expected to fulfil his duties diligently, following a prescribed daily schedule from 1:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. (Kaur, 2010). He is rational and has the enthusiasm and spirit of an investing nature, with a religious, strong character, truthfulness, and liberal nature. He should be an energetic, devoted, and critical analyst (STUDOU, Nd). According to Kautilya, the ruler can be of any varna, although the Kshatriya is preferred. Prabhushakti (army and treasury power), Mantashakti (wise men's advice, specifically the Council of Ministers), and Utsahshakti (charisma) were the three sources of authority for the king. The most powerful source was Mantashakti, followed by Prabhushakti and Utsahshakti (Shamasastri, n.d).

Kautilya believed that institutions (Council of Ministers) were more important than individuals (Kings) in governing. The Hobbs's concept of a 'Leviathan' differs from the Vedic understanding of a king. According to Hobbes, "Men impart all their power and strength upon one man, or one assembly of men, capable of reducing all their wills, by plurality of voices (Hobbes, 2008).

Arthashastra describes the duties of the king: Raksha, Palana, and Yogshema, which means to maintain peace, order, and dharma, and protect the weak from the strong, economic well-being, livelihood, fulfilled life, and social welfare care for the needy, widows, old age, weak. The king should work for the public benefit by treating the people with his children. King is bound by 'Rajadharma,' the king should seek happiness in the happiness of his citizens, his welfare is in their welfare, and his good is not in what pleases him but in what pleases the citizens (Shamasastri, n.d).

King had no private life, and all his actions were subject to public security (Rao, 1958, 122). The Vedic King wasn't an absolute monarch or a "mortal god." He was a defender of the dharma. He made decisions based on the Council of Ministers' advice. In addition, the numerous autonomous associations that make up his kingdom acted as a powerful check on his power. According to Confucian tradition, the emperor heads a family or community (Yang, 1987).

Amatya (Ministers) official

Kautilya believed in the importance of the Institution (Council of Ministers), not of an individual (king) or not an absolute monarchy. According to Kautilya, the Council of Ministers managed government. High officials should be capable administrators, native, born of a high family, influential, well trained in arts, possessed of foresight, wise, of strong memory, bold, eloquent, skilful, intelligent, possessed of enthusiasm, dignity, and endurance, pure in character, affable, firm in loyal devotion, endowed with excellent conduct, strength, health and bravery, free from procrastination and fickle mindedness, affectionate, and free from such qualities as excite hatred and enmity (Shamasastri, n.d). Ministers work for the King and are primarily from the Brahmin community. The ambassador, who represents the King/State, is the most important. The King should carefully choose the Amatya. Because Amatya can sometimes question the king's power, he should be selected by a trusted individual who is highly vested in Shasta (STUDOU, n.d).

Janpadh (Territory/Farmland)

The concept of Janapada encompasses both territory and population. It is where the common man lives, operates, conducts business, and runs various activities. It is essential because it

provides economic resources. In this context, the king must ensure his people are happy. The ideal territory comprises villages, each housing a minimum of 100 and a maximum of an unspecified number of houses. These villages should be situated at a distance not exceeding one or two kosha from one another, facilitating mutual assistance when needed. The demarcation of village boundaries should be marked by natural features such as rivers, mountains, or forests or by planting trees. Concerning population, Kautilya advocates for the settlement of hardworking peasants capable of bearing taxation and legal penalties.

Additionally, he recommends that the population be predominantly composed of lower-class individuals, demonstrating loyalty and dedication to the state. Kautilya advises the king to encourage migration from other regions, settling newcomers in existing or newly established villages. Administrative units are structured into four tiers, with the Grama being the smallest unit, followed by Samgrahana (a block of ten villages), Kharvatika (two hundred villages), Dronamukha (four hundred villages), and finally, eight hundred villages constituting a larger administrative unit (Kaur, 2010).

Effective governance consistently relies on quality intelligence. Enduring challenges such as division, conflict, and anarchy persist globally, prompting security-conscious administrations throughout history to recognise and address these complexities through the systematic collection, analysis, and institutionalization of political intelligence in their foreign affairs endeavours (Bozeman, 1992).

Arthashastra stands out as a seminal work providing essential insights into the production and utilization of intelligence for statecraft. Kautilya was the foremost theorist of statecraft in ancient India. Even in the case of territory, Kautilya suggests using spies to remain in touch with the public. He mentioned at least ten types of spies, i.e., secret agents for external and internal affairs. Spies could be under the following guises: Kapatika chhatra (fraudulent), Udasthita (recluse), Grihapalka (householder), Vaidehaka (merchant), Tapas (ascetic practising austerity), Satri (a classmate), Tikshna (a firebrand), Rasada (a poisoner), and a bhikshuki (mendicant women) (Shoham, D., & Liebig, M. 2016).

Durga (Fort)

Maurya Empire is known for different types of forts. Kautilya mentions different forts on hills, water, deserts, and hills for the state's security. The hill and water forts are suitable for defending the population, while the forest and desert forts can serve as headquarters of the wild region. Fort for multi-purpose, security from external attack, forest tribes, wild animals, army training, secret wars, welcome to foreign king\delegates, state functions. The security of the treasury and the army depends on these forts. The battle can also be controlled from these forts effectively. They can also serve the purpose of fighting in case of emergency. Forte is the symbol of the state's defensive and offensive capabilities. So, the king should be constructing the fort.

Kosha (Treasury)

A prosperous economy is required for the State's survival, to maintain an army and bureaucracy, to carry out effective governance, and to ensure the welfare of the people. The primary duty of a king is to keep the treasury full and prosperous. Treasury should be collected and maintained honestly and righteously. That is most likely why Ancient Indian philosophers regarded the treasury as a necessary state component. Though Kautilya desired a rich treasury, which should

have gold, silver, coins, and gems, he instructed the king to get the nation's wealth exclusively by legitimate ways, not through unjust and immoral means. Kautilya offered the following legal sources of revenue (i) several types of land taxes; (ii) duty charged on the sale of commodities in the market; (iii) import and export taxes; and (iv) miscellaneous taxes.

Bala (Military strength), police force

Military force, as prescribed by Kautilya, consists of Kshatriyas. Kautilya had built a large standing army wholly supported by the treasury. The development of a permanent army plays a vital role in centralising government machinery. When the King's army relies on subunits or guilds, he must delegate and share authority with them. A powerful standing army was a prerequisite for a strong monarchical state. The strong, disciplined, and happy army must protect and maintain the state, for this state must pay adequately and timely to the soldiers. (Boesche, 2003).

Mitra (Allies)

The critical need for an ally for a king has been acknowledged throughout history, believing that a true friend holds greater significance than wealth or territory for individuals and the state. Manu asserts that a king's success isn't solely dependent on amassing material possessions but instead on cultivating trustworthy allies with potential power. Similarly, Kautilya stressed the indispensable role of forging alliances in achieving the ultimate goal of state prosperity. A king lacking in allies is vulnerable to various threats (Rangarajan, 1987).

The Mitra, orally or by a friend, is a crucial aspect of Kautilya; it is based more on ethical considerations. Friendship has a symbolic value. They are the king's symbol of strength. However, because friends and enemies can change, there is no such thing as permanent friends or enemies. It can be difficult to tell who is a true friend and who is an enemy. Kautilya distinguishes between two types of allies: Sahaja and Kritrima. The Sahaja, or natural ally, is a person whose relationship goes back to the period of the King's father and grandfather and who lives near the land of the immediate bordering opponent. On the other hand, the Kritrima, or acquired ally, is someone whose friendship is specifically sought to protect money and life. Kautilya, on the other hand, preferred a traditional ally (Kaur, 2010).

According to Kautilya, a ruler is appointed to maintain order, ensure discipline, promote justice, create a pleasant climate for the people, and strengthen ethics, accountability, and integrity. Controlling corruption, facilitating integrated socio-economic development, promoting decentralised governance, encouraging austerity, exercising judicial power and coercive power, encouraging planned development of urban and rural areas, and adhering to the Raj Dharma precepts are all still relevant today. Stability and good governance are closely linked. Stability is when rulers are responsive, accountable, removable, and recallable. Otherwise, there will be insecurity. This is true even in today's democratic environment. However, due to the lack of democratic characters in the rulers, as Kautilya said, the countries' democracy has not become firm. Governance systems do not seem to be moving welfare toward general people.to

Kautilya develops the concept of a welfare state in his Yoga Kshema. This is discussed under the heading of “inclusive growth”. According to Kautilya, the ruler should treat his subjects as if they were his children. Similarly, the modern-day Council of Ministers is stated, and the functions and meetings of the full council meetings are discussed. The way they are done now reveals that nothing has changed since then.

Kautilya said that taxes are the main source of state management; even today, taxes are considered as the primary source of state. Kautilya mentioned that taxation that is too high should be avoided. He said tax should be levied to increase the state's finances, but tax should be taken sparingly because the people cannot afford to pay it. The state should work for the benefit of the people through taxes. The king should work for the public benefit by treating the people with his children. In the present world, many developed countries have worked for the public interest through taxes; they have worked for the construction of a welfare state. But even though there is a democratic system in countries with failed leadership like Nepal, it seems that instead of turning the country into a welfare state, it is used for private interests.

Geopolitics has emerged as the most influential issue in present global relations. Kautilya has already discussed geopolitics in his Arthashastra, the first book of geopolitics. All factors to consider are foreign policy, geopolitics, and how the king should protect his domain. The end of the major goal of the state's protection, security, and stability is still essential today.

Even in countries with democratic governance systems, such as Nepal, politicians lack morals and accountability to the people. Rulers are more concerned with their interests than with the general people's welfare. Dirty games influence politics. Elections are contested solely to demonstrate that the elected rulers capture the country's power and wealth.

While Kautilya's theory has been praised for its insights into statecraft and its enduring relevance, it has also been criticized for its authoritarian tendencies and emphasis on surveillance and control. Nevertheless, the Arthashastra remains a significant contribution to understanding ancient Eastern political thought and continues to be studied and debated by scholars.

Conclusion

Arthashastra is an essential Hindu theological doctrine. The Arthashastra is a large text about how to run a monarchical Vedic government. Regarding government and statecraft, Kautilya was a rational thinker with a realistic approach. He considered the state and the monarchy to be human creations. Furthermore, his human model was highly life-like. He advocated for a strong ruler and a centralized government. But he didn't expect superhuman abilities from a 'human' King. Kautilya advocated a strong state with a combination of seven limbs; every element is equally important for successive states. He stated that a mighty king should rule based on faith. He has discussed his economic ideas on every part of human life and society and the many facets of state governance.

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