

THE CONCEPT OF GOOD GOVERNANCE IN KAUTILYA'S ARTHASHASTRA

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Abstract:

In recent years, a good number of works has been done on the issues of good governance. Good governance is a term has become an agenda of almost all development institutions. Good governance has different connotations to different organizations. But Kautilya's Arthashastra is an epochal treatise dealing with the art of government, its functionality, the duties and responsibilities of the king and his ministers and above all the concerns of his subjects. The paper aims to explore the various aspects of good governance reflected in Kautilya's Arthashastra.

Introduction

Good governance refers to a system in which a government not only fulfils all the common aspirations of its citizens but also promotes the well-being of the entire society. In the words of Kautilya, "In the happiness of the subjects lies the happiness of the king and in what is beneficial to the subjects his own benefit. What is dear to the king is not beneficial to him, but what is dear to the subjects is beneficial to him".¹ It is the primary concerns of the citizens of any society that the government must be good and effective. Kautilya's Arthashastra is one of the most comprehensive treatises ever produced on state power, its acquisition, exercise and disruption.² Several characters of the Arthashastra have particularly become relevant to the present context. Amitav Acharya notes that we are yet to see such grand theorising from Sumerian, Egyptian, Chinese or Indian pasts, stuck as we are with the idea of Kautilya being an Indian Machiavelli, rather than Machiavelli being a Euro-Mediterranean Kautilya.³ Kautilya contended that establishment of good institutions was indispensable for the attainment of prosperity since they generated conditions favourable to the full exploitation of opportunities but good governance was essential for providing opportunities. He believed that there is an inseparable link between good governance and accumulation of knowledge. In recent years, a considerable amount of intellectual effort has been devoted to study the nature of relationship between institutions, good governance and economic growth.⁴ In an age of monarch and legitimised inscriptive inequality, Kautilya alone called the king a servant of the State who would harbour "no personal likes"; it would be rather the likes of the servants that would be followed by him."⁵ Thus, good governance is simply something that the government can obtain by any means. Good governance hinges on a wide range of governmental actions and the involvement of a large number of citizens and organizations.

Objective of the Study

Kautilya put emphasis on the notion that institutions are a prerequisite to economic growth, good governance; knowledge, ethical conduct and economic growth are interdependent. Hence the basic objective of the study is to highlight the different parameters of good governance with a special focus on the duties of the king and his functionaries to manage the administration and promote rational will and moral power of the people.

Review of Literature

L.N. Rangarajan(1992)- The Arthashastra is an extraordinary detailed manual on Statecraft and the Science of Living by one of classical India's greatest minds, Kautilya.

S. D.Chamola(2007)- KautilyaArthshastra and the Science of Management: Relevance for the Contemporary Society contains some universal truths which transcend the boundaries of time and space and identifies solutions to the issues being faced by the economics today and to examine the Kautilian Model in the context of contemporary societies.

Roger Boesche(2002)- The first great political realist: Kautilya and his Arthashastra is a succinct and penetrating analysis of one of the ancient world's foremost political realists and draws out the essential realist arguments for modern political analysis.

Pradeep K Gautam(2013)- Relevance of Kautilya'sArthasastra highlights his concepts to political theory and other fields of enquiry, such as intelligence, internal security, war, foreign policy, sociology, political psychology, law, accounting and management.

VinayVittal(2011)- Kautilya'sArthashastra: A Timeless Grand Strategy provides an insight into the ancient Indian anthology of political wisdom, theory, and the art of statecraft and a strategic treatise that constitute a collection of timeless concepts

M.V. Krishna Rao(1958)- Studies in Kautilya is an objective and thorough examination of Kautilya'sArthasastra from the standpoint of his own age and society.

Thomas R. Trautmann(1971)-Kautilya and the Arthasastra-A Statistical Investigation of the Authorship and the Evolution of the Text discusses about statecraft, economic policy and military strategy.

Research Methodology

This conceptual paper adapts the methodology for the exploration, understanding and interpretation of ancient textsand content analysis on various sources of information obtained from Kautilya's Arthashastra to examine the criterion in good governance.

Kautilya's concept of Good Governance

According to Kautilya, good governance has three basic objectives: (a) The king should ensure provision of national security and public infrastructure, such as roads to facilitate and promote commerce The king should formulate efficient policies and their effective implementation, removal of all obstructions to economic growth and encourage capital formation,

(C) The king should ensure a fair, caring and clean administration.

Good governance refers to a political system in which the king exercises his power in utilizing the economic and social resources for the welfare of his subjects.Arthashastra states: "In the happiness of his subject lies his happiness; in their welfare his welfare; whatever pleases himself he shall not consider as good, but whatever makes his subjects happy, he shall consider good"⁶The work of government is threefold- that which the king sees with his own eyes, that which he knows of indirectly through reports made to him and that which he infers about work not done by knowing about work that has been done.A King is bound to ensure that the common good (dharma) is preserved.⁷Thus, good governance is a framework for sustainable human development.

The main duty of the King

Kautilya believed that the king should be well educated and disciplined in sciences, committed to good governance of his subjects and have the intention to work for the welfare of the people alike. According to Kautilya, King's maintenance of dharma in concrete terms "signified nothing but the defence of the social order based on family, property and caste."⁸ The king should have the ability to persuade and motivate his ministers and to act as a leader for the achievement of collectively agreed upon goals in specific time.

The objective of good governance is that the king should discharge his duties to cater to the interests and needs of his subjects. When the king possesses good qualities then minister and others dependent upon him for their success and failure follow his behavior, for the king stands at their apex.⁹ The king should shoulder the responsibility of children, old, childless women, diseased persons and above-all infirm who did not have any natural guardian to protect them. In Arthashastra alone describes the king a servant of the state who would harbour no personal likes and dislikes; it would be rather the likes and dislikes of the servants that would be followed by him.¹⁰

Appointment of Qualified Ministers

The ministers were appointed by the king on the basis of their quality and ability laid down for different posts. Besides, it is the king's prerogative to investigate all the qualities of the persons who were recruited for different posts. Hence, the king himself does all the important appointments on the basis of intelligence and power of experience and also being suitable for the posts. Arthashastra, thus, states that competent and qualified ministers along with highly virtuous and administratively qualified king can only provide good governance to the state. Mehta finds Arthashastra to be more a treatise on administration than on politics and statecraft.¹¹ Thus, in appointing the qualified and adroit ministers Kautilya wanted to establish that there was the sense of good governance at every step of administration. **Kautilya proposed an ethical and sovereign state**

Kautilya suggested that the king should be endowed with amicable qualities and possessed of all the elements of sovereignty. According to Kautilya, if one follow the principles reflected in Arthashastra, one must not only preserve dharma (spiritual good), artha (material well-being) and kama (aesthetic pleasure), but also destroy unrighteousness, material loss and hatred. Both Machiavelli and Kautilya have espoused the distinction between morality of the ruler and the ruled and both of them have advised the ruler to rise above the ordinary canons of morality. According to Dunning Aristotle, "never flatly proclaimed the independence of political from moral doctrine" and in his system it was rather "an incident than an essential."¹² Kautilya believed that a king should have the obligations to uphold custom and sacred law and to fulfil the requirements of rajadharma. It is the duty of the king to protect his people justly and maintain the sovereignty of the state. Hobbes thought that the maintenance of an absolute sovereign was the necessary conditions for preserving peace and inculcating moral virtues among men and according to him it was also the only guarantee against the recurrence of the anarchic situation as that of the state of nature when there would be no morality, no equity and no justice.¹³

Welfare nature of the state

Kautilya vouched for a welfare state where the prosperity and welfare of the people were given optimal priority. He was not only concerned about the material welfare of the people but also their moral welfare. "In the happiness of his subjects lies his happiness; in their welfare his welfare, whatever pleases him he shall not consider as good, but whatever makes his subject happy, he shall consider good."¹⁴ Kautilya maintained that a welfare state was the supreme concern of the ruler. He was not only interested in the material welfare of the people but also in their moral welfare. Arthashastra gives to the welfare of the citizens, the first place in all

considerations of policy; the common good of the people and their sustained happiness are considered as main ends for the service of which Kautilya called out an elaborate administrative system.¹⁵ The ideal of his welfare-centric state also had the provisions for the advancement of vulnerable and weaker sections of the society

Adaptation of preventive measure

The basic principles of Kautilya's good governance were supervision and vigilance. He also considered the carrying out of preventive and punitive measures to punish corrupt officials as indicator good governance. Kautilya laid down strict rules of conduct and control. He opined that a well-considered and just punishment makes the people devoted to righteousness, wealth and enjoyment. It has often been proposed, taking clue from his theory of the Origin of State, that Kautilya considered the legally established coercive power of the king to be the only alternative to the anarchic situation as it prevailed earlier to the establishment of a political order.¹⁶ According to Kautilya, punishment if exercised impartially in proportion to the guilt is bound to protect the world and the next. The king should be alert that the laws breakers be punished. Dandaniti similar to our modern notion of politics as this is necessary for the security and wellbeing of that too much or too little punishment defeats imposes severe punishment exasperates people is defeated. Hence danda or punishment should proportion to the gravity of the offence.¹⁷

Political stability and sagacity of the king

Kautilya's Arthashastra holds a unique position among the available texts of this genre and in Hindu literature on polity. Kautilya's views on politics were largely based on secular politics. He believes that politics must be considered as an independence science. An Indian scholar observes: "of all the schools of ancient Indian political thought the most note-worthy is that of Kautilya".¹⁸ According to Kautilya, knowledge and intelligence was the most important factors in maintaining the kingdom. The pre-eminence which Kautilya occupies among the ancient Indian political thinkers is also due to his views on politics and ethics. Based on *anvikshaki*, i.e., reason and logic and past experience, his analysis of the relationship of politics and ethics may be said to reflect the most enlightened view-point of one of the most distinguished political thinkers of ancient India.¹⁹ Artha is an imposing element in this world and politics is also related to it. This idea is amply similar to materialist philosophy of Marx, according to which foregoes the political power. Kautilya held out the contention that political stability was a prerequisite for the growth in knowledge and knowledge was necessary for economic growth and strengthening national security and morality. His Arthashastra is "truly an anthology of political wisdom and theory and art of statecraft, scattered in pre-Kautilyan writings, streamlined and re-interpreted by Kautilya in his attempt to construct a separate and distinct science of statecraft."²⁰ Thus Kautilya declared that politics was the supreme art and supreme science. The prosperity and utility of all sciences hinged on the well-being politics.

Kautilya's view on economic growth

Kautilya opined that wealth and wealth alone is important, so far as charity and desire depend upon wealth for their realisation. If the people are prosperous, even a leaderless state can be governed. Prosperity depends on the intellect. Intellect depends on education.²¹ Kautilya's view is that good government promoted economic growth which, in turn, strengthened national security, ethical conduct, and helped in financing public infrastructure through higher tax revenues. Kautilya's views on economy highlight the modern day's core concepts of economics of demand and supply and its combined effect on determination of price. without taking due consideration of demand and supply, price cannot be determined on an equal footing which in turn maintain equally the welfare of consumers and producers. He strongly believed that a king could win public support only

by raising people's standard of living. He devised a comprehensive package of economic policies to stimulate economic growth.

Kautilya noted, "Hence the king shall be ever active in the management of the economy. The root of wealth is economic activity and lack of it brings material distress. In the absence of fruitful economic activity, both current prosperity and future growth are in danger of destruction. A king can achieve the desired objectives and abundance of riches by undertaking productive economic activity".²² Kautilya envisaged that foreign trade could increase the economic prosperity of the trading countries. Kautilya believed that the aim of economic knowledge was to "create and preserve" artha (material well-being). According to

Alfred Marshall, such a role to economic knowledge gave to economics its modern aim of seeking after such knowledge as may help to raise quality of human life.²³ Thus, Kautilya applied his economic philosophy not only for upholding the economic status of the state, but also for managing state activities.

Conclusion

Kautilya reiterated that government could generate good institutions and could stipulate good governance but it could not instil desire among the people to take advantage of the existing opportunities. He considered that good policies were designed to create opportunities and fair institutions were needed to utilize those opportunities. However, elements of good governance are not solely dependent on the function of the government itself, but it equally hinges on the mutual cooperation, understanding and involvement of the majority of the citizens and organisations.

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