

KAUTILYA VIEWS ON GOVERNANCE AND CORRUPTION

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ABSTRACT

The presented article has two main objectives first one is to summarise the recommendations given in the Arthashastra on effective governance and secondly to discuss the Kautilian view on the theory and practice of corruption. The concept of governance cannot be completed without acknowledging the contribution of the most celebrated scholar of ancient India, Kautilya. The Kautilya's Arthashastra is the oldest and the most exhaustive treatise on the governance and administration of a state. The traditional view is that the Arthashastra was authored by Kautilya, also known as Chanakya or Vishnugupta. He destroyed the power of Nanda dynasty and place Chandragupta Mourya on the throne of Maghda. Chandragupta is known to have come to the throne 321 BC. This treatise was written I the 4th century BC. The Arthashastra was first published in 1909 by R. Sharma Shastri. Earlier it was only in extract form in the Puranas and in the works on Dharamshastra, Nitishastra and Dandaniti. Ever since its publication in 1909, the Arthshaatra has been the object of critical study by many distinguished scholar both Indians and foreigners. At present exhaustive literature is available on Kautilya's Arthashastra. Economist, political scientists, sociologists, writers on jurisprudence and ethics, psychologists and historians have given their commentaries on arts and science propounded by Kautilya in Arthshastra .

INTRODUCTION

All of us expect and desire that our ruled Government should be good and effective. For the conditions of safe and happy life, state came into existence. Good governance is required for sustainable development. It is clear to all of us that good governance matters for development and high level of corruption holds development back. Governance can be defined as the way in which public institutions perform their functions in a country and poor governance is associated with corruption, distortion of government budgets, inequitable growth, social exclusion, lack of trust in authorities. Governance and corruption are interrelated issues. Poor governance offer greater incentives and more scope for corruption and the objective of good governance cannot be achieved without controlling corruption in the country. Corruption is generally defined as the abuse of public

authority or trust for private benefits or corruption takes place when public officials break the law for their private interests. It may be in any form as bribery and extortion or may be the allocation of public resources to favored clients for political benefits.

KAUTILYA VIEWS ON GOVERNANCE

As a political thinker, he was the first to visualize the concept of a Nation for the first time in human history. During his time, India was split into various kingdoms. He brought of them all together under the one central governance and this creating nation called Aryavartha, which later became India. Kautilya identified a number of issues in his Arthashastra and governance and corruption was most important in all of them. Arthashastra is concerned with the means of fruitfully maintaining and using land. Kautilya had immense knowledge about various aspect of governance such as taxation, diplomacy, trade, business, administration etc. It is said that he had a fair knowledge of medicine and astrology as well.

Arthashastra deals with governance safeguards without presenting any overt philosophy or religion. It also advocates practical economics and real politics. Kautilya speaks of the way a state's economy is organized, how ministers should be chosen, war conducted, and how taxation should be arranged and distributed. Emphasis is placed on a network of spies and informers which function as a surveillance crops for king, focusing on external threats and internal dissidence.

He takes a holistic approach to governance and explains several areas critical to the functioning of a country in depth. The main sections deal with National security and Foreign Policy, Administration of Justice, Policies related to economic development, Taxation, Labor Management, and Financial Management. To him attainment of good governance entail that the objectives of the state are fulfilled and realized. This is possible through properly organized and guided administration. He suggests that good governance should avoid extreme decisions and actions. Decisions should be taken according to the situation.

Picking on Chanakya's four-pronged approach to public finance and state planning, which was actually economics, monetarism and much more, based on "dharma, artha, kama and moksha," the experts agreed that understanding human welfare was the cornerstone of Arthashastra, said to be the oldest and most exhaustive treatise on governance and administration of state in the world, which set forth theories of state craft and monetarism and also a code of civil and criminal law still relevant today.

The Arthashastra equates political governance with economic governance. The end is economic governance while political governance is the means. But as economic objectives are not realized in the absence of political ones, then political governance becomes an end and economic governance the means. 'The end justifies the means', this is supposed to be the basis of Kautilyan philosophy. Political power and material wealth according to Kautilya are the means and ends of governance. And good governance - political or economic - depends upon justifying the ends and means as the socio, economic and political conditions.

According to Kautilya, to ensure good governance there must be a properly guided public administration, where the ruler should surrender his likes and dislikes in the interest of his subjects, and the personnel running the Government should be responsive and responsible. Kautilya further emphasized that for citizen friendly good governance there should be uniformity in the administrative practices as well as competent ministers and officials possessing qualities of leadership, accountability, intellect, energy, good moral conduct, and physical fitness, capable of taking prompt decision. According to Kaufmann and Kraay,¹ the concept of Governance is not new. Kautilya presented key pillars of the art of governance emphasizing justice, ethics and anti autocratic tendencies. He further detailed the duty of the king to protect the wealth of the state and its subjects, to enhance, maintain, and it does also safeguard such wealth as well as the interests of the subjects."

A ruler who administers justice on the basis of four principles: righteousness, evidence, history of the case, and the prevalent law, shall conquer the earth. Kautilya implicitly suggests a linear income tax. He emphasizes fairness, stability of tax structure, fiscal federalism, avoidance of heavy taxation, ensuring of tax compliance and subsidies to encourage capital formation. He advocated limiting the taxation power of the State, having low rates of taxation, maintaining a gradual increase in taxation and most importantly devising a tax structure that ensured compliance many postulates of Kautilya's philosophy of political economy are applicable to contemporary times. Ideally, the government should collect taxes like a honeybee that sucks just the right amount of honey from the flower so that both can survive. Kautilya's scheme of taxation involved the elements of sacrifice by the taxpayer, direct benefit to the taxpayers, redistribution of income (the state took care of the poor), and tax incentives for desired investments.

Kautilya did not view law to be an expression of the free will of the people. Thus sovereignty - the authority to make laws, did not vest with citizens. Laws were derived from four sources - dharma (scared law), vyavahara (evidence), charita (history and custom), and rajasasana (edicts of the King).

In case of conflict amongst the various laws, dharma was supreme. The ordering of the other laws was case specific

Kautilya had visualized the necessity of state provision of public goods which strengthened trade and commerce. The bureaucracy was involved in the provision of three of such goods - the 'quality control machinery', the system of currency, and the system of 'weights and measures'. Quality control was a revolutionary concept for that era.

Bureaucrats received a fixed pay and were also eligible for state subsidized housing. This is an example of Kautilya's deep understanding of statecraft as officials were expected to compensate themselves by retaining a part of revenue extracted from the people.

Kautilya's philosophy is based on the principles of "sam, dam, dand, bhed" (persuasion, temptation, punishment, and division) as various, different, and sequential means to achieve an end. Kautilya believed that for the prosperity of a state , the state must be devoid of internal conflicts the king should be in the control of the state. To maintain this internal peace he believed in a realistic rule of law

Kautilya also wrote on six types of foreign policy-treaty (sandhi), war (vigraha), marching against the enemy (yana), neutrality (asana), seeking protection from a powerful king (samsraya), and dual policy (dvaidhibhava). The rules concerning these are:

- He who is losing strength in comparison to the other shall make peace,
- He who is gaining strength shall make war,
- He who think neither he nor not the enemy can win shall be nautral,
- He who has an excess of advantage shall march,
- He who is wanting in strength shell seek protection,
- He who undertakes work requiring assistance shall adopt a dual policy.

Kautilya said that good governance and stability go hand in hand. According to him, there is stability if rulers are responsive, responsible, accountable, removable and recallable, otherwise there would be instability. For good governance, all administrators, including the King, were considered servants of the people. They were paid for the services rendered and not for their ownership of anything.

KAUTILYA VIEWS ON CORRUPTION

He seriously considered the problem of corruption. Corruption can be difficult to avoid as Kautilya said that it is impossible to tell that, "just as fish moving under water can not be possibly be found either as drinking or not drinking water". Kautilya lists forty kinds of misappropriation of funds by the bureaucrats. The informant giving information on corruption was entitled one sixth of the amount as a reward. There is also a fascinating description of how the departmental supervisors should check whether expenditures have been incurred for the desired end - including the heads (labor, capital and material) of the expenditure.

Kautilya admitted that some degree of corruption would always exist, and cannot be scrutinized perfectly, 'It is possible to mark the movements of birds flying high up in the sky; but not so is it possible to ascertain the movement of government servants of hidden purpose.' He therefore recommends strictest punishment, both material and corporal, as a disincentive to cheat.

In the Arthashastra, stress has been given both on fraud prevention as well as fraud detection. Kautilya had listed several ways by which public funds are misappropriated. He analysed this human behavior, in the following manner: "just as it is impossible not to taste the honey or the poison that find itself at the tip of the tongue, so it is impossible for a government servant not to eat up, at least, a bit of the king 's revenue.

Kautilya was well-versed with the characteristics of bureaucrats and statesmen and laid down rules to prevent misuse of power. He emphasized the importance of accounting methods in economic enterprises to properly measure economic performance. He explained that no amount of rules and regulations or auditing can prevent unethical behavior.

FINAL WORDS

The deeper study of Arthashastra shows that law is scattered throughout the work. It advise for secrete services for criminal investigation, to watch over State servants or public and control of corruption are relevant now. The vision of Kautilya about the governance is amazing. He has tries all the possible medicines to overcome the disease of corruption. His ultimate aim was to give perfect governance where people will be happy and prosperous. He declared that this is the prime duty of the ruler. Thus, it becomes prime duty of the rulers of the nation that they must work for good Governance and should make all possible efforts honestly, to control the corruption. Today there is a need for such a dedicated minister and a ruler for the development of the nation.

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