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Kautilya's Perspective On Ecological Development

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ABSTRACT

Ecological development refers to the adoption of sustainable economic growth, infrastructure, and social welfare in a manner that maintains the balance of ecosystems, conserves natural resources, and minimizes environmental degradation. It is the focus of sustainable development, aiming to balance human activities with the earth's ecological capacity. As developmental activities increase on a large scale, ecosystems and wildlife are affected. It is noticed that the exploitation of the flora and fauna for the benefit of human beings and recreation purposes has increased. Our ancient sources like *Arthashastra*, *Manusmriti*, *Brihat Samhita*, the Epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and many others highlight notions about environmental conservation, interaction with diverse biological entities, forest ecology, agricultural produce, water management, etc. It is quite apparent that people strove towards developing effective measures to safeguard their ecosystems and engage in sustainable development. This paper tries to analyze how people during Kautilya's time had a sound understanding of ecology.

Keywords: *Arthashastra*, Ecology, Environment, Kautilya

INTRODUCTION

The ecological balance is of utmost importance in the present era. Although its importance has been continuously highlighted by ancient authors like Kautilya, it is of paramount significance after the Industrial Revolution. Over the last two fifty years the rise in global temperature, loss of forest cover, increase in pollution, and significant genocide of thousands of species have disturbed the earth's ecological balance. Although the loss done so far is irreparable and irreversible even if we as a mankind do not awake, then the universe will find soon human race in the list of extinct species very soon. The conservation of ecological balance includes not only flora and fauna but also adopting sustainable practices like green energy. The ecological balance will benefit us by providing a clean atmosphere and will also help in reducing global warming.

Ecological balance and development have been an integral part of Indian society for a long time. India has a long tradition of protecting wildlife. It remains a long tradition of living with wildlife, living in harmony. Wildlife conservation and protection is part of our culture and tradition. Several references in Kautilya's *Arthashastra* show a high level of awareness regarding wildlife. Various steps were taken by Kautilya to preserve wildlife. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* depicted that the lives and activities of people of that time were greatly impacted by their environment showing a very close relation to nature and natural resources.

HYPOTHESIS

The policy of ecological development is quite apparent throughout the chronicle of the *Arthashastra*. In his *Arthashastra*, Kautilya describes the role of the state in regulating public practices and the duty of the crown to enhance ecological development as well as avert crimes against the environment and animals.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the environmental perspectives through studying the Indian historical source Kautilya's *Arthashastra*.
- To study how forests have been envisioned and perceived in our ancient historical tradition.
- To study the Indian model of eco-friendly living of people of the past with special reference to Kautilya's *Arthashastra*.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research is based on a qualitative research methodology called Hermeneutics. It is a special type of Content Analysis where it is tried to interpret the subjective and allegorical meaning of the text within its socio-historic context. These are truly interpretive techniques for analyzing qualitative data. It is assumed in this method that written texts relate an author's experience within a socio-historic context, and should be interpreted as such within that context keeping in view the systematic and objective description of the research study.

ANALYSIS

At its core, *Arthashastra* of Kautilya is the most glorious chapter in Indian history for wildlife protection and ecological balance. These were made duties for the whole society instead of the responsibility of an individual or the state alone. There is extensive evidence in the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya's concern for the environment and ecology. *Arthashastra* reveals a full awareness of the undesirable effects of environmental degradation, whether caused by human activities or natural factors. It was the responsibility of the state to protect its citizens from these calamities {4.3.1, 2}. In this paper, it is tried to analyze how Kautilya had a sound understanding of ecology through a study of the environment, forests, and water resources.

ENVIRONMENT

Kautilya informs that people were aware of rainfall patterns, soil types as well as appropriate irrigation techniques. At that time different crops were sown according to the suitability of the soil, water, climatic conditions, and workforce as mentioned in the second *sloka* of twenty fourth chapter of the second book of *Arthashastra*.

बहुहलपरिकृष्टायाम् स्वभूमौ दासकर्मकरदण्डप्रतिकर्तृभिर्वापयेत्।
(*bahuhalparikristayam savbhoomau daskarmkardandpratikatartubhirvapyet.*)

{2.24.2}

The *sloka* states that-

“He (*Sitadhayksha*) should cause them (crops) to be sown in land, suitable for each, which has been ploughed many times, through serfs, labourers and persons paying off their fines by personal labour.”

The text displays knowledge and concern about various living creatures – plants and vegetation, and wild and domestic animals. In *Arthashastra* various *slokas* are advising the protection of animals, trees, and forests. Punishments and penalties were specified for injuring and killing living creatures. It is mentioned in the following *slokas*:

क्षुद्रपशूनाम् काष्ठादिभिर्दुःखोत्पादने पणो द्विपणो वा दण्डः, शोणितोत्पादने द्विगुणः ।
महापशूनामेतेष्वेव स्थानेषु द्विगुणो दण्डः समुत्थानव्ययश्च ।
(*Kshudrapashoonam kashaadibhirdukhhotpadne pano dwipano va dandah,*
shonitotpadne dwigunah.)

(*Mahapashoonametesvev sthanesu dviguno dandah samutthanavyayashrch.*)

{3.19.26, 27}

The *slokas* state that-

“For causing hurt to small animals with wood and other things, the fine shall be one *pana* or two *panas*, double that for causing bleeding. For these same offences concerning big animals, the fine shall be double and payment of expenses for treatment and cure.”

मृगद्रव्यवनान्मृगद्रव्यापहारे शत्यो दण्डः।
बिम्बविहारमृगपक्षिस्तेये हिंसायाम् वा द्विगुणो दण्डः ।
(*Mrigdravyavanammrigdravyaphare shatyo dandah.*
Bimbviharmrigpakshisteye hinsayam va dwiguno dandah.)

{4.10.4, 5}

The *slokas* state that-

“In case of theft of deer or objects from deer-parks or produce-forests, there shall be a fine of one hundred. In case of theft of deer or birds (intended) for show or pleasure or in case of killing these, the fine shall be double.”

All of the tree parts were considered important and punishments were fixed according to the damage of the specific part of the tree. To quote:

पुरोपवनवनस्पतीनाम् पुष्पफलच्छायावताम् प्ररोहच्छेदने षट्पणः, क्षुद्रशाखाच्छेदने द्वादशपणः, पीनशाखाच्छेदने
चतुर्विंशतिपणः, स्कन्धवधे पूर्वः साहसदण्डः,
समुच्छित्तौ मध्यमः ।
पुष्पफलच्छायावद्गुल्मलतास्वर्धदण्डः, पुण्यस्थानतपोवनशमशानद्रुमेषु च ।

(*Puropanvanspateenam pusplachchhayavtam prarohchchedne spanah, kshudrashakhachchedne
dwadaspanah, peenshakhachchedne chaturvinshtiparah,
skandhavadhe poorvah sahasdandah, samuchchittau madhyamah.
Puspfalachchhayavadgulmlatasvardhdandah,
punyasthantapovanshmashaandrumsu cha.*)

{3.19. 28, 29}

The *slokas* state that-

“For cutting the shoots of trees in city parks that bear flowers or fruit or yield shade (the fine shall be) six *panas*, for cutting small branches twelve *panas*, for cutting stout branches twenty four *panas*, for destroying trunks the lowest fine for violence, for uprooting (the tree) the middle (fine). In case of bushes and creepers bearing flowers or fruit or yielding shade the fine shall be half, also in the case of trees in holy places, penance-groves and cremation grounds.”

सीमवृक्षेषुचैत्येषुद्रुमेष्वालक्षितेषुच ।
तएवद्विगुणादण्डाः कार्याराजवनेषुच ॥
(*Seemavrikshesu chaityesu drumeswalakshitesu cha.
Ta eva dwiguna dandah karya rajvanesu cha.*)

{3.19. 30}

The *sloka* states that-

“In the case of trees at the boundaries, in sanctuaries, and of trees that are prominent, these same fines doubled shall be imposed, also (in the case of trees) in royal parks.”

There were definite house-building rules according to the environmental conditions {3.8.6-19}. It was the duty of every citizen to maintain proper sanitation, and punishments were set for default. It ordains appointing superintendent of cattle, elephants, horses, and pastures to perform duties like protecting wildlife and preventing poaching of wild animals, ensuring adequate rationing to domestic animals and their proper care, compliance to norms regarding dealing with pet animals by their owners, regulating grazing by cattle, etc.

To quote:

- Superintendent of Cattle

गोअध्यक्षोवेतनोपग्राहिकम्करप्रतिकरम् भग्नोत्सृष्टकम् भागानुप्रविष्टकम्
व्रजपर्यग्रम् नष्टम् विनष्टम् क्षीरघृतसंजातम् चोपलभेत् ।

(*Goadhyaksho vetnopgrahikam karpratikaram bhagnotsristkam bhaganupravistkam vrajpryagram nastam
vinastam ksheerghritsanjatam chopalbhet.*)

{2.29.1}

The *sloka* states that-

“The Superintendent of Cattle should know about cattle looked after in return for a wage, tended with a tax and a fixed return, become useless and cast off, entered in the State herds by payment of a share, the total number of cattle in herds, cattle that are lost or have perished, and the total produce of milk and ghee.”

- Superintendent of Horses

अश्वध्यक्षः पण्यागारिकम्क्रयोपागतमाहवलब्धमाजातम् साहाय्यागतकम्
पणस्थितम् यावत्कालिकम् वाअश्वपर्यग्रम् कुलवयोवर्णचिन्हवर्गागमैर्लेखयेत्।
अप्रशस्तन्यंगव्याधितांश्वावेदयेत्।

(*Ashvaadhyakshah panyagarikam kryopagatmahvalbdhmajatam sahayyagatkam pansthitam yavatkalikm
vaashvpryagram kulvyovarnchinhvrgagmairlekhyet. Aprashastanyngavyadhitanshrchavedyet.*)

{2.30.1, 2}

The *slokas* state that-

“The Superintendent of Horses should cause to be registered the total number of horses, received as gift, acquired by purchase, obtained in war, bred in the stables, received in return for help, stipulated in a treaty or temporarily borrowed, according to their pedigree, age colour, marks, class and source. And he should report such as are not good or are crippled or diseased.”

- Superintendent of Elephants

हस्त्यध्यक्षोहस्तिवनरक्षाम्दम्यकर्मक्षान्तानाम् हस्तिहस्तिनीकलभानाम् शालास्थानशय्याकर्मविधायवसप्रमाणम्
कर्मस्वायोगम् बन्धनोपकरणम्
सांग्रामिकमलंकारम् चिकित्सकानीकस्थौपस्थायिकवर्गम् चानुतिष्ठेत्।

(*Hastyadhyakso hastivnraksham dmyakarmkshantanam hastihastineekalbhanam*

*shalasthanshyyakarmvidhyavaspramanam karmsvayogam bandhnopkarnam sangramikamlankarm
chikitskaneekasthaupasthayikvargam chanutisthet.*)

{2.31.1}

The *sloka* states that-

“The Superintendent of Elephants should carry out the guarding of elephant forests, and look after the stables, stalls, places for lying down and the amount of work, food and fodder for male and female elephants and cubs, that are being trained or are competent for work, the assignment of tasks to them, the straps and implements and the accoutrements of war, and physicians, trainers and group of attendants.”

Arthashastra gives details of the training, care, and treatment of cows, elephants, and horses. Kautilya had described the facility of veterinary doctors, who were to cure the ill animals. Various mixtures were prescribed to cure different diseases. But Kautilya fined the veterinary doctors when the condition of sick animals became worse because of wrong treatment. If the animal died they had to repay the cost of the animal. Kautilya had prescribed measures for the protection of livestock, particularly, cows.

वत्सो वृषो धेनुश्चैषामवध्याः ।

घ्नतः पंचाशत्को दण्डः, क्लिष्टघातम् घातयतश्च ।

(*Vatso vriso dhenushaisamvadhyaah.*)

(*Ghnatah panchashatko dandah, klistghatam ghatayatashcha.*)

{2.26.10, 11}

The *sloka* states-

“The calf, the bull and the cow among these (animals) are not to be killed. For one killing them, there should be a fine of fifty *panas*, also for one torturing them to death.”

There was death penalty for the person who killed cattle.

स्वयम् हन्ता घातयिता हर्ता हारयिता च वध्यः ।

(*Svayam hanta ghatyita harta haryita cha vadhyah.*)

{2.29.16}

The *sloka* states that-

“He who himself kills an animal or incites another to kill or steals or incites another to steal should be executed.”

One of the responsibilities of the state was to prevent cruelty to animals. Wildlife protection, conservation, and ecological balance were understood to be one of the main functions of the state. It also advocates using non-agrarian lands as sanctuaries or animal parks where animals were to be given complete protection and their killing or capture was forbidden. To quote:

सर्वातिथिमृगम् प्रत्यन्ते चान्यन्मृगवनम् भूमिवशेन वा निवेशयेत्।

(*Sarvatithimrigam pratyante chanyanmrigvanam bhoomivashen va niveshyet.*)

{2.2.4}

The *sloka* states that-

“And he (king) should establish on its border or in conformity with the (suitability of the) land, another animal park where all animals are (welcomed) as guests (and given full protection).”

अकृष्यायाम्भूमौ पशुभ्यो विवीतानि प्रयच्छेत्।

(*Akrisyayam bhumau pashubhyo viveetani praychchhet.*)

{2.2.1}

The *sloka* states that-

“On land unsuitable for agriculture, he should allot pastures for cattle.”

Kautilya was also highly conscious of the benefits human beings get from different kinds of animals. All sorts of animals, whether domesticated or wild, had strong defenses during his era. Kautilya noted an array of animals, including deer, various birds, fish, cattle, elephants, camels, horses, donkeys, pigs, goats, and sheep, among others. Cow and she-buffaloes were reared for milk. Several measures were taken by the state to protect wildlife against the negative effects of calamities. Kautilya devoted a full chapter (Remedial Measures during Calamities) in *Arthashastra* to suggest measures for preventing natural hazards.

FORESTS

Forests are critical in diminishing the hazard of normal calamities, such as landslides, droughts, floods, and other severe events. Forests improve climate change through carbon sequestration, contribute to the balance of oxygen, carbon dioxide, and humidity in the air, and protect watersheds at the wild level. Forests are the foremost biologically diverse ecosystems on earth, providing shelter to various species of insects, plants, and animals. They also have economic and social value by providing shelter, livelihood, and security for forest-dependent areas of people. Kautilya realized the importance of forests and appointed a high officer (the Director of Forests) to look after the forests. Kautilya had defined the forests as follows:

पशुमृगद्रव्यहस्तिवनपरिग्रहोवनम्।
(Pashumrigdravyahastivanparigraho vanam.)

{2.6.6}

The *sloka* states that-

“Enclousers for beasts, deer-parks, forests for produce and elephant forests,-these constitute ‘forests’.”

Kautilya visualizes forest as terrains to be controlled, exploited, protected and expanded, and a terrain into which the state must aggressively extend its administrative and fiscal activity. He advised that forests should be established, preserved and protected. To quote:

एवम् द्रव्यद्विपवनम् सेतुबन्धमथाकरान् ।
रक्षेत्पूर्वकृतान् राजा नवांश्चाभिप्रवर्तयेत् ॥
(Evam dravyadvipawanam setubandhmathakran.
Rakshetpoorvkritan raja navanshrchabhpravartyet.)

{2.1.39}

The *sloka* states that-

“Thus the state should protect produce-forests, elephant-forests, irrigation works and mines that were made in ancient times and should start new ones.”

कुप्यप्रदिष्टानाम् च द्रव्याणामेकैकशो वनानि निवेशयेत्,
द्रव्यवनकर्मान्तानटवीश्व द्रव्यवनापाश्रयाः ।
(Kupyapradistanam cha dravyanammekaikasho vanani niveshayet, dravyavankarmantantaveeshrch
dravyavanapashrayah.)

{2.2.5}

The *sloka* states that-

“The state should establish forests, one each for the products indicated as forest produce, as well as factories for goods made from forest produce, and (settle) foresters, attached to the produce forests.”

In forestry, Kautilya advised to pay proper attention to forestation.

यथास्वम् भूमिषु च स्थाल्याश्चानूप्याश्वौषधीः स्थापयेत्।
(Yathasvam bhumisu cha sthalyasrvanupyasrvausdheeh sthapyet.)

{2.24.23}

The *sloka* states that-

“And on lands suitable for each, he should raise plants that grow on dry lands and that grow in wet lands.”

In his *Arthashastra* Kautilya devoted a full chapter (the seventeenth chapter of the second book) regarding forests namely ‘The Director of Forest Produce’ (*Kupyaadhyakshah*). Forests were one of the major sources of revenue as mentioned in the first *sloka* of the sixth chapter of the second book of *Arthashastra*. To quote:

समाहर्तादुर्गराष्ट्रम् खनिम् सेतुम् वनम् व्रजं वणिक्पथं चावेक्षेत्।
(*Samahrta durg rastram khanim setum vanam vrajam vanikpatham chaavekshet.*)

{2.6.1}

The *sloka* states that-

“The administrator (*Samaharta*) should take care to the fort, the country, mines, irrigation works, forests, herds and trade routes as the main sources of revenue.”

Forests also hold an important place in state revenue in the form of dues levied for the right to collect forest produce.

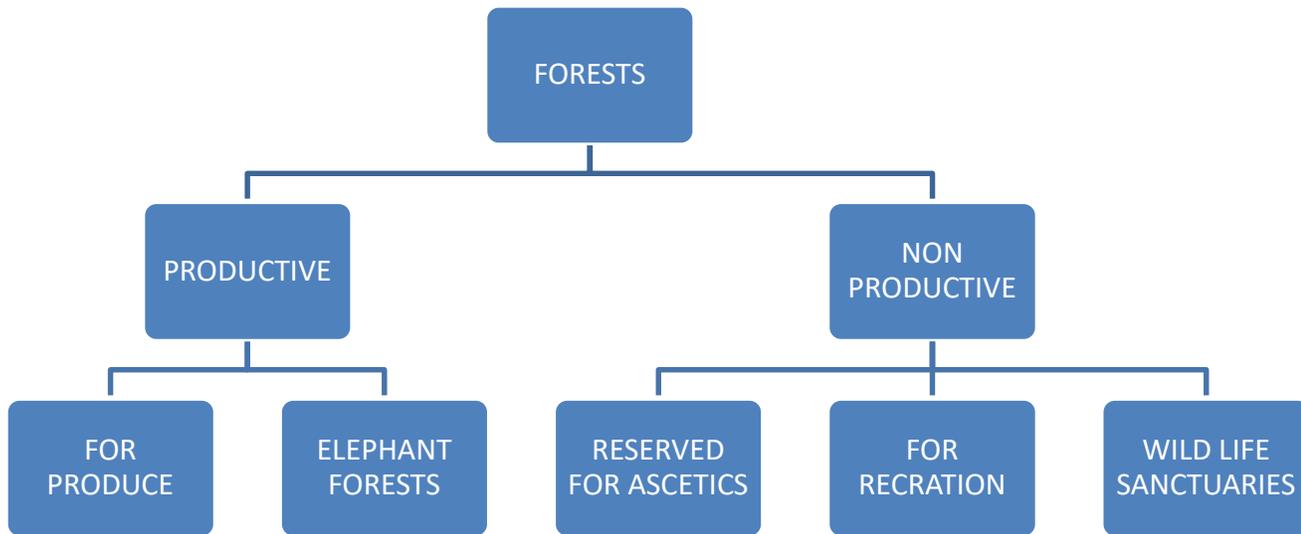
द्रव्यवनछिद्राम् च देयम् अत्ययम् च स्थापयेद् अन्यत्रापदभयः।
(*Dravyavanchidram cha deyam attyam cha sthaapyed anyatrapadbhdyah.*)

{2.17.3}

The *sloka* states that-

“The Director of Forest Produce (*Kupyadhyaksha*) should fix dues from those cutting produce forests, also penalty, except in cases of distress.”

Revenue was generated through the sale of products manufactured by factories that utilize forest resources. These factories were started by the Director of Forest Produce. Different kinds of forests are mentioned in *Arthashastra*. He classifies the forests into material forests, elephant forests (*hastivanas*) etc. in relation to their resource potential and utilization.



Among them, only two types of forests were important to the economy, i.e. produce forests and elephant forests. For producing useful articles, the factories were set up by the Director of Forest Produce. Kautilya prescribed for setting up of the manufactories to process the produce of forests and thus raise the income of the state and participants.

बहिरन्तश्चकर्मन्ताविभक्ताः सार्वभाण्डिकाः ।

आजीवपुररक्षार्थाः कार्याः कुप्योपजीविना ॥

(Bahirantashcha karmanta vibhaktah saarvabhandikah.

Aajeevapuraraksharthah karyah kupyopajeevina.)

{2.17.17}

The *sloka* states that-

“Separate factories making all kinds of goods should be erected, outside as well as inside, by the Director of Forest Produce, for ensuring livelihood and protection of the city.”

Kautilya realized the need to establish a forest administration. He not only appointed a Director of Forest but also classified the forests on a functional basis. He prescribed for the proper maintenance of recreational forests. The Director of the Forests was to promote forest resources with the active participation of forest dwellers. All forests were owned by the state. At that time there was also a special conservation of elephants. Kautilya had prescribed different types of punishment for causing injury to trees, their branches, fruits, creepers, etc. Kautilya instructs the administration that in the case of putting fire to the produce forest or an elephant forest, the incendiary should be burnt in the fire.

विवीतक्षेत्रखलवेशमद्रव्यहस्तिवनादीपिकमग्निनादाहयेत्।

(Viveetakshetrakhalveshamdravyahastivnadeepikamgnina dahayet.)

{4.11.20}

The *sloka* states that-

“He should cause to be burnt in fire one that sets on fire a pasture, a field, a threshing ground, a house a produce-forest or an elephant forest.”

Kautilya ascribes importance to the management and protection of forests as well as gardens, groves and orchards. They were not only recreational venues but also potential sources of revenue. *Aranyas* supplied honey, timber, oblation material for sacrifices, herbs of various kinds, flowers, fruits, roots, vegetables, wild grains etc. He emphasizes safeguarding particularly those forests that were watered by a river as those could be used as a shelter during rebellion, invasion or other kinds of trouble.

नत्वेवविद्यमानेप्राक्रमेअग्निम्अवसृजेत्।

अविश्वास्योह्यग्निर्देवपीडनम्च,अप्रतिसन्ख्यातप्राणिधान्यपशुहिरण्यकुप्यद्रव्यक्षयकरः ।

क्षीणनिचयम् चावासम् अपि राज्यम्क्षयाय एव भवति इति पर्युपासनकर्म ।

(*Na tvev vidyamane prakrameagnim avsrijet.*

Avishvasyo hyagnirdaivapeedanam cha, apratisankhyatpranidhanyapashuhiranyakupyadravyakshaykarah.

Ksheenanichayam chavaptam api rajyam kshayay ev bhavti iti paryupasankarm.)

{ 13.4.22-24 }

The *slokas* state that-

“However, when fighting is possible, he should not at all make use of fire. For, fire is unreliable and is a divine calamity, the destroyer of innumerable creatures, grains, animals, money, forest produce and goods. And a kingdom, with stores exhausted, even if obtained, leads only to loss.”

But he cautions that forest products should be used in a sustainable manner. He lays stress on the protection of specifically those trees that yield flowers and fruits and those that provide shade. Fines of varying amounts are said to be imposed for cutting a tree or any part of it, depending on the kind of harm afflicted. There were strict punishments for the people who violated the rules.

WATER RESOURCES

Water resources are crucial to the agricultural economy. Kautilya frequently mentions small-scale irrigation works privately owned and maintained. It delineates chief means of irrigation as river (*nadi*), lake (*sara*), fountain (*utsa*), spring (*jalakoopi*), well (*kupa*), tank (*tadaga*), reservoir (*adhara/udkadhara*). He also refers to the construction of dams on streams (*setu/setubandha*). He was entrusted to establish sources of water in waterless or water-scarce pastoral regions. In ancient days also, rainfall was not regular and equally distributed over all the regions of the country. Agricultural pursuits in the dry and drought-prone areas were dependent solely on irrigation water. In other areas too, irrigation was required during dry seasons. For this, Kautilya emphasized the construction of water reservoirs, wells, tanks, and fountains. He recommended the plantation of trees for soil and water conservation. People undertaking these activities were encouraged in various ways by the state:

सहोदकमाहार्योदकं वा सेतुम् बन्धयेत्।
(Sahodakamaaharyodakam va setum bandhyet.)

{2.1.20}

The *sloka* states that-

“The State should cause irrigation works to be built with natural water sources or with water to be brought in from elsewhere.”

अन्येषाम् वा बध्नतां भूमिमार्गवृक्षोपकरणानुग्रहं कुर्यात्, पुण्यास्थानारामाणां च।
(Anyesam va badhntam bhumimargvrikshopkarnanugrahm kuryat,
punyasthanaramanam cha.)

{2.1.21}

The *sloka* states that-

“Or, to others who are building these, the State should render aid with land, road, trees and implements, and also render aid to the building of holy places and parks.”

व्ययकर्मणि च भागी स्यात्, न चांशं लभेत्।
(Vayayakarmani cha bhagi syat na chansham labhet.)

{2.1.23}

The *sloka* states that-

“And the State should bear a share in the expenses and yet should receive no portion of the benefits derived.”

अनदुकेकूपसेतुबन्धोत्सान् स्थापयेत्, पुष्पफलवाटान्श्च ।
(Anudake koopsetubandhotsan sthapyet, puspflvatanch.)

{2.34.8}

The *sloka* states that-

“In waterless regions, he (the king) through the Superintendent of Pasture Lands should establish wells, water works and springs, also flower and fruit-enclosures.”

The above *slokas* indicate that the state helped those persons, who voluntarily constructed reservoirs, by providing those sites, roads, timber implements, and other facilities. It is somewhat similar to the subsidies given by modern governments generally to promote economic and social policy. The state also encouraged cooperative adventures of villagers in constructing reservoirs for common benefit. If owners neglected maintenance of their reservoirs for five years or made no use of it, their ownership ceased. Waterworks like reservoirs, embankments, and tanks may be privately owned, allowing the owner the liberty to sell or mortgage these assets as they wish. The king was the owner of all water. The water rates varied according to the modes of irrigation.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The vast mine of information supplied by *Arthashastra* indicates that people of that time must have inculcated and developed knowledge of environment and ecology. He emphasized the importance of protecting the forests, especially elephant forests, as well as the mines and irrigation systems. He was also encouraged to create new ones to ensure sustainability and growth. Protection of old as well as newly established forests was attached key importance by Kautilya. In the context of conservation of a nation's water resources, the *Arthashastra* would be very instructive. It is unfortunate that in India, despite six decades of planning, there is lack of efficient and equitable water management. Kautilya pointed out that irrigation should be planned. He suggested regional reservoirs with mass participation which is likely to create self-help among people generate employment and also create eco-friendly irrigation networks. The wildlife protection and conservation is a huge task in India with the growing concerns of illegal trade and exploitation of wildlife resources. This objective cannot be achieved until and unless all branches of the government authorities, villagers & local people residing in and around the protected areas, non-profit and non-governmental, the general public works together towards this goal. India is experiencing a concerning decline in its forest cover. *Arthashastra* gives an idea of how forests were perceived by ancient Indians. This is a clear example of serious concern of the state to protect forests. Destruction of a forest was not tolerated by the state under no circumstances. Kautilya, led by his empiric knowledge, had given enough concentration on the overall maintenance of all the productive forest of the State. He recognized the needs of human beings, environment and ecological balance as well. Kautilya advised that the state should be ever active in the management and development of the environment and ecology, because in the absence of these activities, economic growth and development are adversely affected. These prescriptions of the *Arthashastra* keep relevance in the modern age.

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