

# Political Philosophy of Kautilya in Arthashastra: Perspectives and Continuations

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## ABSTRACT

*Kautilya was the minister of Chandragupta Maurya during 317-293 BC. He is known for his classical work Arthashastra which has explained his views on state and statecraft in details. This book is considered as the master piece of oriental political philosophy which dealt with State, War, Social structure, Diplomacy and Ethics. The Arthashastra tradition is a unique contribution of India to the domain of world political thoughts because it has developed a political philosophy which was rationalistic in essence and utilitarian in character.*

*In the present paper an attempt has been made to study some of the essential & important political philosophy of the Kautilya where we would try to see its continuations and appropriations in the later political environments.*

## 1. The Development of Idea

As per the translation and interpretation of R. Shamasastri the compilation of Arthashastra is divided into 15 books which are covering all the major portions of statecraft theories to the diplomacy and war. Here political thought is primarily concerned with the state and its functions. There are historical records to tell us how and when man originally came to live under state conditions a political system. In the absence of historical evidence, political thinkers have, however, made various suggestions to explain how state originated. There are differences of opinion among various political thinkers regarding the meaning, origin, nature, functions, objectives and elements of the state. The word 'state' and its cognates in other European languages - stato in Italian; etat in French; staat in German and Estado Spanish and Portuguese. The word state derives from the Latin Status, literally "standing" meaning "condition" or "status". The idea of the state as an organized society goes back to the Greek city-states. Aristotle described it as the natural growth of family and village. The theory is prior in nature, family being older in time. The Romans borrowed the idea of state from the Greeks but applied it a bigger geographic unit. The Roman term Status Rei Publicae means the state of public concern. In its modern sense, the term was first used by Machiavelli during the 16th century general term for a body politic.

It was for the first time, in ancient India, that the Arthashastra of Kautilya definition of the state. According to him 'no territory deserves the name of unless it is full of people and controlled by an agglomeration of power with absolute over the territory'. Kautilya's Arthashastra is not a theoretical treatise on political science. It does concern itself with the question of the origin of the state. The entire teaching of is addressed to the king, the single ruler.

## 2. The Saptanga theory of state

Kautilya used the word Rajya which corresponds to the English word 'state'. The state is defined for the first time in the Arthashastra of Kautilya as consisting of seven elements, a definition which becomes an axiom in the later sources. The state as seven-limbed is contemplated by the ancient Indian thinkers like in the Manusmriti, Manu talked about seven basic

nature of the state like king, the ministers, the capital, the realm, the treasures, the army and the ally. In Arthashastra, Kautilya put the same in different order like Swami, the Amatyas, the Janapadas, the Kosha, the Danda, the Mitra and the Shatru. Here the basic change which occurs in the definition of Kautilya's state is that 'the king and his kingdom are the primary elements of the state because all other elements revolves around these two elements.

Within the Arthashastra there is complete explanation about the definitions of the elements of the state like Swami is the king of the state where he is the prime symbol of all the state activities and representations within and outside the state territories. Whereas Amatya's are the council of ministers as councillors or advisors, colleagues and guides. According to Kautilya the state affairs cannot be conducted without the assistance of competent councillors. The third element, Janapada which is state territory, the territory and population being the pre-requisite conditions for the creation of the state were always kept in view by the ancient Indian scholars. The territory should consist of villages with minimum 100 and maximum 500 houses.

The fourth element of the state is Durga, which means the fortress and resembles pura, according to Kautilya forts should be erected at the boundaries of the Janpadas under the guidance of Antapal for providing security the people. Kautilya has referred four types of Durga:-

1. Audaka Durga which is surrounded by water
2. Parvata Durga which is surrounded by mountains
3. Dhanvana Durga which is surrounded by deserts
4. Vana Durga which is surrounded by forest

Kosha is the fifth element of the state which is state treasure accumulated by righteous and legitimate means filled with gold, silver, precious jewels and gems and the treasury should be able to stand with the necessary expenditure during the time of adversary like war and natural calamity.

Within the Saptang philosophy of state as per the Idea of Kautilya, Danda is the sixth and most important element of the

state which is executed by the power of the king. Danda is Bala or Army, it is necessary not only for defence against aggression by other state instead it is equally needed for carrying the fight into enemy's camp which was often unavoidable as a defence strategy in those days.

Mitra is the seventh and paramount necessity of an ally for state. Kautilya has guided the king to make friends because without friends king may easily fall prey to enemies attack. He has also described three kinds of friends to the king or state.

1. Sahaja Mitra which means natural ally
2. Krtrima Mitra which means friends by acquired virtue
3. Prakrata Mitra which means neighbouring kings

Saptanga theory of state is an ancient system of state articulated by Kautilya but it is also relevant in present time as well because the nature of state has not been change at the basic levels.

### 3. Philosophy of War

Kautilya believes that war is an inseparable part of state system where he encouraged war for preserving and extending the power of the state. He propound the Idea that the execution of power and happiness in a state which makes a king superior. We can also apply the same Idea where modern political philosopher Weber considers that there is no morality in international politics which means the state should be always engage himself in the war.

While when we see the Kautilya's approach on war it seems that he is not saying the all time engagement of the state into war but war is natural for the state. Kautilya and Machiavelli both are instead giving same reasons about the war where they advocate the king to closely involve in the art of war. According to Kautilya there is three kinds of war and a king should always be prepared for them as well.

1. Open war
2. Concealed war
3. Silent war

He has described all of them in details like open war is the fought between the two states. It has participations of army and sometimes ally also be the part of the states. It is very much

visible and it leads to the geo-political change as the consequence of the war.

The second is the concealed war, which is similar to guerrilla war where the strategy, location and ally all are not decided or not open instead it is sometimes an Individual targeted attempt to slain the ally of the keys of the king.

The third category of war as per Kautilya is most important, which is a kind of silent war which is fought on continue basis inside the kingdom so that the power of the king does not get diluted. In his opinion open warfare in any form was righteous. In open warfare he believed that the state becomes one over the idea of moral and no moral can stop the state from fighting the open war.

If we closely observe the prepositions and categorisations of Kautilyas thought on war we would find that it is still relevant in modern states as well because his solid philosophical base is and analysis is still there and it is because the nature of the state haven't change much.

### 4. Conclusion

It is always important to revisit Indian political philosopher Kautilya to see and understand the earliest seeds of the ideas of state and statecraft in ancient Indian society and it is indeed necessary for our society to know that how the Ideas of state, war & justice gradually evolved and extended. When we see the modern political philosophers particularly the western ideas in-relation to the modern world politics and political crisis it appears that the Indian Arthashastra can be used as the reference book for the solutions and understanding of the current political situations as well. Kautilyas diplomacy is always been consider in the oriental political scenarios and one thing we all consider that the nature of the state is the highest expansion of the human nature, since the internal human nature haven't change much in these thousands of years when the Arthashstra was written and that is because the assumptions and speculation of Kautilyas are still relevant for us.

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