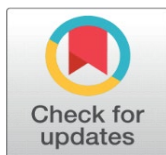
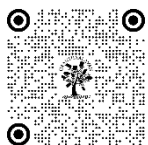


REVIEW OF KAUTILYA'S ARTHASHASTRA

Dr. Satish Patil 

¹Associate Professor, Department of Kannada, Smt Rudramba M.P. Prakash Government First Grade College, Huvinahadagali – 583219, Vijayanagara District, Karnataka



Corresponding Author

Dr. Satish Patil,
satish.patil.s@gmail.com

DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i6.2024.2057](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i6.2024.2057)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

Arthashastra is the oldest treatise on the composite government affairs. The Book has been described as a masterpiece, which covers a wide range of topics like Statecraft and issues of public administration encompassing politics, economics and administration. The principles of governance and Statecraft evolved and established in Arthashastra were followed by various rulers of India like Ashoka and Shivaji. The greatness of Koutilya, as has been observed by many scholars, is that he made the principles contained in his Arthashastra so applicable that even today find pertinence and utility. This article will focus on Contents of Arthashastra.

Keywords: Contents of Arthashastra, Perception, Communication, Power of State, State and Progression of Maps, Date and Authorship, Kautilyan Vocabulary,

1. INTRODUCTION

Kautilya was born in Takshashila, Gola district in South India or Patliputra in Magadha. Kautilya played the central role in establishment of the Maurya Empire under Chandra Gupta (321-297 BCE) – the first pan-Indian state extending over most of the Indian subcontinent. Chandra Gupta was a student of Kautilya who overthrew the Nanda dynasty on the wise counsel of his guru, Chanakya who became Prime Minister in his court.

His book, *Arthashastra*, has 15 parts (or books), 180 divisions, 150 chapters and approximately 6,000 verses or shlokas. Details about the King, his ministers and other officers are given in Book 1 Book 2 lays down the duties of the various executive officers of the state and state's role in activities like agriculture, mining etc. Themes of law and administration are given in Book 3 while Book 4 highlights suppression of crime. Miscellaneous topics like salary of officials etc are covered in Book 5. Constituent elements of a state and foreign policy are detailed in Book 6. Book 7 also covers additional details on foreign policy. Various calamities which may hamper functioning of a state are given in Book 8. Details pertaining to war preparations are given in Book 9. The art of fighting and its different modes are the main concern of Book 10. Book 11 describes how a conqueror should tackle oligarchies governed by a group of chiefs instead of a single

king. Book 12 highlights how a weak king can overcome a strong king while Book 13 describes how to conquer an enemy's fort. Occult and secret practices are dealt with in Book 14 while the last book highlights logical techniques and methodology used in *Arthashastra*. There is a widely held belief that the text of *Arthashastra* was *not* available till it was discovered by Sanskrit scholar *Dr R Shamasastri*. He found the 17th century writing on a bundle of palm leaves from a pandit in Tanjore in 1904. He published the text in 1909 and its translation in 1915. However, *Subrata K Mitra* and *Michael Liebig* in their 2017 work have argued that there has been a continuous oral and written transmission of the *Arthashastra* across time as well as a lasting influence of Kautilyan thought on the politics in South Asia throughout the pre-modern duration. *Max Weber*, one of the foundational thinkers of modern social sciences was the first Western social scientist to recognise the significance of Kautilya in his works, *Politics as a Vocation* and in his sociology of religion studies on Hinduism. Apart from Dr Shamasastri, another Indian scholar who devoted his research career to Kautilya is *Dr R P Kangle* whose three volume edition of *Arthashastra* was published between 1960 and 1965. Another important translation of Kautilya has been done by *L N Rangarajan* (1992) which is a simpler and rearranged version of the original work. Sanskrit philologists and Indologists have extensively engaged with Kautilya's work. However, their focus clearly differs from the research approach of political science. It should be mentioned that Kautilya himself states in the very first paragraph of *Arthashastra* that his work is a treatise on science of politics.

Before understanding Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, one should know the concept of four *Purusharthas* which are goals of human life or aims and objectives of a soul. They are *dharma* (duty), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (desire) and *moksha* (emancipation of soul). The times before Kautilya were dominated by *dharma* (promoted by religion) and regulated by *Dharmashastra*. Pursuit of *dharma* was superior to three other goals of life. However, with *Arthashastra*, pursuit of *artha* became an end in itself while other three aims of life were subservient to it. Kautilya separated polity from religion, something similar that happened in 16th century Europe when supremacy of religion was challenged by state's authority. *Dharmashastra* pertains to more social, moral and religious aspects while *Arthashastra* is more political and economic in nature. It is similar to *Nitishastra* as both are policy oriented and give due importance to discipline, punishment and sanction.

2. CONTENTS OF ARTHASHASTRA

Artha is the sustenance or livelihood (*vr̥ttih*) of men; in other words, it means 'the earth inhabited by men'. *Arthashastra* is the science which provides the means of acquisition and protection of the earth. *Artha* has been regarded as one of the *trivarga* or three goals of human existence, the other two being *dharma* and *kama*. *Arthashastra* has a two-fold aim. Firstly, it seeks to show how the ruler should protect his territory. This protection (*palana*) refers principally to the administration of the State. Secondly, it shows how territory should be acquired. This acquisition (*labha*) refers principally to the conquest of territory from others. *Arthashastra* is the science of dealing with state affairs in the internal as well as external sphere or in other words it is the science of statecraft or politics and administration. For Kautilya *Artha* is the most important of the three goals.

The breakdown of the *Arthashastra* is given below with some *sutras* highlighted for contemporary relevance:

1. BOOK ONE - CONCERNING THE TOPIC OF TRAINING: First *sutra* or 1.1.1 mentions that "This single (treatise on the) Science of Politics has been prepared mostly bringing together (the teaching of) as many treatises on the Science of Politics as have been composed by ancient teachers for the acquisition and protection of the earth". In book fifteen on The Method of the Sciences this is repeated at 15.1.5. Book One deals mainly with the training of the prince for arduous duties of rulership. It also discusses the question of the appointment of ministers and other officers necessary for the administration of a state. This prepares the ground for the establishment of a benevolent monarchy. *Sutras* 1.16.1-35 are the rules of the envoy. Diplomats today will connect with these *sutras* as they relate to the qualities expected of them during their assignments. However, the main *sutra* is 1.19.34, which states: "In the happiness of the subjects lies the happiness of the king and in what is beneficial to the subjects his own benefit. What is dear to himself is not beneficial to the king, but what is dear to the subjects is beneficial (to him)".

2. BOOK TWO- THE ACTIVITY OF THE HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS: This deals with the activity of various state departments and internal administration of a state. *Sutra* 2.10.47 is on four *upayas* on foreign policy (*sam*, *dan* *bheda* and *danda*). *Sutra* 2.24.1-33 on agriculture has ideas that sound as true even today such as in rain-fed agriculture with various types of crops, sharecropping, sowing season and irrigation charges. Later in 5.2.2 *sutra* one-third or one-fourth of grain which is not dependent on rain is demanded (like tax) for the replenishment of treasury. 2.36.26 *sutra* deals with the fine levied for throwing dirt on the road. This *sutra* can put most urban motorists of 21st century India to shame (those who fling waste such as plastic bottles and wrappers on the public roads). Singapore, for

example, is disciplined in this respect as it deters littering of roads and makes use of Kautilya's 2.36.26 *sutra* (probably, the country is not even aware that this discipline was in vogue in India thousands of years ago).

3. **BOOK THREE- CONCERNING JUDGES:** This book deals with the administration of justice and lays down the duties of judges and law. Laws were based on the Aryan system of administration. Today, the book is of academic interest alone as it relates to caste system and terms foreigners as *mlecchas*. British author Mark Tully has cheerfully evoked for himself the term *mleccha*. Sutras 26 to 30 of Chapter 3 (3.19.26-30) deal with the ecological system and levies fines for hurting animals, cutting trees, etc. This *sutra* can be utilized by our Indian Constitution even today for its environmental laws.

4. **BOOK FOUR- THE SUPPRESSION OF CRIMINALS:** This deals with the maintenance of law and order and punishments for various criminal offences. *Sutra* 4.1.15-25 contains fines for washermen and tailors who wear their customers' clothes on the sly. The acts for the suppression of criminal tendencies appear harsh from today's discourse on crime and punishment.

5. **BOOK FIVE- SECRET CONDUCT:** The secret conduct described in this Book is that of the king and servants.

6. **BOOK SIX- THE CIRCLE (OF KINGS) AS THE BASIS:** This deals with the circle of kings (*mandala*) and its seven constituents/ *prakrits* (the king, the minister, the country, the fortified city, the treasury, the army and the ally). The description of the *mandala* in this Book serves as the introduction to the Book Seven which deals with *sadgunya*.

7. **BOOK SEVEN- THE SIX MEASURES OF FOREIGN POLICY:** This deals with the use of the six measures that can be adopted by a state in its relations with foreign states (peace/treaty, war/ injury, staying quiet/remaining indifferent, marching/ augmenting of power, seeking shelter/submitting to another and dual policy/restoring to peace (with one) and war (with another). *Guna* has the technical sense of a measure to be adopted as a policy. To clearly show the top priority of diplomacy based on sound intellect the book concludes with 7.18.44 by stating "He who sees the six measures of policy as being interdependent in this manner, plays, as he pleases, with kings tied by the chain of his intellect".

8. **BOOK EIGHT- CONCERNING TOPIC OF CALAMITIES OF THE CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS:** This book deals with the calamities that affect the various constituents (*prakrits*) of the state. It is necessary to take precautions against those before one can start on an expedition of conquest described in following Books.

9. **BOOK NINE- THE ACTIVITY OF THE KING ABOUT TO MARCH:** The book deals with preparation to be made before starting an expedition and the precautions that have to be taken at the time. The geographic area is also well-defined and provides clues as to why India has never projected power abroad. The *vijigishu* in the text is expected to "conquer the world" which implies the conquest of the whole of India, designated as *cakravartiksetra* (9.1.17-18) – northwards between *Himavat* and the sea, one thousand *yojnas* in extent across. The book also covers the idea of campaigning season.

10. **BOOK TEN- CONCERNING WAR:** Deals with aspects of military matters. The last *sutra* (10.6.51) is probably the most popular idea which clearly shows mind over matter: "An arrow, discharged by an archer, may kill one person or may not kill (even one); but intellect operated by a wise man would kill even children in the womb."

11. **BOOK ELEVEN- POLICY TOWARDS OLIGARCHIES:** *Samgha* (oligarchy) is a form of rule evolved from clan rule. Fairly big states were formed with council of elders to rule over them. The only chapter of the book clearly shows that a *samgha* had more than one chief or *mukhiya*. In some *samghas*, the chiefs styled themselves *rajan* or king. It seems to be assumed that the *vijigishu* (would be conqueror) has or proposes to have suzerainty over the *samgha*. The chapter shows how he should maintain strict control over them.

12. **BOOK TWELVE- CONCERNING THE WEAKER KING:** The book expands ideas already found elsewhere, particularly in 7.14-17 above.

13. **BOOK THIRTEEN- MEANS OF TAKING A FORT:** The capture of enemy forts is recommended mostly through stratagems. Chapter 5 is devoted to pacification of the conquered territory.

14. **BOOK FOURTEEN- CONCERNING SECRET PRACTICES:** This Book describes various secret remedies and occult practices intended for the destruction of the enemy. A great deal of magic and other lore is incorporated here.

15. **BOOK FIFTEEN- THE METHOD OF SCIENCE:** This single chapter explains and illustrates the various stylistic devices to elucidate a scientific subject. *Tantra* means science. The last *sutra* 73 states: "This science has been composed by him, who in resentment, quickly regenerated the science and the weapon and the earth that was under

control of the Nanda kings". Under the sutra is written: "Seeing the manifold errors of the writers of commentaries on scientific treatises, Vishnugupta himself composed the sutra as well as the bhasya".

3. PERCEPTION, COMMUNICATION, POWER OF STATE

PERCEPTION (BOOK ONE): In matters of consultation and policy issues, which are applicable even today, Kautilya divides perception of top policy-makers into three categories directly perceived, unperceived and inferred. This simple matter of training and education demands that ministers and advisers need to be truthful. Today, the kings, ministers and top civil servants work from spacious and air-conditioned offices in five star surroundings and move around in cars and aircrafts. They are far from the grassroots. They need to understand the people's expectations before laying down the policies for administration.

COMMUNICATION AND WRITING SKILLS(BOOK TWO): Of interest in research methodology and excellence in writing or *lekhasampad* are *arthakrama* (proper order of presentation of a matter), *sambandha* (maintaining a connection from beginning to end), *paripurnata* (completeness), so that the meaning of the written text is clear by stating reasons and by giving examples and illustrations, *madhurya* (sweetness) consisting of words conveying their meaning with ease, *audarya* (elevatedness) or absence of vulgar expressions and *spastatva* (clearness). Absence of charm, incorrect (use of) word, and confusion are to be avoided in writing. *Lekhadosah* or the principle defects are *vyaghata* (contradictions), *punarukta* (repetitions), and *apasabda* (the use of words and constructions not sanctioned by grammar).

POWER OF STATE (BOOK NINE): According to the *Arthashastra*, three powers or *saktis* operate in a State. They are *utsahasakti* (the personal energy and drive of the ruler), *prabhavasakti* (the power of army and treasury), and *mantrasakti* (the power of counsel and diplomacy). Kautilya maintains that *prabhavasakti* is more important than *utsahasakti* and that *mantrasakti* is the most important one. This priority is like music to foreign policy-makers and scholars in today's international system where policy recommendations or council and diplomacy are considered the best methods of managing all problems.

4. STATE AND PROGRESSION OF MAPS

Arthashastra of Kautilya has no original maps. Till recently most books on ancient Indian history carried two maps of that era (Maps 1 and 2) derived mostly from Buddhist literature. Map 1 shows the 16 maha-janapds. It is clear from this map that Magadh was only in present-day South Bihar and the region, thus it was a small country. Map 2 is the later period of post Mauryan and Gupta period. Rangarajan, in his work specific to Kautilya inserted a full map of India shown as Map 3 of that period. Finally, the best effort is by Habib and Habib in 2012. Using the names of the places is Map 4 of India in 600- 320 BCE. In all maps a band of 500 years plus and minus has to be accepted in source documents to make the maps. This has to be seen in relation to the controversy of the date of *Arthashastra*. Maps 1 to 4 give an updated idea on the regions and the kings (states of that time) and the progression in map-making in recent times. It is unlikely that any better maps can now be made as most of the evidence has been used to prepare them (as quoted in source literature).

5. DATE AND AUTHORSHIP

It is not unusual to have different views on authorship of ancient works. There are two views regarding the authorship of the *Arthashastra*. The first view is that Kautilya was a single person who wrote the treatise. The other view is that the *Arthashastra* is a compiled work by authors under the rubric of Kautilya.

The date and authorship of Kautilya and even his existence have been debated by scholars. Some doubt Kautilya's authorship on the ground that in the book Kautilya speaks in the third person. But this was a common practice. Kautilya's date is more controversial. Historians such as J. Jolly, Winternitz, Keith, R. Schmidt place him in the 3rd century AD. One of the reasons advanced by them for not accepting Kautilya as a minister of Chandragupta is that Megasthenese and Patanajali refer to the Mauryas and Chadragupta, but do not mention Kautilya. On the other hand Shamasastri, Ganapati Sastri, Kashi Prasad Jayaswal and several others regard him as Chandragupta Maurya's minister and counselor who wrote the political treatise *Arthashastra* in the 4th century BC. According to Nilima Chakravarty, there is more evidence to prove that Kautilya lived around 4th century BC. For example, Kamandaka in his book on polity - *Nitisara* (which borrows from Kautilya), the Sanskrit writer Dandin in his *Dasakumar Carita*, Bana, and the author of Panchatantra state that Visnugupta composed the *Arthashastra*.

Dates for the *Arthashastra* vary according to historians from end 4th century BC to 3 AD. About its age even Indian scholars such as D.D. Kosambi and R.G. Bhandarkar placed the work in 3 AD. The conclusion of a workshop organized by the Indian Council of Historical Research was that the *Arthashastra* was a compilation made by a scholar Kautilya in 150 AD. According to Upinder Singh, the Mauryas (c.324-187 BCE) established an empire that extended over almost the entire sub-continent and even beyond it in the north-west. The period in question is 600 to 312 BCE beginning with Bimbisara, Ajatasatru and Shishunag where the Magadh emerged victorious over the kingdoms/republic of Kashi, Kosal and Vriji. The kingdom then gave way to usurper Mahapadma Nanda who inaugurated a short-lived dynasty till 321 BC. In 321 BC Chandargupta Maurya, a protégé of Kautilya who was his guide and mentor acquired the throne. Earlier he had successfully wrested the north-west India to exploit the power vacuum created by Alexander's departure.

Sutras 1.1.1 and 15.1.5 mention this single (treatise) on the Science of Politics has been prepared mostly bringing together (teachings of) as many treatises on the Science of Politics as have been composed by ancient teachers for the acquisition and protection of the earth. Sutra 15.1.73 ends with: "Seeing the manifold errors of the writers of commentaries on scientific treatises, Vishnugupta himself composed the *sutra* as well as the *bhasya*". In sum, Kautilya admits that it is a compilation of all previous knowledge, and it is done by him. No one challenges the quality and depth of the masterpiece which is of a very high standard. The focus should be on the essence of the work rather than on issues of date or authorship.

Leaving the authorship and date problem to be solved by historians, the next is the sources of manuscript. Before the discovery in 1905, it was thought that the text was lost. Vincent Smith in *Early History of India* which was published in 1904 claimed to have incorporated all sources. In his book the chapter on Mauryan dynasty relied on incomplete Greek and Roman sources. There was a thrill in January 1905 when an article by Shamasastry appeared in the *Indian Antiquary* published from Bombay. Table 1 gives the status of manuscript and original commentaries on the *Arthashastra*. It needs to be mentioned that palm leaf manuscript probably had a shelf life of 300 to 700 years and scribes had to copy the text over and over again. Even today libraries often treat a book as rare when it is 30 years old. It begins to wear out and thus reprints are the norm. Thus there is nothing unusual in Samasastry mentioning that the manuscript may have been a century-and-half old.

6. KAUTILYAN VOCABULARY

Some current events on conflict which can be spoken in Kautilyan logic and grammar may be: **1.** Geopolitical power struggle between regional *vijigisus* (would be regional power) like Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Egypt with the US as *madhyamika* and many countries as *Udasina*. **2.** Similarly, how in BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) grouping on climate change negotiations the four countries are allied against the developed countries and trying to stall the *vijigisu* attitude of the industrial countries (Annex I) of perpetuating economic imperialism by not cutting emission for worthwhile mitigation. **3.** How the concept of *chakravarti* as it relates to the Arctic region is developing between the Arctic Five countries – the US, Canada, the Netherlands (Greenland), Norway and the Russian Federation (all neighbors and likely competitors if not *aris*). **4.** The idea of strategic autonomy does not appear to be sound. All countries need an ally. Thus in the *Prakritis*, or the seven constituent elements of the state the seventh element is an ally. **5.** Just War/*Dharm Yudh* and Liberation of Bangladesh in 1971. With excellent diplomatic methods and negotiations India overcame a number of hurdles in the politics of the UN system during all stages. After the surrender of Pakistani troops India did not allow UN's role to be thrust upon it. India favoured direct negotiations with Pakistan and Bangladesh. It needs to be remembered that India never took undue advantage of over 90,000 Pakistani prisoners of war including civilians who were repatriated unilaterally after the Simla Agreement in 1972. According to the Indian tradition the war was a *dharmavijay* (just war). In other words, it was *jus ad bellum* (the Justice of Resort to War) and its conduct *jus in bello* (the justice of the conduct of war).

7. CONCLUSION

Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, composed in late fourth century BCE, provides an insight into the ancient wisdom of political philosophy. *Arthashastra* is defined as an art and science of governance, diplomacy, and war. The magnum opus was composed by Kautilya, India's greatest Statesman-philosopher, who is credited with the enthronement of Chandragupta Maurya, and the glorious expansion of the Mauryan Empire, which extended from Persia in the west (including Afghanistan and Pakistan) to Bengal in the east. The Mauryan army was colossal, and comprised 600,000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry, 8000 chariots and 9000 elephants. Patliputra was the capital of the empire and had achieved fame as the largest city in the world. Kautilya, also known as Chanakya and Vishnugupta, was the undisputed genius of the strategy that led

to the foundation and growth of the empire. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* provides guidance to a wise king to defeat his enemies and rule effectively on behalf of the general good.

Kautilya's *Arthashastra* provides guidance to a wise king to further the national interests of the state that center on issues of *security*, *wealth*, and *prestige*. Throughout the *Arthashastra*, three fundamental objectives flow from one to the other: good governance (promotion of the welfare of the subjects) leads to good economy (acquisition of wealth) that, in turn, allows for the expansion of territory. The concept of diplomacy is primarily to achieve world conquest and world consolidation. Therefore, six measures of foreign policy are recommended that assist the leader in managing the state through transition from a state of decline to one of stabilization, and from there to achieve progress or advancement. The policy to be employed depends on the relative power, strategic environment, and dynamics of the political situation. The aim of the policy is increase in power of the state at the expense of the enemy. As such, the *Arthashastra* has been identified as the first comprehensive statement of political realism. Kautilya defines war as *an* expression of the foreign policy of a state. He provides guidance to a king to employ the elements of national power to achieve a state of continuing advantage. Kautilya provides a *grand strategy*.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None

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