MP-IDSA
Issue Brief

Imaging Kautilya Beyond Popular Stereotypes

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Summary

The stereotypical image of Kautilya and his Arthashastra needs a conscious and proactive deconstruction and problematisation in the popular domain. To image the real Kautilya and his Arthashastra, one needs to be able to see social, political and cultural life from the perspective and philosophy of Kautilya, which is different from the truncated popular understandings and modernist compartmental worldviews.

Kautilya has been one of the most enigmatic characters in the Indian popular discourses on ancient history and politics. He is known as a practitioner and preceptor of politics influencing ancient Indian literature, texts on ethics (*dharmashastras*), law, governance and politics. As the debate on decolonisation of knowledge and intellectual discourses are intensifying, references to Kautilya in strategic circles along with other disciplinary intellectual circles are increasing. Scholars of both Global International Relations and Global Intellectual History have identified the *Arthashastra* as an indispensable source of knowledge that has influenced perspectives not only in the intellectual history and traditions of the Indian subcontinent but also in regions that have been in perennial trade, cultural and political contact with it.[1]

Therefore, nowadays, there are efforts to engage with the text to understand and interpret it with a contemporary rereading. This has created a demand for greater and sincere efforts to resolve the enigma around Kautilya, his concepts, ideas and thinking. The first problem that we face in the exercise is a stereotypical, popular and simplified image of the scholar-practitioner which distorts the understanding of his political philosophy and precepts. The stereotypical popular image of Kautilya is of an angry, resolute, vengeful, astute, cunning, unscrupulous, violent, deceiving, immoral and 'out and out realist' politician.

The imagined picture of a wrathful Brahmin with a streak of unlocked hair on shaved head has become the universal image of Kautilya. His persona in the Indian discourses though improved with the telecast of the Chanakya television series on *Doordarshan*.[2] As for politics and decision making in practical domains of reality, perception matters more than the truth itself. To rectify the damage done, the stereotypical image of Kautilya and his *Arthashastra* needs a conscious and proactive deconstruction and problematisation in the popular domain. Therefore, identifying the problem with the popular and stereotypical perception of Kautilya, this Brief highlights the various shades constituting his complete picture.

Different Contributing Sources

Chanakya was known before the modern discovery of *Arthashastra*, and texts like *Parishistaparvan* (authored by a Jain Hemchandra from the 12th century CE), *Brihatkathamanjari* (a compilation of stories by Kshemendra), *Kathasaritsagar* (compilation of stories), *Mudrarakshasa* (a play) and *Chanakyaneeti* (a compilation of axioms) in Sanskrit and their translations provided us the most of what we know about Kautilya's life and image. These

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[1] G. Coèdes, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (An English translation of Les États Hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie), Translated by Susan Brown Cowing, Edited by Walter F Vella, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1968, p. 26.

[2] India's official television broadcast channel.

texts present him as an intelligent man with astute political wisdom that he employed to the benefit of the Mauryan emperor.

As the stories in these texts may be disputed for being available in different versions, the manuscripts of *Arthashastra* are the most direct and authentic attribution to Kautilya and his intellectual contributions. The text of the *Arthashastra* was not in public imagination as it was considered lost till 1905 when R Shamasastry discovered it in the Oriental Research Library of Mysore. He published the Sanskrit version of the text in 1909 and translated it into English in 1915. Given the country's extremely low literacy rate in the pre-independence era, the intellectual community in India was miniscule, and the text of *Arthashastra* being complex and recently translated was not known to the masses.

However, the anti-British national movement of India took the discovery of an ancient treatise on politics as a source of national pride leading to quick translations in several other Indian languages. Contrary to the easy to understand original and translations of related play, stories and axioms, the text was written in a dry ancient Indian academic style with no reference to history, its characters and incidents. The abstract nature of the content and ideas made it difficult to understand and be picked up immediately by the common masses. Shamasastry's text became the source of the first authentic intellectual image of Kautilya and his *Arthashastra* for modern India.

Several manuscripts were discovered later to be compared, translated and compiled in a critical edition by Prof RP Kangle in 1960 as the most authoritative version of the *Arthashastra* in modern times. The text of the *Arthashastra* has been considered difficult and full of vocabulary that is unusual in the sense of its prevalence and translation. There are many words that have been rarely used in texts other than the *Arthashastra*.[3] It also contains nuanced abstract ideas that are beyond the understanding of laymen.

Therefore, the popular image (caricature) of Kautilya that we are familiar with is at first a product of the 19th and 20th century translations of *Brihatkathamanjari, Kathasartisagar, Chanakyaneeti, Mudrarakshasa,* and *Parishistaparvan* or *Sthaviravali.* They, being in circulation for a longer continuous period and comparatively easy to understand, secured themselves priority over the actual academic text even after it was translated and became available to scholars generating instant intellectual interest. Secondly, the image is magnified by a simplistic understanding of the theory of *rajamandala* after the discovery of the *Arthashastra* itself. Nonetheless, the text invigorated nationalist intellectual fervour leading to comparisons with Western classical texts, especially Machiavelli's in a physically, morally and culturally colonised India.

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[3] Udaiveer Shastri (Translator), **Kautiliya Arthshastra**, Lahore, Meharchandra Lakshmandas, Sanskrit Pustakalaya, 1925, pp. 3–4.

Brihatkatha, its Derivatives, and Parishistaparvan

Brihatkatha is a lost ancient text written by Gunaddhya in the lost *Paishachi* language. However, its stories have been retold in an abridged form later in the Sanskrit texts of *Brihatkathamanjari* and *Kathasaritsagar*. The texts along with the *Parishishtaparvan*[4] tell us the story of Chanakya that he was insulted by the Nanda king of ancient Magadh, so he resolved to avenge. He found Chandragupta Maurya, trained him and finally uprooted Nanda. During the course, there are stories about how he deceived those who harassed and pursued him and Chandragupta to kill. He himself has been portrayed killing a few of them by design. The stories give him the status of astute manipulator, learner and administrator as he guided Chandragupta to build an empire and govern. He is also portrayed as someone who was not attached to wealth and status, and only focused on delivering his duty. Although wise and successful, when old, he himself became a victim of palace intrigues and designs.

Chanakyaneeti

This is a source attributed to Chanakya through its title, and was not lost unlike the text of the *Arthashastra*. Several versions of *Chanakyaneeti* in Sanskrit and other regional languages were available. It is evident that 86 verses of the text of a *Laghu-Chanakya*, another title for *Chanakyaneeti*, was translated by Dimitrios Galanos, a Greek indologist residing in India during the first quarter of the 19th century.[5] The other titles for different versions of the *Chanakyaneeti* are *Vriddhachanakya, Chanakayaniti Darpan, Chanakya Rajanitishastra, Chanakya Sara Samgraha* and *Chanakyaniti Shastra*.[6]

It is also evident that some of the versions existed in medieval India as they have been incorporated in the Tibetan *Tanjur/Tengyur* which certainly is dated somewhere between 7th to 10th century CE.[7] The text is seen as carrying crystallised aphorisms of wisdom and values that are essential to live a good life, both ethical and practical. The reputation of Chanakya as a wise teacher was already established, well before the discovery of the *Arthashastra* by these texts through centuries. In fact, his name had become an integral part of the social and cultural folklore. The text harbours and propagates ancient-medieval set of Indian cultural values along with wise nuggets of essential and enduring behavioural understanding in the social context. The

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[4] The book was written by Hemchandra, the author of *Brihatkathamanjari*.

[5] Siegfried A. Schulz, "Demetrios Galanos (1760-1833): A Greek Indologist", *Journal of American Oriental Society*, Vol. 89, No. 2, 1969, pp. 340, 351. See also Ajay Kamalakaran, **"How a Pioneering Greek Scholar was Robbed of the Credit for Translating Chanakya's Words in Sanskrit"**, *Scroll.in*, 29 January 2022.

[6] Ramavatar Vidyabhaskar (Translator), **Chanakayasutrani**, Pardi, Bharat Mudranalay (Bharat Publication), 1946, p. 5.

[7] Ludwik Sternbach, "Indian Wisdom and Its Spread beyond India", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 101, No. 1, 1981, p. 102.

content of the text however may be judged as misogynistic and casteist, with a favourable disposition towards patriarchy and *Varnashrama* system (associated with caste and stages of life) in Indian society.

However, the central philosophical theme in the text is balance among *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (wealth) and *kama* (pleasure) dimensions of existence and social life, with instructions particularly on family, property, social hierarchy, right behaviour of the individual, social and political being. *Chanakyaniti*'s major contribution to Kautilya's image is the attribution of an all pervasive wisdom to him, for it being relevant from the personal, social, economic and political in the temporal domain to the after-life (real Kautilya does not care about after-life). The text makes Kautilya's persona larger than the life of a scholar-practitioner or a politician. He acquires the aura of a *rishi* (ascetic sage who knows the essence and value of life) or a preceptor that is always right to the extent of being sacred. The texts in the popular domain by the common masses have been perceived as having eternal values, attributing to Chanakya an image of someone knowing the eternal and the ultimate.

Mudrarakshasa (Rakshasa's Signet Ring)

This Sanskrit play was also in circulation before the discovery of the manuscript of *Arthashastra.* Based on linguistic and historical analysis, the play is supposed to have been written sometime between 4th and 5th century CE.[8] It was translated into English and a few other Indian languages during the 19th century, including Hindi by popular playwright Bharatendu Harishchandra. He was known for writing and enacting plays in theatre. According to RK Mookerji, the early life story of Kautilya can be traced through a few *Puranas*, Buddhist and Jain texts, but the greatest impression regarding the story and image of Kautilya has been through theatre.[9] This brought the persona of Kautilya to a larger public.

The story of *Mudrarakshasa* is about Rakshasa, a loyal minister of the Nanda king deposed by Chandragupta Maurya, and his official ring/signet that was by design used by Chanakya, the central protagonist of the play, to win Rakshasa over to his side in service of Chandragupta Maurya. The play has characterised him as extremely cunning and sly. The playwright acknowledges Chanakya's masterful contribution to the success and glory of the Mauryan empire, yet lets contemptuous words be used by Rakshasa for description of his personality. This may be seen as both a deliberate attempt to describe Kautilya with the words meaning crooked, as well as a skillful and neutral articulation of Rakshasa's perspective.

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[8] Rangeya Raghav (Translation into Hindi), *Mudrarakshasa*, Delhi, Rajpal Publication, 2023 Edition, pp. vi–vii.

[9] P K Gautam, *One Hundred Years of Kautilya's Arthashastra*, New Delhi, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 2013, p. 92.

The subject matter of the play is very limited and focuses on deceitful designs and plots from the two contesting sides, ignoring completely the scholarly and other dimensions. The play has created perceptions about Kautilya and his ways in the minds of the masses for centuries. Despite the discovery of the academic text of the *Arthashastra*, the caricature of Chanakya's personality created by the limited plot of the play remains lively in the popular domain. The play, however, doesn't seem to discredit Kautilya as perceived, rather indicates an awe for him. In a contest of treacherous designs of two crafty political protagonists in *Mudrarakshasa,* Kautilya emerges victorious, defeating Rakshasa in all his endeavours to oust Chandragupta from kingship. This victory over Rakshasa's designs establishes and seals the image of Kautilya as master of strategy and manipulation in popular imaginations of ancient Indian history.

'Chanakya' Television Series

A television serial titled Chanakya was relayed by Doordarshan, India's state broadcaster, at the beginning of the last decade of 20th century. The well-researched serial was written and directed by Chandraprakash Dwivedi. Stories in *Parishistaparvan, Brihatkathamanjari, Kathasaritsagar* and *Mudrarakshasa* are the main sources that recreated the personality of Chanakya on television. The series is the best among all dramatisations as it has made a genuine attempt to picturise life, culture and ways of the Mauryan times. However, the narrative and language used in the dialogues (screenplay) of the characters suffer from the common problem of presentism as it superimposes the current meaning of *rashtra* (nation) over the ancient meaning of *rashtra* (subjects/realm) with reference to organisation of states and the definition of the political self and the other.

The serial is one of the most influential lenses for imaging Chanakya in the popular domain. *Mudrarakshasa* had left the moral and philosophical considerations out of its subject matter, while the serial approached the personality of Chanakya holistically. It was also informed by the text of the *Arthashastra* that incorporated *dharma* (righteousness/ duty) as a variable in political decision-making. It emphasised on Chanakya's deference to *dharma* in general. Aspects of the Kautilyan way that could be presented only negatively in isolation of the context, were assuaged by the sections focusing on the importance of *dharma* (righteousness) and ultimately *rajadharma* (ethic of state).

The Incorrect Order of Upayas (As it is not 'Sama, Dana, Danda, Bheda')

People in India have been aware of the four *upayas—Sama* (Peace/Conciliation), *Dana* (Gift/Purchase/bribe), *Bheda* (Dissention/Partition), *Danda* (Force/Penalty)—associated with the tradition of *Arthashastra* as tools of manipulation and policy implementation in

popular culture even before the discovery of the text, but with wrong order and pronunciation (*Sama, Dama, Danda, Bheda*). The altered order has been reinforced by popular usage and organic transmission of language and culture without any references to texts or traditions. Television serial titled '*Saam Daam Danda Bheda*', a contemporary family and political drama available on Disney+Hostar, is an example of casual popular use of the four *upayas* without any research and textual referencing before finalising the title.

Another example using the wrong pronunciation and order is the title of a children's book by Hindi littérateur Mridula Garg.[10] She casually reiterates the wrong order that is organically popular among the masses, even journalists and politicians without being aware of the fact that order of the four words is important. The text of *Sukranitisara* was available before *Arthashastra's* discovery and it mentioned the *upayas* in an order same as that of the *Arthashastra*, i.e., *Sama, Dana, Bheda, Danda*. People also mispronounce *Dana* as *Dama*, since the contemporary Urdu word *Dama* means cost or payoffs which in certain contexts is similar to the meaning and spirit of the term *Dana* among the four *upayas*.

The order is important as both Shukra and Kautilya have their rationale for it.

> Sama is to be first adopted. Then the policy of Purchase. The enemies have always to be played off against one another, and the policy of punishment is to be adopted in times of danger to existence.[11]

> [*Sukranitisara*]

> In that each earlier one is lighter than each later one. Conciliation is one-fold. Gifts are two-fold, being preceded by conciliation. Dissention is three-fold, being preceded by conciliation and gifts. Force is four-fold, being preceded by conciliation, gifts and dissension.[12]

> [*Arthashastra*]

Researchers have not yet come across evidence that could be corroborating the order of *Sama-Dana-Danda-Bheda* rather than *Sama-Dana-Bheda-Danda*. It is also difficult to find a proper rationale to the reversed order of *Danda-Bheda* over *Bheda-Danda*. Still the popular order of the *upayas* prevails as it goes unchallenged in discourses. We do not know when the order changed in popular culture. Maybe more specific research could bring out the reason.

The Neighbourhood in Rajamandala (Circle of States)

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[10] Mridula Garg, *Saam Daam Danda Bhed*, Delhi, Rajkamal Prakashan, 2011.

[11] Benoy Kumar Sarkar (Translator), **Sukra-Niti-Sara**, Allahabad, Panini Office, 1913, p. 129 [Chapter IV, Section I, Sutra 73–74].

[12] R P Kangle, *The Kautiliya Arthashastra Part II* (8th Reprint), Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 2014, p. 425 [9.6.56-61].

Another popular belief about Kautilya is that he considers all neighbouring states as enemies. His theoretical framework and mechanism of the *rajamandala* gives a formation of 12 kinds of states in a region where a *vijigishu* (king/state desirous of conquest) considers oneself at the centre. The state in the immediate neighbourhood of the *vijigishu* is termed as the *ari* (enemy) and the state beyond the *ari* linearly in the same direction is the *mitra* (friend) of the *vijigishu*. On this foundational logic, any king or state who is desirous of conquest has to think in a spatial framework where the immediate neighbour is an enemy and the enemy's neighbour is the enemy's enemy. In sum, where all states are potential *vijigishus* while the neighbour is an enemy, the enemy's enemy is *vijigishu's* friend.

This understanding of the *rajamandala* framework has been stabilised in the modern and contemporary popular discourses, leading to allegations that Kautilyan understanding of the neighbourhood does not allow peaceful relations and coexistence with neighbouring states. But, a deeper textual familiarity and study reveals that Kautilya categorises the neighbouring states in three categories—*aribhavin* (inimical), *mitrabhavin* (friendly) and *bhrtyabhavin* (vassal).[13] The first category is in sync with the popular understanding, while the other two problematise it. Kautilya delineates the conditions also in which the neighbours could be inimical, friendly or vassal states.[14]

Now, the question is why the understanding of Kautilya's *rajamandala* framework gets distorted and simplified, calling all neighbours as enemies. The answer is that the framework is seen as a standalone and self-sufficient tool to understand interstate affairs, ignoring the context of its need, purpose of state and the meaning of *vijigishu*. One must note that all states in the *rajamandala* are potential *vijigishus* as they all assume themselves at the centre of the *rajamandala* framework and are expected to behave as advised corresponding to their strength and conditions within the *rajamandala*. Following this, they may overtime hegemonise the *rajamandala*. Neighbour of a state would be its default enemy if it desires to conquer or becomes a *vijigishu* to expand. However, if neighbouring states meet the conditions of a friendly or vassal state, they shall not be an enemy.

The *rajamandala* framework provides an academic tool to understand managing interstate relations with a desire to conquer and expand where the *vijigishu* and the neighbouring states perceive each other as certain enemies. If there is no desire to expand, whatever the reason may be, the neighbour would not always be an enemy, although it still may be so for several other reasons, not just for location. Therefore, Kautilya's understanding of the neighbourhood, to get the real picture and meaning, must be read and understood in context of the dynamic nature of the framework together with the theory and purpose of state. This is a framework where the identity of

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[13] Ibid., p. 382 [7.18.29].
[14] Ibid., pp. 316, 318, 382 [6.1.13-14], [6.2.14], [6.2.16-17], [7.18.29].

states changes their nature and behaviour.[15] It is not static, self-sufficient and isolated, fixing the character of all neighbouring states in all conditions as the enemy.

Academic Stereotyping

The description of Kautilya and *Arthashastra* as a realist text also contributes to his popular stereotyped images by both the Western and Indian scholars. Western scholars, both European and American, had at first questioned the historicity of Kautilya and the authenticity of the text.[16] Later they termed it as an extremely Machiavellian and realist text. Although the text has content that could be traced in both the realist and idealist traditions, academicians either ignored or downplayed content other than the realist highlights. Indian scholars also initially were inclined to read the text from the Western perspective.

Benoy Kumar Sarkar preferred to discuss the *rajamandala* of the *Arthashastra* in the context of a "Hindu Theory of International Relations", although the content of the text is neither religious nor communal. Although the language of the text is Sanskrit, supposedly the 'divine' language, it has an instrumental view of religion, customs and belief systems. It is peculiar to see how early analyses of the text ignored plenty of references to *dharma* (righteousness/duty) and focused on proving it an immoral rather than amoral or morally relative text. We may note the views of Roger Boesche and Torkel Brekke, two contemporary Western scholars, to understand the problem.

Although Roger Boesche in his work on *Arthashastra* recognises Kautilya's genuine concern for the welfare of people, he analyses and highlights his ideas on politics, use of force, and war from the modern and contemporary parameters of human and individual rights, labelling him an "unrelenting political realist".[17] He further states that "on each reader it leaves its mark, a chill as when a dark cloud blocks a warm sun. Is there any other book that talks so openly about when using violence is justified?".[18] Discussing the king's security arrangement in the *Arthashastra* he further says, "As with any king or tyrant, elaborate precautions were taken against assassination. None of this is unusual."[19]

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[15] Deepshikha Shahi, "Arthashastra Beyond Realpolitik: The 'Eclectic' Face of Kautilya", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 49, No. 41, 2014, pp. 68–72.

[16] Torkel Brekke, "Wielding the Rod of Punishment - War and Violence in the Political Science of Kautilya", *Journal of Military Ethics*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2004, p. 42.

[17] Roger Boesche, "Introduction", in *The First Great Political Realist: Kautilya and His Arthashastra*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2002.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Roger Boesche, "Conclusion", in *The First Great Political Realist: Kautilya and His Arthashastra*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2002.

Analysing the spying system, Boesche says that:

> Kautilya created a system that would be of "mutual mistrust" or suspicion, a situation in which a subject would fear confiding in his or her best friend or even a spouse for fear of being reported, a psychological isolation extending beyond mere loneliness. Although Kautilya genuinely wanted the general good for all, these are the methods of a traditional tyrant.[20]

Torkel Brekke while examining Kautilya on war and violence also highlights that he was "intelligent and unscrupulous".[21] He notices and investigates the theme of *dharma* frequently emerging in discussions within the *Arthashastra* as Heesterman asserts that Kautilya does not break with the literature on *dharma*.[22] However, he agrees that it is difficult for him to accept Heesterman's statement that "*dharma* always keeps hovering over *artha* (self-interest/ wealth) and the political science in India".[23] He fails to understand the framework of coexistence of *dharma* and *artha* within the text of the *Arthashastra* that is labelled as notoriously realist advocating expansion of states through violence and deceit. Although both Boesche and Brekke acknowledge the greatness, comprehensiveness and contribution of *Arthashastra* in political thought, not only in the Indian subcontinent but beyond, criticism emerges louder, Boesche equates him with a disciplinary nightmare and undemocratic supporter of tyranny.

Imaging The Real (Not Realist) Kautilya

The real imaging of Kautilya is complex and nuanced rather than simplistic, and at times inconvenient for both realists and the idealists. Boesche's problem is that Kautilya deliberated "openly" about tools and designs that were, and still are, employed by politicians clandestinely without discussion. He equates Kautilyan king with a "tyrant" for having elaborate precaution against assassination, as if this is not taken by the 'greatest' of democracies like the US and UK to save their leaders. He accepts that "none of this is unusual" but is tempted to label the Kautilyan ideal type king as tyrant.

Any isolated description of the system and ways of intelligence in modern democracies would also appear like the tools and methods of a traditional tyrant which Boesche alludes to. Therefore, to understand the functioning of a state system, one needs an appropriate context generated with the theory, purpose, political culture, ideals and ethics of the state under analysis. Kautilya's image cannot be painted through the brushes of ideological or theoretical fixations. An eclectic (in Western sense) or holistic (in Indian sense)

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[20] Roger Boesche, "Introduction", no. 17..

[21] Torkel Brekke, "Wielding the Rod of Punishment - War and Violence in the Political Science of Kautilya", no. 16.

[22] Ibid., p. 43.

[23] Ibid.

approach is required to understand the full picture of Kautilya and his *Arthashastra.*

We may also note that hitherto under-researched Kautilyan *Anvikshiki* (science of enquiry) gives a better, nuanced and holistic picture of Kautilya. To image the real Kautilya and his *Arthashastra,* one needs to be able to see social, political and cultural life from the perspective and philosophy of Kautilya, which is different from the truncated understanding of the common masses and modernist compartmental worldviews. Kautilyan *Anvikshiki* (science of enquiry), a peculiar combination of three different and sometimes divergent philosophical traditions—*Samkhya* (dualism believing in inferential methodologies and spiritualism), *Yoga* (emphasising conscious practice and balance), *Lokayata* (materialist philosophy believing in positivist methods and pleasure)—gives us the tools to sketch the whole picture of Kautilya and his *Arthashastra.*

The system eliminates distinction between the moral and the immoral and the perception of any decision or action becomes open to interpretation based on the context within a gamut of culture and conventions. The political anthropology of *Arthashastra* does not deny the ethical and moral dimension of life but considers it to be only partial and conventional, while the domain of politics goes beyond this, into the holistic and essential. Kautilyan political anthropology accepts the diversity of beliefs systems and moral precepts (*dharma*) which may clash with each other.

It is where the realm of politics and governance begins that has a different perspective on ethics, i.e., the fabric of *rajadharma* (ethic of state) in relation to *dharma*(*s*) of the diverse common masses. *Rajadharma* may appear, many times, although not always, as immoral and violent for some (but not all) within the society. The ethical parameter to judge observation of the *rajadharma,* contrary to the common *dharma*(*s*) may only be the fulfillment of the duty and purposes of the state as defined in the *Arthashastra* as "acquisition of (things) not possessed, the preservation of things possessed, the augmentation of (things) preserved and the bestowal of (things) augmented on a worthy recipient,"[24] for which keeping order and harmony among the subjects of the state using judicious coercive force becomes paramount.

From the perspective of the *Arthashastra,* violence, force, deceitful designs and expansion of the state are strategies to survive and thrive in an essential environment where states are ready to use them against each other. The world is dynamic and there are states that may not use these strategies, but that is only temporary as their aspirations, sense of power and values may change. These strategies are natural compulsions in an ancient political culture where violence was a legitimate tool to remove competition or change regimes due to their linkage with heredity.

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[24] R P Kangle, *The Kautiliya Arthashastra Part II* (8th Reprint), no. 12, p. 9 [1.4.3].

As the advisor to an emperor (*vijigishu*), Kautilya has a clear predilection for monarchy, however as an academic, he advises even oligarchies about what may save them from imperial monarchies.

> The Oligarchies also should guard themselves against these deceitful tricks by the single monarch. And the head of the oligarchy should remain just in behaviour towards the members of the oligarchy, beneficial (and) agreeable (to them), self-controlled, with devoted men, and following the wishes of all.[25]

Do we expect this from someone who advocates tyranny? He elucidates about restraint and how the opponents may be treated humanely during the conduct of war[26] which Brekke ignores entirely, appreciating Somadeva Suri who was inspired by Kautilya for mentioning the same.[27] No reading and practice of *Arthashastra* is complete without putting it in the context of its Book I elucidating the traditions, intellectual and philosophical groundwork on which the whole text stands. The real image of Kautilya is truly revealed with an understanding and insight into the domain and 'ethics' of *Arthashastra*, i.e., *rajadharma* (ethics of state politics) which may be judged through the philosophical triumvirate of *Samkhya, Yoga* and *Lokayata* in Kautilyan *Anvikshiki* (the science of enquiry), as he terms it the "lamp of all sciences".[28] Hence, one needs to go beyond the stereotypes and its casual reinforcements in popular culture for imaging Kautilya with its nuances and details.

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[25] Ibid., p. 459 [11.1.55-56].

Ibid., p. 490 [13.4.52].

[27] Torkel Brekke, "Wielding the Rod of Punishment - War and Violence in the Political Science of Kautilya", no. 16, p. 49.

[28] R P Kangle, *The Kautiliya Arthashastra Part II* (8th Reprint), no. 12, pp. 6–7 [1.2.10-12].

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