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## State and Governance in Kautilya's Arthaśāstra: A Non-Western Philosophical Perspective

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### Abstract

Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra*, written in the fourth century BCE, is considered one of the most significant texts in the history of Indian civilisation. His book covers almost every aspect of administration in a monarchical state. According to Kautilya's worldview, the ultimate purpose of every individual is the attainment of dharma (duty). Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* provides insight into the ancient Indian corpus of political knowledge, including concepts of the state and statecraft. It is one of the most important political and strategic works, containing a set of ideas that will never go out of style. Such methods and concepts are significant, and they continue to be relevant in today's time too. Several ideas from Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* can be employed advantageously to gain long-term benefits. His *Arthaśāstra* also address some of the major problems that many states are currently facing. Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* offers advice to a wise king on how to advance the state's national interests, which mainly centered on matters of glory, prosperity, and security. Three main goals of Kautilya are interwoven throughout the *Arthaśāstra*. The first goal among the three is good governance which leads to good economy and subsequently supports the growth of overall territory. According to Kautilya, the goal of diplomacy is basically to consolidate and conquer the world.

The objective of the Kautilya's diplomatic policy is to strengthen the state while weakening the opposition. To assist the leader in managing the transition from decline to stability and eventually to development or advancement, six fold foreign policy measures (*sādgunya niti*) are suggested by Kautilya. The appropriate strategy depends on the balance of power, the strategic environment, and the dynamics of the political situation. Consequently, it has been concluded that the *Arthaśāstra* provides an original and comprehensive definition of political realism. According to Kautilya, war is the practical application of a state's foreign policy. He advises the ruler on how to use national power to secure a lasting position in the world order, offering a detailed plan for achieving this goal.

**Keywords:** Balance of power, diplomacy, good governance, national interest, political realism

### Introduction

The *Arthaśāstra* is a masterpiece of Kautilya, who was one of India's greatest statesmen and philosopher. One of the eternal classics about arts of war and politics, the *Arthaśāstra* was written in the late fourth century BCE. When the Gupta dynasty collapsed in around 550 CE, the book disappeared and it again surfaced in 1904 only, more than 1400 years later. The first English translation, which had been completed in 1909 than it was followed by translations into German, Russian, and other languages in 1915 and the authorship of this book is also a point of contention.

Kautilya is also known as *Chanakya*, and *Vishnu Gupta* is the other name that has been used to refer to him. The majority of academicians believe that Kautilya (or *Chanakya*) wrote *Arthaśāstra* and that it was written during the time of Chandragupta Maurya, the first Mauryan king (321-297 BCE). There was a significant time when Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* reappeared. Although he was highly renowned for being a kingmaker, his precise thought had been missing. It was a revelation when *Arthaśāstra* was published at the beginning of the 20th century. It immediately drew analogies to some of the most notorious political works of the West due to its unrelenting teachings/ideas in the ambit of state making in an era of multi-polar rivalry. Max Weber directly stated that truly radical Machiavelli is expressed in the *Arthaśāstra* and it was written at the time when Christ was not even born. Kautilya was referred to as "the first major political realist of the World" by Dr Roger Boesche. Heinrich Zimmer labelled *Arthaśāstra* as the 'first comprehensive compilation of the timeless laws of politics, commerce, diplomacy, and war' in an effort to put it along with

the spectrum of human socio-political philosophy. The precision of its logic, the well-planned responsibilities and actions for the wise ruler are the things that distinguish *Arthaśāstra* from other texts. Also, it has been highlighted that *Arthaśāstra* may be the first important work on the nature of social and political economics, often known as macroeconomics, ever written. The *Arthaśāstra* is a book with enormous historical relevance since it sheds light on the clarity of thinking of one of the greatest political philosophers in the history of Indian civilisation. It might also prove to be a helpful resource for discussions of the current multi-state diplomatic situation. *Arthaśāstra* offers a practical guide on how to conquer the territory, how to maintain the boundaries of acquired territory or how to preserve it once conquered. The *Arthaśāstra* can be considered as a science and an art of statecraft of politics and administration to the extent that the practitioner must rely on wisdom and experience, guided by the broad principles and prescriptions offered by Kautilya. In this sense, the *Arthaśāstra* gives governments a plan on how to defend their own territory, seize other's territory. It includes both the state's domestic and foreign policies.

It is quite challenging to trace the beginnings of political thought. The Greek authors Plato and Aristotle devised it in the Western world. But prior to this, some sort of political thinking prevailed. In addition to these Greek authors, politics and rule also emerged in India during the ancient period. However, some thinkers in the West went on to claim, for a very long time, that India had made no contributions to political thought. Even the Hindu political art was not ready to be accepted as knowledge by these Western thinkers. They saw it as being a component of Hindu philosophy. Foster Barker and George Sabine assert that only Greek thought was the origin of political thought. Although the idea that political thought began rationally by Greek philosophers is partially true, this does not mean that political thought did not exist prior to them. In fact, India had political structures for millennia before the Greeks arrived. Several political theories and institutions are discussed in the writings of early Indian political theorists. People in ancient India emphasised on elevating political art along with religion, philosophy, and spiritualism. As the Aryans invaded India, they produced the *Vedas*. These *Vedas* contain concepts related to politics and political life. *Samthias*, *Sutras*, *Brahmanas*, and *Upanishads* were produced after the *Vedas*. These Epics described the political systems in detail. Great Epics including the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, Buddha Epic, and Jaina Epic were written during the Vedic period. These Epics occasionally make references to political thought. After these Epics, various religious and economic writings were produced. There are a few chapters in these works that deal with politics. We can include Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra*, which was written at the same time as Plato and Aristotle, in this group. The *Arthaśāstra* of Kautilya is a priceless contribution to Indian political thought. Indian history claims that political thought dates back to 2500 years old. This time period extends from the Vedic era to the 10th or 11th century.

The Indian thinkers, in the perspective of Western thinkers, contributed nothing to political thought. They believed that Plato and Aristotle were the sole initiators of political theory. The *Arthaśāstra*, a work of Kautilya, was unearthed in 1905 by Dr R. Shamasastri, demonstrating the existence

of political thought in ancient India. The history of brilliant minds can be found in the history of ancient political thought. They created political institutions, political arts, and political concepts. The ethical and political principles have been also elaborated by Kautilya.

In Ancient India, there are two categories of literary sources that discuss political issues and challenges. Although the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, and philosophical system contributed some important political insights, their primary focus is on theology, religion, and philosophy. Yet, the Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* and the *dharmaśāstra* literature cover political issues and philosophies of governance more thoroughly. The Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* discusses the concerns related to the state and government, along with possible solutions. The *Arthaśāstra* and the *Santiprava* are the only two monumental political works from ancient Indian thought. The *Arthaśāstra* tradition, which offered the Indian people a progressive alternative in the sixth century BCE, represents India's unique contribution to political theory and created a political ideology that, was fundamentally utilitarian and rationalistic.

### **Importance of Studying Non-Western Perspectives on the Statecraft**

The study of Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* is valuable because of its non-Western philosophical underpinnings on state and statecraft. Written in the 3rd century BCE, it is an essential work on political theory that provides insights into the political and social systems of that time. The text remains relevant in present day's politics, particularly in developing countries, as its emphasis on economic development, social welfare, and foreign policy is still applicable. By offering a non-Western perspective on political thought and governance, the *Arthaśāstra* broadens the discussion on political philosophy and showcases the diversity of approaches to political thought. Furthermore, it has influenced other cultures, particularly in Southeast Asia, making it essential to analyse its philosophical underpinnings to understand the spread of Indian ideas and culture beyond its borders. In other words, studying Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* is critical because it offers insights into ancient India's political systems, remains relevant in contemporary politics, provides a non-Western perspective on political theory, and has influenced other cultures.

### **Historical Context and Authorship**

Many theoretical and archival studies have been done on Kautilya's political thought and about his idea of the state. Several academicians have studied statecraft, published books and papers which results in enhancing this field of study. '*State and Government in Ancient India*' by A. S. Alteaker, published in 1958, analyses different Vedic and Post-Vedic writings, focusing on the *Arthaśāstra* in light of the *Saptanga* theory, which addresses seven elements of sovereignty. According to him, the *de jure* states of the contemporary times, which are attained by recognition from other states, can be equated with the mention of allies as an element. He examines the hierarchies of political institutions as well as the contractual foundation of the state. '*Kingship and Community in Early India*', by Charles Drekmeier, published in 1962, analyses the concepts of state, kingship, and the viability of the welfare state as they are described in Kautilya's treatise. He has also dealt with the economic ramifications of state welfare policies. He also explores the

intellectual underpinnings of interstate relations in many ancient Hindu treatises.

'*The Kautilya Arthashastra*' by R. P. Kangle, published in 1963, is the oldest and most detailed treatise on state's administration and governance. He points out that although Kautilya's term "*raja rajyam*" doesn't convey the same meaning as the French concept, it does highlight the importance of the spatial arrangement within the state system. Kangle assesses the seven-element theory of sovereignty. Additionally, he recognises the significance of *dharma* in the hierarchy of legal and judicial systems. He assesses the concept of the council of state as the origin of the six-fold foreign policy.

The author of '*The Ideas of Sovereignty and State in India Political Thought*' (1963), K. M. Panikar examined Kautilya's view of the monarchy. Additionally, he makes a distinction between *Dvairajya* (rule of two) and *Vairajya* (rule by foreign ruler). He examines theories about the state's contractual foundations as well. He thoroughly examines the Kautilyan theory of the kingship's spatial progression in relation to the state system and claims that Kautilya was in favor of the state's organic development.

'*The Arthashastra*', written by R. Shamasatry in 1967, is based on the well-known writings of Kautilya, an ancient philosopher sometimes referred to as the Aristotle and Machiavelli of India. This book outlines four successful solutions for today's planning, productivity, conflict management, security, stability, and interpersonal relationships.

According to Benny Prasad's '*Theory of Government in Ancient India*' (1968), Kautilya's famous treatise incorporates a philosophy of government that seems to be distinct from the situation that prevailed at the time under Mauryan rule. His investigation reveals a synthesis of concepts from Vedic and Post-Vedic literatures regarding the political and economic underpinnings of the ancient Indian administrative structure. Beni Prasad discusses the *Saptanga* theory and asserts that it is a contract between the people and the king that gives rise to the state.

In 1995, '*Kautilya's Political Theory: Yogakshema, the Concept of Welfare State*', Ritu Kohli expressed the opinion that Kautilya had an impact on nearly every facet of human life, including the political, social, and cultural spheres. According to Kautilya, the king (*swami*) serves as the center of the state, around which all other components revolve. The *swami* is in-charge of the government. According to him, the king has a duty to exercise leadership in ensuring the welfare of society.

'*The Kautilya Arthashastra Revisited*' (2000) by S. N. Mital, meticulously disproves the claims made by numerous scholars who claim that the Kautilya's *Arthashastra* text was not produced by a single author and that its composition cannot be dated to a specific century. The book was primarily produced as a response to Thomas R. Trautmann's '*Kautilya and the Arthashastra*', in which he attempted to prove, using statistics that the *Arthashastra* was a collection of writings by three or four authors that Kautilya had edited. The author makes an effort to disprove Trautmann's theory by using his own statistics collection. According to Mital, Kautilya wrote the *Arthashastra* around the fourth century BCE, as is often believed. In his book '*Contemporary Politics and Chanakya*' (2012), D. S. Yadav describes Kautilya as one of the greatest personalities of wisdom and knowledge in Indian history.

As the "Pioneer Economist of India", Kautilya was a specialist on trade, welfare economics, and other topics. He has been regarded as the Hindu Machiavelli in the West. According to Kautilya, an active foreign policy and the six approaches of foreign policy are necessary for a state's welfare. He has gone into great depth to explain the *Saptanga* theory of state, which is a plan for categorising the many parts of the kingdom.

### **Kautilya's Concept of State**

The state and its affairs are fundamental to Indian political thinking. There are no historical documents demonstrating how and when men initially began to live in states with political systems. In the absence of historical evidence, political thinkers and authors have presented numerous interpretations for the formation of the state. Diverse political thinkers hold varying opinions regarding the nature, purpose, history, and constituent elements of the state. Consequently, various efforts have been made to examine Kautilya's notion of state.

There is no contemporary evidence to shed light on the origins of the state. The concept of the state as an organised community could be traced back to Greek city-states. The Romans adopted the Greek concept of state and applied it to a larger territorial area. The term '*res publica*' in Latin refers to the state of public interest/affairs. In contemporary times, the phrase was given by Machiavelli in the 16th century as a broad term for a political organisation. Further, according to Hobbes, Lock, and Bentham the state is a man-made institution.

The question of the origin of the state has been covered in a number of ancient Indian texts, such as the *Manusmriti* and the *Mahābhārata*. The state was viewed as a divine institution in the *Mahābhārata*, and the king's authority to rule came from both his divine creation and the subjects' consent to be governed by him to restore order and prevent chaos. According to the *puranic* literature, *varnas* were important in the formation of the state. After the means of subsistence were provided, people were divided into four *varnas*. In order to punish people who are harsh and unfair, *Brahma* (God) established the authority of the monarch, who was also given the power of *danda* (punishment).

The *Arthashastra* is not a treatise on Political Science and does not specifically discuss the formation of the state. Instead, it is a fundamental text on the art of administration, with only a brief mention of the history of the state. According to Kautilya, the state emerged as a response to people's dissatisfaction with the *matasnyaya* (Law of the fish), which posits that bigger fish consume smaller ones. In order to fulfill the people's desire for a peaceful society, the state was created and the king took on the responsibility of ensuring the welfare and protection of the subjects.

### **Definition of State**

Kautilya, an ancient Indian political thinker, was the first to define the concept of a state in his work, *Arthashastra*. In Kautilya's view, an area cannot be considered a state unless it has both people and rulers to govern it. He believed that a state is composed of multiple cities, which not only provide basic necessities for life but also protect their inhabitants from harm and wild animals. Additionally, a state should possess resources such as fertile land, food, wood, forests for elephants, and pastures for animals. Water is another crucial resource for a state, and it should have multiple

sources of it rather than relying solely on rain. Kautilya believed that the people living in a state should have high moral character and that there should be wise rulers and loyal servants. Overall, Kautilya provided a thorough and detailed definition of a state.

*Arthaśāstra*, which translates to “the science of wealth”, is a guide to acquiring and preserving power on the earth. It is believed to be a means of securing power over both the present and the afterlife. Kautilya’s definition of a state is similar to the modern definition put forth by thinkers such as Garner. He used the term “*Raja*”, which corresponds to the English word “state”, and identified seven essential elements of a state. According to Kautilya, the state and kingship were based on the goodwill of the people, with the king serving as the head of the state. In the *Vedas*, the state was regarded as a source of justice, security, peace, and law and order, with the king having the duty to uphold these attributes in his subjects. Kautilya felt that the state and king were inextricably linked, with the king wielding executive, legislative, judicial, and financial powers.

### Objectives of the State

Throughout the history, the purpose of the state has been a topic of discussion for political thinkers. Plato believed the state provided a place for individuals to find their proper role, while Aristotle believed that the state’s main goal should be ethical, establishing an egalitarian society for the highest quality of life. Hobbes believed that the state should uphold law and order as well as individual liberties and property rights. According to Locke, the state ought to protect people’s lives, liberty, and property. Bentham viewed the state as ensuring the greatest good for the greatest number, but Rousseau saw it as a social contract to carry out the general will. Marx believed in a classless society in which the state gradually withered away, while Herbert Spencer viewed the state as a mutual protection company. He believed that the state’s principal duty was to defend individuals from external threats while also enforcing agreements and regulations, similar to a mutual protection society where members band together for collective security. Prof Laski considered the state is ‘a fellowship of men with the aim of enriching common life for all’. While Vedic literature did not explicitly outline the state’s ideals, but peace, order, security, and justice were regarded as fundamental aims, with the king as head and upholder of the law. Additionally, the state promoted *dharma* (duty), *artha* (wealth), and *kama* (pleasure), aiming to promote morality, develop national resources, and ensure peace and order for individual enjoyment of life. Ultimately, the welfare of the people should be the sole objective of the state, according to Kautilya.

### The Saptanga Theory: Seven Elements of State

The ancient Indian writers did not discuss the evolution of the state through various stages because the historical method was unknown at that time. However, the concept of the state as consisting of seven elements was first introduced in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kautilya. Though the seven *prakritis* (elements) of the state — *swami* (the sovereign king), *amatya* (ministers), *janapada* (territory), *durga* (a fortified capital), *kosha* (treasury), *danda* (army), and *mitra* (allies) — had already been covered in earlier writings like *Manusmṛiti*, but Kautilya rearranged these components and added a new one: the allies.

He also emphasised the primary importance of the king and kingdom, which are the two elements around which all other elements revolve. This theory of the state, known as *saptanga* theory of state, was widely accepted and considered a standard definition of the state. The seven limbs enumerated by Kautilya cover all the essential features of the state: population, territory, government and sovereignty. *Janapada* represents territory and population, while *swami* and *amatya* provide sovereignty and government. Although there are other elements such as *durga*, *kosha*, *danda*, and *mitra*, Kautilya believed that the primary elements were *swami*, *amatya*, and *janapada*.

- 1. Swami (the sovereign king):** Kautilya emphasised the importance of the king in the political system; assigning him the highest position above all other elements of the state. The king was not only the chief executive head and commander-in-chief of the army, but also the defender of *dharma* and the life force of the state. The king’s knowledge of the *Vedas*, *Arthaśāstra*, *dandniti*, and noble birth were crucial factors that Kautilya preferred in a ruler. The king was given extensive powers for the welfare of the subjects, and Kautilya believed that the happiness of the king depended on the welfare of the people. The king should regard himself as an agent of the people, and his foremost duty was to protect them. Kautilya believed that an energetic king would lead to an equally energetic population, and that a lazy king would fall into the hands of enemies. The king was the centre of all political life and administration, and most activities of the state were controlled by him. An ideal king possessed qualities of leadership, intellect, energy and personal attributes. Even a small-territory ruler may conquer the world by his power. Along with providing protection for the populace, the king’s responsibilities included appointing ministers and punishing the wicked.
- 2. Amatya (ministers):** The *Amatya*, as described in Kautilya’s *Arthaśāstra*, are high-ranking ministers or advisors who play a key role in state’s administration. The *Amatya*, one of the seven elements of the state, is necessary for efficient government and smooth operation of the state. According to Kautilya, there was an intricate system for recruiting *Amatyas* and other officials, and candidates had to be of high moral and ethical standards, financially honest, and of good reputation. The *Amatyas* were intended to be natural-born citizens of noble descent, devoid of all vices with infallible memory, amiable disposition, knowledge, patience, and perseverance. Since these individuals were to be the king’s trusted advisors, only wise men were supposed to be appointed to these positions.
- 3. Janapada (territory):** According to the *Arthaśāstra*, *janapada* is a crucial aspect of a state and encompasses both territory and population. For a state to exist, it needs both fertile lands, including mines, timber, forests, and waterways, as well as a prosperous population that includes men of good character and loyalty. Kautilya recognised the existence of ethnic differences among the population and acknowledged that conquests and migrations could result in multiple ethnic groups inhabiting a *janapada*. To ensure that each village in a *janapada* is viable, Kautilya suggested encouraging people from neighbouring countries to migrate and settle in new or existing villages, as well as

persuading people from heavily populated areas of the kingdom to settle in such villages. The king's responsibility was to protect agriculture and oversee industry within the *janapada*.

4. **Durga (a fortified capital):** Kautilya emphasised the importance of a safety and protection system, with forts being a crucial component of the state. He believed that forts were as important as the people and land in a state, as they provided both internal and external security. Fortification was necessary to protect the state from external attacks, and it was crucial for the security of the treasury and army. Kautilya recommended that forts should be built at all four corners of the state to ensure security from all sides. He classified forts into four types, including *audak* (filled with water), *parvat* (surrounded with high mountains and rocks), *danvan* (surrounded with deserts), and *van* (built in dense forests) forts, each with its unique features for security. Forts were important for the safety of the state and its people, and they were used for various functions, such as maintaining the army, welcoming foreign delegates, and keeping off forest tribes and wild animals. Additionally, Kautilya discussed the importance of *durga* as a fortified capital, with specific planning and layout considerations. Overall, forts played a vital role in the stability and consolidation of states, including carrying out functions like secret wars, army readiness, and fighting the enemy.
5. **Kosha (treasury):** The *kosha* (or treasury) is a vital resource and serves as the foundation of any state or organisation. It is essential for the protection of the state and its army. The treasury should be well-managed and filled with valuable resources like gems, gold, and jewels to withstand any potential crises. In his work, *Arthaśāstra*, Kautilya emphasizes the importance of public finance as even a family cannot function without a treasury. He distinguishes between public finance during times of war and peace, but stresses the same basic principle: the king's primary responsibility is to maintain a full and prosperous treasury through the honest and religious collection of taxes. Kautilya asserts that the treasury is more important than the army, and that its wealth must be accumulated through lawful means, either through inheritance or the king's own efforts. The king should reward people with good behaviour and punish theft, ensuring the treasury's honest maintenance.
6. **Danda (Army):** The existence of a state is dependent on a strong defence system, which requires a strong army to defend against both internal and external threats. According to Kautilya, the army is the sixth element of the state and is essential for maintaining social order and protecting against enemy attacks. Kautilya describes various types of armies, including clan armies, hired soldiers, corporate armies, friendly country armies, and tribal armies. He emphasizes the importance of clan armies due to their loyalty to the king and their knowledge of military strategies. Kautilya believes that the state army should be well-trained and well-equipped, and soldiers should be satisfied with their working conditions. A good soldier should possess qualities such as loyalty, bravery, and knowledge of military science. In an emergency, Kautilya permits troops from lower castes to join the

army, although officers ought to possess more of these attributes. Kautilya gives a thorough account of how the army is set up.

7. **Mitra (Allies):** Kautilya's idea of an ally or *mitra* is based on ethical principles, and he believed that the ideal ally should be someone who is hereditary and not artificial. This ally should be trustworthy and always ready to offer assistance when needed. Conversely, anyone who is greedy, disloyal, immoral, weak, or impotent should be treated as an enemy. Kautilya suggests that an ideal ally should have certain qualities, such as a long-standing friendship with the king's family, the ability to be controlled, support from powerful individuals, a shared interest, and the ability to mobilize quickly. He acknowledges that every state aims to maximize its interests and power, and alliances are only beneficial if they serve the interests of both parties. If the balance of power shifts, allies can easily become enemies. The king's responsibility is to prioritize his kingdom's best interests when dealing with foreign powers, and he must protect his people and defeat his enemies to provide them with material gain, spiritual good, and pleasure. Kautilya also proposes two methods for forming an alliance or *mitra* — by seeking the help of a stronger king or by collaborating with a neighbouring enemy. Kautilya's *saptanga* theory is an important contribution to the field of politics and administration, comprising all of the ingredients essential for effective governance. According to Kautilya, it is up to the king to control the constituents of the state, and he may make even the poorest and most miserable citizens of his sovereignty happy and prosperous, whereas a wicked monarch will definitely demolish the most prosperous aspects of the kingdom.

### Functions of the State

In modern political theory, the focus is often on the role of the state in society, with some philosophers advocating for a limited role. However, ancient India did not have such a dichotomy, as the state was not represented by an absolute monarch who behaved like a Hobbesian Leviathan, encompassing all aspects of human life. Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* assigned the state the role of a modern welfare state, encompassing social, economic, and religious aspects of human life. The responsibilities of the state were road construction, transportation, road maintenance, forest management, exploration of minerals, education, sanitation, defense, law and order, protection of life and property, justice, and helping the impoverished and destitute. The state also aimed to foster spiritual well-being and undertake various activities to benefit its citizens. Kautilya's state regulated the life of its citizens through various organisations and officers, with the king at its pivot. The Kautilya's state was similar to the modern welfare state, with the goal of promoting national wealth and a prosperous economy. Some important functions of the state enumerated by Kautilya are as follows.

- a) **Political Functions:** From the Vedic period, the primary role of the state has been to protect the citizens from both external aggression and internal insecurities. The state also ensured a minimum standard of living for all its citizens, acting as a ministry of social assurance. Kautilya emphasised the need for the state to protect people and their property and provided measures to

prevent antisocial activities and natural calamities. He also suggested some unethical measures to defend and strengthen the state. Another function of the state was to preserve law and order and punish the offenders based on the seriousness of their crimes, striking a balance between justness and strictness. The king should also ensure that the people can live in peace and without fear for their belongings, as well as safeguard their social and religious rights. In his *Arthashastra*, Kautilya stressed the importance of political and social activities and warned that a king who neglects his duties and destroys the social fabric will face dire consequences.

- b) **Economic Functions:** Kautilya believed that the most important task for his state was to achieve all-round economic development. He recognised that a sound financial position was necessary for effective administrative work. Therefore, he emphasised the importance of the king's role in developing agriculture, business, industries, and tax systems in order to maintain a full treasury and ensure continuous progress. It was essential for the king to develop all fields of the common man equally, while also ensuring regular construction of residential areas. In order to achieve economic growth, forest areas should be used properly and material should be obtained from mines. The state should set prices of goods, and fix the profit percentage at 5% for local traders and 10% for foreign trade. If anyone exceeded this limit, they would be penalised. Kautilya believed that state ownership and regulation was necessary for economic growth, but he also allowed for private property and ownership of industries. The state should own industries like transport and cotton, and the king should be involved in mining operations, manufacturing, exploiting timber, elephants, forests and market towns. However, this should not be viewed as socialism, as Kautilya's state had a mixed economy similar to present-day India, where private enterprise was also allowed with regulations set by the government.
- c) **Social Functions:** According to Kautilya, it is essential for the state to protect the *dharma* or social order of the land. The king's duty is to safeguard his subjects and ensure justice, failure to do so will result in punishment. The state has to protect the *varnas* and their duties. It is also important for the government to promote true religion and education, and provide special provisions for the educated and learned individuals in the state. The state is responsible for the health of its citizens and must ensure that family relationships and teacher-student relationships are faithful. Additionally, the state must assist the poor, elderly, pregnant women, and newborns. Kautilya stresses that the king must act as a father figure to his subjects, showing kindness towards cultivators, the afflicted, and the helpless. This reveals Kautilya's empathy towards the well-being of his citizens.
- d) **Educational Functions:** Establishing education institutions to provide education to the people is the responsibility of the state, as emphasised by Kautilya who believed that educating the masses was crucial for the progress of the state. The lack of education and discipline was identified as the root cause of various problems in a *rashtra*. Kautilya advocated for the Vedic

system of education and believed that everyone should be educated to become responsible citizens of a civilised state. Education was deemed universal and free, with both the state and children sharing the responsibility of acquiring knowledge. The main objective of education was to promote a healthy civic life based on truth and observance of *dharma*. The state allocated a significant portion of its expenditure towards education, providing pensions to *acharyas* and *vidwans*, as well as offering honorariums to teachers of music, preceptors, and specialists in *dharmaśāstras* and *Arthashastra*. The state assumed full responsibility for covering all expenses related to education.

- e) **Promotions of People Welfare:** The primary objective of the state is to ensure the welfare of its people. Kautilya emphasizes that the state policy should focus on promoting the welfare of the people. He believes that the interests of the sovereign should align with the interests of the people. The state must utilise all its resources to ensure the welfare of its citizens. In his book, *Arthashastra*, Kautilya asserts that the happiness and welfare of the king is dependent on the happiness and welfare of his subjects. The state is responsible for carrying out development activities, such as constructing dams, settling virgin land, establishing trade centres, schools, and providing healthcare and sanitation facilities for the welfare of the people. Neglecting the health of the citizens can be detrimental to the prosperity, security, and stability of the state. Therefore, the state should appoint medical superintendents to ensure the health of its citizens and control the spread of diseases.
- f) **Promulgation of Law and Maintaining the Judiciary:** To protect the social order and promote the welfare of the people, the state must carry out the crucial function of creating and enforcing laws through a judiciary. In modern times, lawmaking has become an indispensable function of the state. The state is responsible for maintaining common law through customs and traditions. The *dharmaśāstras* and *Arthashastra* reveal a well-established judiciary, with the king being the source of justice. Kautilya believed that the state had multiple dimensions, such as protecting *dharma*, justice, and the interests of the people. The state's role was to be *dharmadhikari*, *nyayadhikari*, and *mangalkari*. While the king held considerable power, Kautilya placed restrictions on his actions and considered him a servant of the people. Kautilya's views on state functions and the economy were similar to modern welfare state systems, as the state was responsible for promoting social welfare, trade, and commerce. It was also the state's duty to care for orphans, the elderly, the sick, and the helpless, while physicians were responsible for public health. According to Kautilya, the stability and efficiency of the state were crucial for human welfare, as the state was considered the centre of society.

### **Kautilya and Plato: Realpolitik in Kautilya vs. Idealism in Western Thought**

Kautilya and Plato were two philosophers who lived in different parts of the world and in different time periods, but both had influential ideas that shaped political philosophy. Kautilya, also known as *Chanakya*, was an Indian

philosopher who lived in the 4th century BCE. He was a Chief Minister and advisor to the king of the Maurya Empire, Chandragupta Maurya. Kautilya's most famous work is the *Arthashastra*, a treatise on statecraft, economics, and military strategy. One of his key ideas was the concept of *dharma*, or the duty of rulers to ensure the welfare of their subjects. He also emphasised on the importance of a strong and efficient administration, and advocated for a centralised and authoritarian government. On the other hand, Plato was a Greek philosopher who lived in the 4th century BCE. He was a disciple of Socrates and established the Academy in Athens, the first higher education institution in the Western world. Plato is best known for his work '*The Republic*', a dialogue on political philosophy. In '*The Republic*', Plato argues that the ideal society is one in which there is a class of philosopher-kings who rule with wisdom and virtue. He believed that the purpose of politics was to create a just society, and that justice was the foundation of all human virtues. While Kautilya and Plato had different ideas about the best form of government, they both emphasised on the importance of good governance and the duty of rulers to ensure the welfare of their subjects. Both philosophers believed that the goal of politics was to create a just society, and that this required wise and virtuous leadership.

#### Comparative Analysis of Kautilya and Machiavelli

Kautilya and Machiavelli were both political philosophers who lived in different times and cultural contexts. Kautilya, also known as *Chanakya*, was a philosopher and statesman who lived in ancient India, whereas, the Italian philosopher and writer Machiavelli flourished during the Renaissance period. Both Kautilya and Machiavelli wrote extensively on the art of governance, and their works are considered to be among the most influential in the field of political philosophy. One key similarity between the two philosophers is their belief in the importance of strong and effective leadership. They both believed that rulers should be prepared to take any necessary action to maintain their power and the stability of their state. This includes the use of force, deception, and manipulation, if required. However, there are also significant differences between the two philosophers. Kautilya's political philosophy was rooted in the Hindu concept of *dharma*, which emphasises on moral and ethical principles, while Machiavelli's philosophy was based on the idea of the "ends justify the means", and his focus was on the practical aspects of governance. Another difference between the two is their views on religion. Kautilya believed that religion was an important part of governance and that ruler should promote and support the religious practices of their people. Machiavelli, on the other hand, believed that religion was a tool that rulers could use to control their subjects, but he did not see it as essential to good governance. Overall, Machiavelli and Kautilya have similar political ideas, but they also differ greatly, reflecting the historical and cultural environments in which they lived.

#### Relevance of Kautilya's thought in Contemporary Times

Kautilya has no parallels in the history of political philosophy, and he was ancient India's first political scientist. His political ideas transformed the political beliefs and institutions of the time.

A long-standing myth in the West that political science was not a significant field of study in the past. As the people of

India were more preoccupied with metaphysical speculation, the fundamental questions of political science, political organisation, political system, and political thought were not the focus of investigation. Numerous philosophers in the West were of the opinion that India lacked a school of political philosophy in traditional terms. They contend that the ancient Indian intellectuals did not contribute anything. However, R. Shamasastri's, discovery of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* in 1906 disproved the notion held by some Western academicians that Indian thinkers made no contributions to political theory. The creation and institutionalisation of a science of polity is Kautilya's greatest contribution. He set modern political science free from its constraints and transformed it into an innovative tool for managing public affairs.

The Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is a political manual that offers direction to kings on how to rule their territories and consolidate their rule. In Indian administrative history, he is the figure with the greatest prominence. The most significant and perfect contribution to the study of state can be found in Kautilya's work. A distinct period in the development of Indian political thinking can be traced back to the Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. He was a hard realist rather than an idealist. He presented his social and political theories and also come up with the ways to implement them. The constant problem of "conquering and upholding the territory" is addressed in *Arthashastra*.

Politics became a distinct academic field due to Kautilya. Politics, according to Kautilya, is the highest form of both science and art. It was the cause of everything. The health of politics determined the well-being of all sciences. He clearly distinguished between politics and religion. He never attempted to analyse political issues from a theological perspective. He used logic to support his opinions.

Kautilya understood the significance of religion within the people's social life. He used rationalism as the foundation of his approach without undervaluing the importance of religion. He supported a paternal state, hence expanding the extent of government intervention was not viable for him. He was forced to rely on logic and knowledge. The *Arthashastra* is founded on the experience and information that Kautilya gained via his own study and observation of the events and institutions around him, in addition to the current works on the polity. He enhanced his understanding through his experiences with the various procedures and structures employed by governments of his time.

Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is important because, for the first time, it released the science of politics from all kinds of constraints and provided a structured tool for state management. The state portrayed in the Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is much more elaborate, attempting to control all aspects of state's activity. The Kautilya believed social life, trade, money, civic activities, cultivation, and nearly every other aspect of man's organised life to be within the lawful realm of government. In his writings, the state is the most powerful association, with religion remaining a private matter. He supported the use of religious institutions for the well-being of his subjects. The state, according to Kautilya, is crucial in maintaining social order. He believed in the power of a strong centralising state. The king enjoyed liberty for the sake of the state, which meant he was free to engage in treason, deception, and sacrilege if required. The state and kingship, according to Kautilya, were founded on general goodwill. The king was the head of the both

government and the state.

Kautilya's *Arthasāstra*, sometimes referred to as the "science of politics" is an ancient Indian text on statecraft, economic policy, and military strategy. While it was written over 2,000 years ago, many of its teachings and principles remain relevant in contemporary times. One of the most important contributions of the *Arthasāstra* is its emphasis on good governance and the state's role in enhancing social welfare. This includes the promotion of economic growth, the establishment of an effective legal system, and the provision of basic services such as healthcare and education. In today's world, where many governments are struggling to provide these essential services to their citizens, the *Arthasāstra's* focus on good governance is highly relevant. Another area where the *Arthasāstra* remains relevant is in its discussion of international relations and diplomacy. Kautilya recognised the importance of maintaining good relations with neighbouring countries, and his ideas on foreign policy and military strategy continue to influence contemporary thinking on these issues. The *Arthasāstra* also has much to say about economics, including the promotion of trade and commerce and the use of taxation to fund public works and infrastructure projects. In today's globalised economy, these issues are more important than ever, and Kautilya's insights into economic policy remain highly relevant. Overall, while the *Arthasāstra* was written over two millennia ago, its teachings on governance, foreign policy, and economics continue to be valuable in contemporary times. As such, it remains an important work for scholars and policymakers interested in the development of effective governance and economic policy.

### Conclusion

Kautilya's *Arthasāstra* provides a profound exploration of statecraft and governance from a non-Western perspective, emphasising philosophical underpinnings that are both distinct and influential. Through its comprehensive analysis of state mechanisms, political tactics, and ethical issues, the *Arthasāstra* provides invaluable insights into the complexities of governance and statecraft in ancient India. Kautilya's writings place a strong emphasis on pragmatism, strategic diplomacy, and striking a balance between moral obligations and practical necessities in sustaining and strengthening state power. He developed a complex network of connections and offered the *mandala* concept in conflict and diplomacy.

The ideas expressed in the *Arthasāstra* not only reflect the unique socio-political context of ancient India but also offer enduring lessons for modern political theory and practice. By combining Kautilya's viewpoints into more general political discourses, we are able to develop a deeper comprehension of governance that goes beyond viewpoints that are Western-centric. The *Arthasāstra* is still regarded as a seminal text; shedding light on non-Western approaches to political strategy and provides timeless guidance on the art of statecraft.

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