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Article

Principles of Kautilya in Democratic India: A Case Study on Dr. Kiran Bedi's Activities

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Abstract

Arthashastra, a masterwork written by Kautilya¹ of the fourth century era, includes an array of topics like statecraft, politics, strategy, selection and training of employees, leadership skills, legal systems, accounting systems, taxation, fiscal policies, civil rules, internal and foreign trade and so on. This was the handbook of the Mauryan Empire, the first politically united Bharat. Nobody is unknown about this treatise in the 21st century because of the accessibility of this work via rediscovery of the book by Prof. R.Shamashastry, commented by T. Ganapati shastry in Sanskrit and the English translations by Prof. R.P. Kangale and Shri L.N.Rangarajan. In Arthashastra, there are ethical values in business as well as in good governance. Kautilya, being a realist, has given value-based guidelines on good governance. The present study focuses on the relevance of Arthashastra by referring to how the Kautilya's principles of good governance (based on values) are being implemented in democratic India. This paper will take the activities of Dr. Kiran Bedi, Lt. Governor of Pondicherry as a case study for the same.

¹ Though Cāṅkya is popularly known as Kauṭilya, T.Ganapathi Sastri opines that Kauṭilya should be the correct term, see introduction of T.Ganapathi Sastri of the Arthashastra of Kauṭilya.

The methodology of this study involves understanding the chapters of Arthashastra containing universal principles of good governance, and carrying out a comparative applied analysis on how those principles are practiced in the present governance of Pondicherry.

Introduction

Arthashāstra is considered to be one among fourteen *Vidyāsthānas* of the Indic Knowledge Systems. It has been regarded as the upaveda of Atharvaveda. The four *upavedas*-*Ayurveda*, *Dhanurveda*, *Gandharvaveda* and *Arthashāstra* deal with materialistic concepts such as long life, life skills, livelihood, acquiring knowledge, wealth and prosperity. *Arthashāstra* is the science dealing with 'artha'- the earth inhabited by men following various occupations. The main concern is: how to obtain the earth inhabited by men following various occupations and how to protect it.² The *Arthashāstra* is divided into 15 *Adhikaranas* (books); 180 *Prakaranas*, 150 *Adhyāyas*(chapters), 380 *Karikas*. All together there are 6000 *slokas* each consisting of 32 syllabic units.³ Books 1-5 comprising 95 *prakaranas*, deal with the protection and welfare of people (तन्त्रम्). Books 6-13 comprising 84 *prakaranas*, deal with the security and consolidation of realm (आवापः); Book 14 &15 on miscellaneous topics of (a) secret recipes designed to remedy afflictions caused by enemy action and (b) 32 methodological devices used in this treatise for the better understanding of it respectively.

When *Arthashāstra* has been approached only from a social perspective, values that the society of Kautalya followed or need to be followed in his viewpoint can be understood. The first Book of *Arthashāstra* deals with the self-development of kings. His personal development only results in providing a happy social life to all.

In democratic India also, we need good leaders who are concerned with the happiness of the public. Or we need to develop citizens who can be transformed into such leaders and transfer that leadership into the future generation. Before going to that it is needed of the hour to search whether or not such a leader exists in society. The social ideas or principles of Kautalya are being followed knowingly or unknowingly.

² R.P.Kangale pp:593, fn 1.

³ N.P.Unni Eng. translation, T.Ganapati Shastry, Srimula , General introduction; 'Arthashastra: the magnum opus' pp: 33

Dr. Kiran Bedi, first woman IPS officer and Lieutenant Governor of Pondicherry, is such a person who follows at least some of the Kautilyan principles of self-development of a leader in her career.

Though society had changed from monarchy in the past to democracy at present, human beings are still focused on the four methods of living a purposeful life- (1) Dharma,(2) Artha,(3)Kama and (4) Moksha. The way of attaining these methods can be changed but these four methods remain the same. People look for the fulfilment of materialistic goals; very few go beyond that also. The 'welfare of the state' in all aspects is a universal aim of society. For a universal aim, universal method/s is to be continued. That curiosity to find out universal method/s led to this present study.

Review of literature

The studies on *Arthashāstra* in the past were mainly based on economics, taxation, war strategy, foreign policies, organizational philosophy, decentralization, and pillars of governance.

Some comparative studies have been made by scholars on the basis of western political theories of Hobbes, Karl Marx, Plato, and Aristotle; and also of economic theories.⁴

Apart from these, *Arthashāstra* has been studied to know the concepts such as ethics, good governance, departments of the government, salaries of bureaucrats and corruption and a few on environment and ecology, ground and surface water management.

Shri. S.S.Ali opines that good governance depends on the co-operation and an involvement of a large number of citizens. It can be achieved by showing respect to basic human values and rights, by strengthening democratic institutions and by ensuring accountability and transparency.⁵

Article based on "Kautilya versus Thiruvalluvar " deals with lack of ethics in bureaucracy leading to corruption, and the issue of good governance in Kautilya's *Arthashāstra*. Points

⁴ https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/9962/1/MPRA_paper_9962.pdf

Kumar, A. (2005). THE STRUCTURE AND PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC ORGANIZATION IN KAUTILYA'S ARTHASHASTRA. The Indian Journal of Political Science, 66(3), 463-488. Retrieved February 18, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41856143>

⁵ S.S.Ali- concept of good governance, IJPS ,67(2) pp: 380; jstor-41856223

from this to be noted are: “For Kautilya the destructive characteristics of man can only be corrected for the common good by making him into a citizen who works for the common good, symbolized by the ruler.”⁶

“The Indian independence movements did not take much into account their own tradition of identifying economic ethics and good governance.”⁷

“We suggest that here are forgotten sources for creating ethical incentives in economics and governance today.”⁸

The final words of Ritu Sharma are “prime duty of the rulers of the nation is that they must work for good Governance and should make all possible efforts honestly, to control the corruption. Today there is a need for such a dedicated minister and a ruler for the development of the nation.”⁹

To understand the comprehensive model for value-based management for an organization, an article by N.Siva Kumar and U.S. Rao aided this study.¹⁰

“Raj Nivas- The past four years’ documents the activities made by Dr. Kiran Bedi in Pondicherry. The main purpose of this study is to check the implementation part of Kautalyan principles in this regard.

Relevance of this study

Based on the literature review and study of other articles whose details are given as ‘other references’, the following can be understood. Scholars have proved the significance of *Arthashastra* in adopting a well-organized corporate management system, accounting, budgeting and taxation. The comparative studies of *Arthashastra* with western theories like

⁶ Kautilya versus Thiruvalluvar. Inspiration from Indian Ancient Classics for Ethics in Governance and Management, pp: 11-

⁷ Kautilya versus Thiruvalluvar, pp:11

⁸ Ibid. pp:12

⁹ Ritu Sharma, Kautilya views on governance and corruption IJRESS Vol. 7 Issue 6, June- 2017, pp: 84

¹⁰ “Guidelines for Value Based Management in Kautilya’s Arthashastra”, Journal of Business Ethics , Apr., 1996, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Apr., 1996), pp. 415-423.

the social contract theory of Hobbes have opened the way for respecting *Arthashāstra*, worldwide.

However these studies have a gap in analysis of their theory and practice. Until and unless the theory is tested by practice, the universal methods or principles would remain unknown to the public. The present study aims to fulfil this gap to find out how the principles of Kautilya are practiced within the Indian milieu. At least do they exist or not; if not, what can be done to implement them according to our present needs? Or should we reject the principles of Kautilya on social perspectives?

Hypothesis

The first hypothesis is: some ideas of Kautilya can be taken directly and they are being practiced by self-motivated leaders. The results reveal that the qualities for the personal development of a leader are present in their actions according to the way they are trained in their life.

The second hypothesis is: some practices in *Arthashāstra* should not be taken as it is because of the change in society from monarchy to democracy. For example, the protection of the king from his son; this should not be taken because no fear is needed for the leader of being killed by his/her offspring. In democracy, the leader is a political representative selected by votes of the people via election. In government services, the selection process is through competitive examinations. There also, government officials have no fear of losing power by their children. Their power remains in their actions.

Third hypothesis states that some ideas should be reformed according to the present context and practice. From the above example, the leader needs not to be afraid by the offspring but by the opposition party or to the people if he/she attempts any wrong deed.

Lastly, some words in *Arthashāstra* should be extended in its meaning according to the present context. For example, the word-king (राजा) - means one who shines by responsibility-राजते शोभते इति. In democratic countries like India, women are also allowed to participate in elections as candidates and they are also obtaining the position as ministers, IAS, IPS, and IFS officials, and as diplomats. So the word राजा in masculine gender should be taken as 'one who shines by responsibility' only.

Limitation of the study

The study is limited only to the socio-political aspect and to understand the chapters of *Arthashastra* contain universal principles of good governance. Only the activities of Dr.Kiran Bedi are taken for case study. This paper is not dealing with the economic aspects of *Arthashastra* such as taxation, budget etc. This study is limited to the selected chapters of the first book and one chapter each of the fourth book, sixth book and ninth book of *Arthashastra*.

Universal principles in Vinayadhikarikam¹¹ on leader's development

Science of observation

The science of observance (आन्वीक्षिकी), said by Kautilya, is one of four *Vidyas*. *Sankhya*, *yoga* and *Lokayata* consist of this. He says this is the most important *Vidya*. The need of आन्वीक्षिकी is there when issues (व्यसना) arise in the country or confusions occur due to rule of law. Vedas and the science of observation help to investigate what is spiritual good and evil in the Vedic lore, and material gains.¹²They help in better understanding of situations and application of law.

When a situation is analysed better and the nature of the problem lying in it is understood, it is easy to look for solutions. This leads to the steadiness in mind both in adversity and in prosperity.

In Pondicherry, Lt.Governor promotes field visits to reach out to the public. The idea behind this is that when you see the field where the problem exists, the problem could be better understood. The concept of observation is similar in both cases.

Interaction with seniors (वृद्धसंयोगः)

Interactions with those experts of *Vidya* in practice as well as those well versed in sciences help to enrich knowledge and discipline (विनय^a). Kautilya advises that the practice of interaction with expert senior officers should be done regularly.

¹¹ Name of the first book of Arthashastra

¹² R.P.Kangale, 1.2.11, pp:07

As a young woman, Bedi visited the Service Club in Amritsar frequently, where interaction with senior civil servants inspired her to take up a public service career.¹³ When she was posted in Delhi's west district, she implemented an open door policy which encouraged citizens to interact with her. At Raj Nivas where she was Lt. Governor of Puducherry, sessions for students to interact with her were conducted.¹⁴ Moreover, sessions were conducted for IAS trainees undergoing Induction training program for Officers at LBSNAA.^{*b,15}

Spirit of teamwork

According to Kautalya, a king or leader is like one wheel of a chariot. Kingship needs help; just a single wheel could not move the chariot forward. Hence one should employ ministers and listen to their views¹⁶. To run a government and effective governance, the *Amatyā*, *Purohita* and *mantri* should work together. They should listen to the needs of the public, feedback through spies and so on for ensuring public welfare.

Lt.Governor took charge of Puducherry on 29 May 2016 with an aim of building a PROSPEROUS PUDUCHERRY.¹⁷ She built Team Raj Nivas or "THINK TANK" and used to have meetings regularly called as "10 A.M Meeting" for sharing ideas, thoughts, collective thinking, envisioning and constant learning.¹⁸ Separate meetings with the officials were also conducted in Raj Nivas. Open house for the public to meet the officials without any strict

¹³Wikipedia_Kiran Bedi- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiran_Bedi#Indian_Police_Service_career

¹⁴Kiran Bedi-Lt. Governor Puducherry(YouTube channel)," Dr. Kiran Bedi meets schoolchildren" uploaded on Jan 21, 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FaDZN5TW9zo&t=1449s>

¹⁵Kiran Bedi-Lt. Governor Puducherry(YouTube channel),"Dr.Kiran Bedi interacts with IAS Officers" uploaded on Aug 8, 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CtioQDBkdrs&t=330s>

¹⁶ N.P.Unni , Eng.trans.,T.Ganapati Shastry, सहायसाध्यंराजत्वंचक्रमेकंनवर्तते।कुर्वीतसचिवांस्तस्मात्तेषांच शृणुयान्मतम्।।" (Srimulabhashya), pp:39-40

¹⁷ Forward, "Raj Nivas-The Last Four Years", 2016-2020, a Raj Nivas publication,

¹⁸ "Raj Nivas-The Last Four Years", pp: 04

*a विनय does not only mean discipline. Through knowledge one being disciplined by nature .

*b Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration

rules for telling their issues, and week-end 6 A.M morning visits ensured that Lt.Governor was reaching out to people. Green and clean Puducherry and water rich-Puducherry model were note-worthy activities of Dr.Kiran Bedi with Team Raj Nivas. By these, public welfare of people in Puducherry was ensured. Documentation, repository and digital publications provided these details to all worldwide. Kiran Bedi governance model had transparency, people's participation, accountability, and efficiency.

Lieutenant Governor of Pondicherry

Intelligence and spirit, truthful in speech, not breaking his(her) promise, grateful, liberal, of great energy; some qualities of one easily approachable. Intellect qualities; desire to learn, listening, learning, thorough understanding, reflecting, rejecting false views and intentness on truth. Bravery, resentment, quickness and dexterity are the qualities of energy. Eloquent, bold, endowed with memory, intellect and strength, trained in arts, free from vices, able to lead the army, seeing long and far, not laughing in an undignified manner, without a frown, devoid of passion, greed, stiffness, fickleness, troublesomeness and slanderously, sweet in speech, speaking with a smile and with dignity, with conduct conforming to the advice of elders- these are personal excellences.¹⁹

Most of these qualities can be seen in Lieutenant Governor of Pondicherry, Dr.Kiran Bedi (based on YouTube videos). Though Pondicherry is a small union territory compared to the size of India, it became prosperous by the good governance practiced by Lt.Governor. Kautilya says if a king(leader) is enriched with personal excellence and good qualities and good team, even a small land always prospers and progress never falls down.²⁰

Thus, the core principles of *Arthashastra* are practiced in democratic milieu. So *Arthashastra* is relevant today, as evidenced.

Purvapaksha

The activities of Dr. Kiran Bedi, the reformation of the prisoners at Tihar Jail was inevitable. In *Arthashastra*, Kautilya has not mentioned about the transformation of prisoners like what

¹⁹ R.P.Kangale, Kautilya Arthashastra, vol.2, 6.1.1-6, pp:364-365

²⁰ T.Ganapati Shastry, "आत्मवांस्त्वल्पदेशोपि युक्तः प्रकृतिसम्पदा। नयज्ञः पृथिवीं कृत्स्नां जयत्येव न हीयते।।" (Srimulabhashya), pp:229

Bedi did. Hence, the *puroapaksha* argues that without practice, there is no relevance for the principles / values mentioned in the *Arthashastra*.

Answer to Purvapaksha

The statement put forward by the *puroapaksha* can be agreed partially. The transformation of prisoners as that made by Dr. Kiran Bedi is not there in Kautalya's *Arthashastra*. But that doesn't mean *Arthashastra* is silent on correcting the prisoners. The context of conviction as a prisoner is different. According to *Arthashastra*, two types of Jails were mentioned- one for those convicted by judges viz. prison; second, for those punished by high officials for non-payment of fines. Prisoner-officer had the authority to order the harassment or torture of prisoners. A large part of the regulations were conceived with the protection of the welfare of the prisoners in mind.²¹ In the ending verse of ninth chapter on protection of all departments (सर्वाधिकरणरक्षणम्) in the fourth Book of *Removal of thorns*, it is said that the king should correct the officials who deal in money matters by the means of punishment²²- "In this manner the king should first correct those (officers) who deal in money matters by means of punishment; and they being corrected, should correct the citizens and the country people by means of punishments."²³ Whereas now, the context has changed. Tihar Jail has no official prisoners, alone.

It is correct to say that the Kautalya's principle of correcting the officials through punishment and correcting the citizens and country people is reformed as per present context. And Kautalya doesn't restrict the leader to be strict with his own policies alone. According to the need of the hour, reformations can be done if they benefit the subjects. Therefore, the case of Bedi is upholding the relevance of *Arthashastra* on the value "in the happiness of his people lies the happiness of the leader."

Moreover, the SWOT analysis given for her colleagues is also one idea of Kautalya to check the strength and weakness of the king compared to the enemy before declaring war with him. Though these are two different contexts, the idea is beneficial for understanding the strength and weakness of the examiner.

²¹ L.N.Rangarajan, pp. 489

²² T.Ganapati Shastry, *Srimula bhashya* (with English translation of N.P.Unni) pp.163

²³ R.P.Kangale.Vol.2 pp: 324

Inference

This paper was an attempt to study how the principles of Kautalya has been implemented in democratic India. The ideas taken directly from Arthashastra are the science of observation, interaction with senior experienced officers, control of senses, spirit of teamwork, and leader's happiness depending on public welfare. Though the way of implementation has changed, the principles can be taken universally worldwide. So, the first hypothesis is proved true.

The concept of SWOT analysis is the same; but that practiced by king and officers now is different. Since the liberal policy of Kautalya provides freedom for the leader to implement new ideas as per time and place, it is upto the experience of the leader whether to follow Kautalya exactly as such or with mixed ideas.

There are similarities and dissimilarities of implementing Kautalya's principles in democratic India. But the fourth hypothesis remains as it is. However, the purpose in the sense of understanding about the implementation of Kautalya's principles is fulfilled.

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Om Tatsat Brahmārpaṇamastu.

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