

# Philosophy of Kauṭilya: A Critical Study of Arthashastra

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Kauṭilya is no other than the extremely clever '*Cānakya*' or '*Vishnugupta*' who was also the teacher of king Chandragupta. It was Kauṭilya who through his sheer genius and shrewdness put an end to the power of Nandas and placed Chandragupta on the throne of Magadh. Kauṭilya, being an Acharya or a revered teacher of King Chandragupta was directly involved in statecraft as the king always sought his advice. 'Kauṭilya' produced the unparalleled treatise named Arthashastra.

In Arthashastra, Kauṭilya shows a knowledge of basic polity that had no parallels in Western political thought that the ultimate objective of the king, in economic and other affairs, should be to benefit his subjects. Their happiness or welfare should be the prime objective of State policy

The authorship of Arthashastra in such a capacity assumes great importance. Much before the Europeans could give due credence to earlier literary documents such as the 'Vedas', they recognized the Arthashastra as the primary record of objective facts. Moreover, as the Arthashastra is essentially a book on statecraft, the extensive treatment given to mines, minerals and metals in it prove the concerns of Indians in this regard.

Kauṭilya's discussions of war and diplomacy and yet, his analyses are fascinating and far-reaching, such as his wish to have his king become a world conqueror, his evaluation of which kingdoms are natural allies and which are inevitable enemies, his willingness to make treaties that he knew he would break, his doctrine of silent war or a war of assassination and contrived revolt against an unsuspecting king, his approval of secret agents who killed enemy leaders and sowed discord among them, his view of women as weapons of war, his use of religion and superstition to bolster his troops and demoralize enemy soldiers, his employment of the spread of disinformation, and his humane treatment of conquered soldiers and subjects.

Kauṭilya cultivated his pen to write a scholarly treatise on the science of human existence on 'Artha' and art of Sustenance for life and prosperity of the people. Arthashastra relates to all the aspects of human life-social, economic and religious was and is to embrace the whole of human life. In Arthashastra the dominant emphasis is on monarchical centralization and it is a compendium of rules of behavior of the people in the society and in the state.

Kauṭilya cautiously made a revolution in warfare, relying not quite as much on the warrior class of Kshatriyas. India was divided into four classes or castes (varnas): Brahmins or priests; Kshatriyas or warriors and rulers; Vaishyas or farmers and traders; and Shudras or laborers. The

Dharmaśāstra, or law codes, written before Kauṭilya, urged an army of Kshatriyas and, in an emergency, also Brahmins (priests) and Vaishyas (farmers or merchants). Kauṭilya had no use for Brahmin troops—"by prostration, an enemy may win over Brahmana troops"—but he liked the energy, numbers, and strength of Shudras, agricultural laborers treated much like serfs.

Kauṭilya's praise of ordinary men from the lower two varnas was unusual in the ancient world. Kauṭilya alone holds that the army made up of vaishyas and sudras is important. Kauṭilya apparently believed that an army of kshatriyas was best; warriors were supposed to find their "highest duty and pleasure" by dying in battle. According to Kauṭilya, "there is no country without people and no kingdom without a country," meaning a prosperous-not a ravished-countryside.

Kauṭilya stated that other sects ought to be duly honored in every case love of the family; compassion, which includes respect for others, kindness even toward slaves and prisoners, "reverence toward elders, and gentleness to animals"; honesty; liberality toward relatives, friends, and neighbors; moderation and self-control. a system of social welfare, including medical centers for human beings and animals, the construction of roads for good communication, along with the digging of wells and, and so on, all policies that he thought best carried out by the centralized administration of Government.

Kauṭilya said he was promoting dharma for the common good of the world and stated plainly that he put forth the doctrine of dharma for happiness in the next world. Kauṭilya may be seen in the light of socio-political circumstances in which he lived and the Government, under which, he had to struggle for fulfilling his aspirations. The obligation of the State is to provide the social security and welfare of the people.

The traditional ends of human life, Dharma (righteous living), Artha (material well-being), Kama (enjoyment of sensual and artistic things), and Moksha (freedom from the birth-death cycle) all go together, and enjoyment of a full life was thought to be impossible without any one of the above ends. Of these, Artha occupies a key position in human life.

According to Kauṭilya, king is the fountain source of all Government's authority and powers the king, therefore, is the supreme lord authorized to wipe out, engines of destruction and entrusted with the preservation of laws and their proper administration for the promotion of common weal of Yogakshema

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Kauṭilya suggests that good governance should avoid extreme decisions and extreme actions. Soft actions (Sam, Dam) and harsh actions (Dand, Bhed) should be taken accordingly. Kauṭilya opines in a most modern way - 'Sovereignty is practicable only with the cooperation of others and all administrative measures are to be taken after proper deliberations.' The King and ministers were supposed to observe strict discipline..

King in extraordinary circumstances has right to implement law as per state need. Kauṭilyan concept of state laws, therefore, is almost, in modern sense of state laws, as advancement over previous Hindu polity.

Kauṭilya's state is based on righteousness, aims at Yogakshema, which implies the idea of welfare that is more than mere protection of person and property, but also guarantees civil, economic and legal rights to its citizens.

Kauṭilya refers that his state is a welfare state, which aimed at the exploitation of all possible resources for the benefit of the state and its citizens. Therefore, he remarks that "the Artha is the supreme constituent of Danda." Hence, the Kauṭilyan state fully regulates the life of citizen. Wealth is means to secure the happiness of the people. The state is finally engaged in the promotion, development, happiness and welfare 31 or Yogakshema of the subjects.

Kauṭilya conceives of sovereignty in the unity and organization of the state internally and externally. Kauṭilya says, "The king is the state internally and externally. Kauṭilya says, "The king is the state (Rajaram)". The king, therefore, is the real pivot of the body politic and thereby the real representative of the state and its authority. Kauṭilya's 'Dandaniti' is the real manifestation of the sovereignty that lies with the king.

Kauṭilya described of a large and complex administrative mechanism, but it is not the prototype of a triumphant civil service or of bureaucratic despotism concerned with delegated legislation and administrative adjudication, because, all the Adhyakshas (Supereintendents) are to be under the full and final control of the 'raja' or king.

In Arthaśāstra there are details of goods, industrial products, their prices, standards of weights and measures and various grades of officials to regulate the prices in the market. The relative values of the money, has also been given to facilitate the business transactions. Consumer protection is strongly emphasized in Arthaśāstra.

Kauṭilya is in favor of industrialization but stood for mixed economy along with free industrial enterprises. State controlled industries are also conceived for meeting the demands of the people and earnings wealth through international trade .

Kauṭilya refer about labour organizations, protective labour laws, quantum of wages and other necessary benefits to artisans and labourers. Kauṭilya refers about contractual basis of labour employment and the wages in that connection.

Kauṭilya realized that the role of the State was to ensure that commercial activities do not violate laws or are harmful for the consumer and if the State did not establish and enforce codes of conduct, it would, in fact, raise transaction costs. The lack of trust and guarantee of quality would diminish commerce and increase search and verification costs for agents undertaking commercial transactions.

The agricultural basis of the state has been considered the real backbone of the state economy. Kauṭilya has given a detailed theory regarding land ownership, taxation, quantum of taxes to be realised as share (Bhaga) of the state and for the management of this part of economy.

Kauṭilya single-mindedly aimed at preserving the monarch's power for its own sake, like Machiavelli's The Prince, the Arthaśāstra requires the ruler to benefit and protect his citizens, including the peasants, whom Kauṭilya correctly believes to the ultimate source of the prosperity of the kingdom. He therefore advocates what is now called "land reform."

Kauṭilya has given a more detailed laws relating to marriage, ownership of property, laws of trade and commerce etc. as civil law and a detailed lists of criminal crimes and their concerning criminal law.

Kauṭilya has given the importance of Kantakashodhana as the first protective shield of principle of state and Government. But Kauṭilya does not empower his king with unlimited powers in the matter because he prescribes in full details the quantum of punishment in each case of crime.

Kantakashodhana' the ways and means of protecting the people from anti-social elements like thieves, dacoits, murderers, deceitful artisans, traders, Government officials and other calamities with the help of Danda.

Kauṭilya lays down that the punishment is not end in itself but only a means to an end. According to him, the punishment reforms and rectifies the wrong-doers. Secondly, the punishment gives consolation to the offenders (after getting it they do not do so, in life). Thirdly, the punishment prevents and checks the commission of crime. Fourthly, the punishment deters the potential offenders from the commission of crime and deviation from the path of action. Fifthly, it purifies the offenders

It is evident that Kauṭilya covered most of the aspects of human relations and obligations under the legal system of law. Kauṭilya ultimate objective, however, was not to benefit the king but to benefit the people. He thought a strong and wealthy monarchy would be in apposition to protect the interests of the people against the invasion of other kings.

Another source of leakage in revenue or expenses is corruption. Much has been said about this in recent times. Kauṭilya insisted on character references before a person was hired. He believed in increased infrastructure in terms of roads, canals and dams, utilizing the natural resources properly. Exemption of payment of taxes was provided for a period of 3-5 years in case of new tanks, renovation and

cleaning. Also he encouraged profitable trade with foreign countries.

Kauṭilya's magnum opus Arthaśāstra was a handbook meant for Kings. Kauṭilya had the foresight to realize that the goal of public administration must be people's welfare; which meant that rural development was as important as urban, failing which people tend to migrate from rural to urban areas. He therefore placed emphasis on agriculture, animal husbandry, trade and commerce Arthaśāstra as a book on statecraft has a timeless appeal.

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