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## CHAPTER - 4

# ARTHASHASTRA REVISITED – ETHICAL GOVERNANCE IN THE EDGE OF GEOPOLITICAL TURBULENCE

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## 1. Introduction – Revisiting the Arthashastra in the 21st Century

Since the dawn of time, people have been attempting to figure out who should be in charge and how to wield that power. Leaders and philosophers have always tried to establish a middle ground between what people need and what is right, between what is ideal and what is true. This has always been true, even in the old Greek capital cities and the imperial palaces of China and India. Kautilya's Arthashastra is one of the few works from this very old school that has been as important and long as it has been. People commonly think of this book, which came out about the third century BCE, as a compendium of ideas about how to run a government, deal with other people, run an economy, and fight a battle. It advises rulers how to run their kingdoms, keep them rich, and use their power wisely.

The world is changing in ways we've never seen before in modern times, though. The international order is becoming less stable because of things like the emergence of multipolarity, the rise of conflicts between major countries, the expansion of technology, the hazards of climate change, and the constraints of global administration. Ethical government is the belief that persons in authority should utilize it ethically, fairly, and with regard for the well-being of others. It seems like this ideology is under more and more danger. People often don't know what to think about themselves since governments switch between harsh truths and symbolic gestures of goodness. The Arthashastra can help us think about this topic in a different approach. People argue that the book is about brutal practicality, but if you examine more closely, it's not. It's more about keeping things in order, keeping people safe, and the ruler's duty to the people. Kautilya understood that lying, spying, and force were real, but he put them in a way that was aimed to safeguard the state and the prosperity of its people.

This chapter attempts to reevaluate the Arthashastra, not merely as an antiquated text, but as a repository of ethical governance principles applicable in a chaotic global context. By examining its concepts, juxtaposing them with contemporary ethical theories, and applying these ideas to address current geopolitical issues, we may discover methods to reconcile pragmatism with morality. We will look at the core notions of government in the Arthashastra, then the moral principles that support them, and finally how we might employ what we've learned from the

Arthashastra in present times. The Arthashastra asserts that ethics and statecraft don't have to be at war with each other. They can, on the other hand, be under constant tension. Leaders are having a hard time balancing power with morals, therefore it's crucial to keep this in mind. We can establish a moral government that is ready for the challenging times we are living in today by following good ideas like this.

## 2. The Arthashastra's Foundations of Governance and Statecraft

The Arthashastra was written by Kautilya, who was also known as Chanakya or Vishnugupta. He lived during the Mauryan era. It was a complete guide to being a king, running a government, and diplomatic relations. It was different from other philosophical works because it mixed moral principles with practical advice. It gave rulers a guide on how to run a country well.

The Framework of the State He talked about the "seven limbs of the state," which he called the Saptanga. These things were the king, the ministers, the allies, the treasury, the land, the defenses, and the army. All of these parts must be strong for a state to exist. The king was the most important person, and he had power because he could make sure everyone was happy. The army protected the country, the officials gave advice, and the territory brought in money. In the bigger geopolitical order, friends decided whether a kingdom would live or die. The treasury paid for both welfare and war, and fortifications kept sovereignty safe.

- **What the King Does**

What the people thought of the king was more like a trustee than a dictator. He said, "The king's happiness is in the happiness of his subjects; the king's welfare is in their welfare." This term makes it clear that the administration's main goal is to improve the lives of the people. He knew that the monarch had to be practical, though, and that lies, punishment, and even spying were all fine as long as they kept things stable.

- **The government and money**

The Arthashastra put a lot of emphasis on making and giving money. People thought that farming, trade, irrigation, and taxes were all very important to the security of the state. Kautilya wanted fair taxes that weren't too harsh or too easy on people. Having a strong economy was important for security and authority.

- **How Mandalas Work and How to Be Diplomatic**

The Mandala, which is the Arthashastra's idea of foreign policy, may be its most important lasting addition. This idea says that states that were close to each other are naturally unfriendly, while states that are farther apart might be friendly. Instead of being set in stone, alliances and rivalries were fluid and could be adjusted as interests changed. The Mandala theory showed a realistic view of international politics in which survival was more important than morals.

- **Secrets and keeping things safe inside**

A lot of books were written by Kautilya about spying, information networks, and surveillance. Spies were used in war, but they were also used to keep an eye on government officials, stop corruption, and put down uprisings before they started. Even though this might seem mean, Kautilya justified it as necessary for stability and to keep bad things from happening.

The Arthashastra gives a complete plan for running the government. It blends moral responsibility with practical statecraft. Not just a guide to lying, it's also a way of thinking about how to run a government that takes into account how weak people are, how conflict is inevitable, and how to find a balance between morals and practicality. In this complex view of the world, morality, and reality live together in a precarious balance.

## 3. Ethical Governance in Classical Thought and Modern Interpretation

Many individuals don't agree on whether the Arthashastra has a decent moral point of view or only clings to logic. To comprehend the moral implications, it is essential to examine the distinctions between these concepts and contemporary notions of effective governance, as well as their similarities to prevalent governmental conceptions.

- **The ethical principles of the Arthashastra**

Kautilya got his power from the principle of rajadharma, which asserts that people owe something to the sovereign. No one monitored other people or forced them to do things to acquire what they desired. They performed these things to maintain things in order, make sure everyone was pleased, and keep the people in control safe. He could have done two things better. He talked about people's health; thus, the government should care about

more than simply its own aims.

Kautilya doesn't agree with the ideas of artha, dharma, and niti. Niti stands for policy, while artha stands for riches. People who worked for managers but didn't help would lose their jobs. If a king or queen didn't care about what was good and bad, they would lose their power. So, in the long run, finding a medium ground was the best thing to do.

Nick Machiavelli researched different countries before writing *The Prince*. These are some of its good points: Machiavelli said that leaders should be good individuals, even if they want to do wicked things. Kautilya, on the other hand, pondered about more than just the time. Their opinions are the main reason they don't agree. Kautilya said that a ruler's power depended on how well his people were doing. Machiavelli, on the other hand, wants to be in charge of everything.

Confucius emphasized that moral norms must always be followed. He believed that these sections of the government were the most significant. Kautilya, on the other hand, stated that leaders should employ both morals and violence to stay in power.

The primary premise of utilitarianism is to do what is best for the most people. John Rawls and other liberal thinkers claim that fairness and justice are the same thing. A realistic utilitarian ethic emphasizes that everyone's health and safety are vital, but when there is risk, their safety and life should come first. This way of thinking about right and wrong aligns well with Kautilya's thoughts.

- **The Arthashastra discusses ethics.**

We could reflect about the good and bad things about the world today if we read some of the Arthashastra. Is it a good idea to keep a lot of people safe? People like this are looking about and watching. The king or queen answered, "Yes, as long as things didn't get worse." This is still a topic of conversation when people talk about government spying and data security.

- **Threats and bumper stickers:** The Arthashastra advises that one method to motivate someone to act better is to punish them harshly. It goes against everything we believe about human rights today, even if it works. They don't see eye to eye.
- **Business ethics:** Kautilya believed that taxes and rules should be fair and that no one should be treated unfairly. There are still issues like bribes, unfair marketplaces, and income that isn't equitable.

- **How people feel about moral government at this time**

These days, the fundamental ideals that guide government ethics include being honest, fair, and responsible, and including everyone. We should know how to wield our power and respect it. All of these norms say that the monarch should do what is best for the people. Kautilya's rules may seem harsh, but they fit with these ideals.

Heads can read the Arthashastra again to understand how to be nice and do the right thing. Finding the appropriate balance between what needs to be done and what is right can be hard. The government needs to be careful not to tarnish its own image when it seeks to fix real problems. Kautilya didn't make people more negative; instead, he established a paradigm that showed how ethics and practicalities may work together.

#### **4. Geopolitical Turbulence and the Crisis of Governance Today**

The forecasts we now possess for the 21st century are, at best, imprecise. A lot of people were glad when the Cold War ended because it made the country more open. Its limitations are that it is sluggish and that it derives strength from numerous areas. The government is wrong, so someone needs to step in and make things right.

- **Countries that are really strong typically fight each other.**

When it comes to trade, research, or the military, the US and China don't get along. Because of this, firms that operate across borders and supply lines are fouled up, which makes it tougher for people to trust each other. Countries that are near to each other should stay on one course, whereas countries that are farther apart should try a few alternative ones. People have to do what strong people say if they want to stay alive, no matter what. This signifies that the government is now bad.

- **They have different ideals.**

Europe isn't as safe as it used to be when Russia attacked Ukraine. This has put both international law and the strength of each country to the test. When states make decisions, they should think about their values, their business aims, and their duty to safeguard the public. It's hard for government officials to do the right thing when people are competing for power. This is clear in the fight.

As the weather changes, we need to take care of the Earth. You need to find the quickest method to get there.

Climate change could be the most serious moral issue we face right now. A lot of evidence shows that governments put their short-term economic interests ahead of their long-term viability, but they still do it. He added, *"Bad things will happen when leaders don't care about the health and happiness of their people (and those who will follow them)."*

The internet and other technology are getting in the way. Digital technology has made everything better. Governments utilize tracking devices, cyber weapons, and artificial intelligence (AI) to fool and control their people. Some people use the internet to steal from others, spy on them, and invade their privacy. This is very wrong.

In the last few years, a number of areas have suffered worse droughts and more dictatorships.

As populist leaders erode long-standing institutions, more and more people around the world don't trust their governments. The end outcome is a society that is increasingly divided. They can limit people's rights, but they also protect them. The same issues that have caused problems for past administrations keep cropping up when people aspire to attain moral and political power. Problems happen when powerful people misuse their power. A lot of countries today have a hard time staying in power and staying alive. Always keep in mind that your safety depends on how good and healthy you are. You can be authoritarian when you are strong and can do things on your own. This is horrible for everything.

## 5. Relevance of Arthashastra in Contemporary Governance and Diplomacy

Even if the Arthashastra has a few shortcomings, it is nevertheless possible for people to gain a great deal of knowledge from it. Considering that it is now a collection of interconnected ideas, its value has increased.

Kautilya recommends that you should always be learning new things, planning ahead, and keeping an eye on the future. He also suggests that you should always be keeping an eye on the future. Despite the fact that pandemics, cyberattacks, and the reality that connections with other countries are constantly changing, it is still extremely important to plan ahead in order to successfully manage the government. In his advice to nations, Kautilya urged them to avoid repeating the same mistakes, which included failing to adequately prepare for the catastrophes that will be caused by climate change.

The ways in which individuals regard and perceive multipolarity:

- **Making Use of Mandalas to Set the Picture**

Mandalas, which are extremely sophisticated, have been of great use to individuals in understanding how odd modern culture is. India is making significant efforts to acquire new allies in the region, despite the fact that it already has good relations with China, Russia, and the United States of America. The idea that feelings should not serve as the foundation for partnerships was held by Kautilya. You have the ability to change your mind, which is why this is true. Obtaining this equilibrium is of the utmost importance; nonetheless, there should be no compromise on fundamental principles such as respecting authority and human rights.

- **To do so would be incorrect.**

Always honest and doing what was right, Kautilya was a man of integrity. He underlined that people should exercise extreme caution while speaking with law enforcement and that those in positions of authority should never tell lies or behave in an unfavorable manner when employing their authority. Since the beginning of time, people have felt a sense of obligation, even when they engage in behavior that is in direct opposition to the principles that govern democracy. It would be beneficial for the world if people were able to communicate with one another without difficulty, if there were no restrictions placed on the media, and if the government did not assume control of institutions.

According to Kautilya, the happiness of the people will be contingent upon the king's contentment. Considering the contemporary values of democracy and the utilization of power and assistance to accomplish goals, this

technique makes perfect sense. People frequently take to the streets to express their dissatisfaction with the government, when they are unable to find work, when they are being mistreated, or when they feel threatened by someone in authority. People have a low level of trust in governments that do not care about their health because of this concern. Putting ethics at the forefront of management is not only the moral thing to do, but it also confers benefits on businesses.

What are the reasons that countries are less likely to collaborate politically when they are concerned about the environment and climate change? In order to maintain a consistent climate, Kautilya believed that crops and irrigation were of utmost importance. Currently, governments should also be responsible for developing plans to preserve the environment. When it comes to this particular situation, the government needs to devise a strategy that will allow businesses to grow while simultaneously safeguarding the environment.

**Digital government:** The Arthashastra discusses methods to keep a watch on things, which can translate in today's world as utilizing computers to follow individuals. One example of this is the implementation of digital government. Right now, a good government would ensure the safety of its citizens without infringing on their rights or compromising their privacy.

Kautilya believed that via the implementation of acceptable taxes, the global economy would become more equitable, firms would become more accountable, and income would be distributed more evenly.

There are many different ideas that have an impact on India's foreign policy, however the degree of that impact varies. In order to demonstrate how the Kautilyan philosophy operates, the Arthashastra grants India the authority to make its own decisions regarding matters of essential importance. India has collaborated with a number of influential organizations in an effort to persuade the rest of the world that it is a compassionate nation that is concerned about the rights of individuals as well as the health of all people. It is difficult to maintain strong moral ideals, such as advocating for democratic norms, while at the same time avoiding the trap of allowing pragmatism to evolve into exploitation.

It instructs us on how to strike a balance between concepts that are applicable in the real world and regulations from the Arthashastra that we are not required to adhere to without question. It is a sign that a government that lacks morals will fail, and that being immoral is a sign of weakness when it does not care about what is genuine.

## **6. Conclusion – Towards an Ethical Statecraft for the Future**

The Arthashastra's wisdom can help the world a lot when things get tough. From this point of view, the government is not a bad thing or a good thing. It acknowledges the harsh realities of power while maintaining the belief that individual rights and welfare are paramount.

I believed Kautilya would know about the challenges that leaders now have, such how to deal with criticism from within, keep the peace among friends, and run the economy. But there are more risks now than there were back then. Things like climate change, nuclear weapons, and digital fighting put people all across the world at risk. So, doing the right thing is not only the right thing to do, it's also vital to stay in business. This is the case for the reason indicated above.

The Arthashastra argues that ethics and pragmatism should be given the most weight and work together. If a management doesn't care about their workers' health, they will lose their job; if they don't care about how their actions affect real people, they will die. This is the best method to be a good leader. It is founded on accountability, can be changed, and can be employed in the actual world.

As the world becomes more unstable, countries need to discover a method to manage their governments that is not just strategic and beneficial, but also moral and practical. This new perspective transforms the Arthashastra from an ancient Indian text into a blueprint for the future, where ethics and authority can once more collaborate for the sake of society at large.

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