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Foreign Policy in Kautilya's Arthashastra: A Critical Analysis of the Importance of Rajamandal theory in India's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century

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Abstract

Kautilya also known as Chanakya or Vishnugupta was a statesman and philosopher India has ever produced is famous for his epic writing title as "Arthashastra". Though the meaning of Arthashastra is related to gaining of wealth but the primary focus of this book is on statecraft diplomacy and strategy in maintaining relation with other states. Arthashastra is purely dedicated to national security issues and regarded as a handbook to run an empire by following all the advices of Kautilya written in Arthashastra Chandragupta Maurya was able to defeat the large Nanda Empire and established a stable kingdom of his own by following this. National security is the prime theme of Arthashastra systematically classified as Saptanga theory and the Mandala theory. The Mandala theory is at the core of Kautilya's conceptualization of state affairs primarily deals with security of the states which has practical relevance in current international relations today. The theory and principles of Rajamandala (the circle of kingdom) is followed not only by India but by other countries of the world in maintaining their foreign policy even in 21st century.

KeyWords: Mandala, Foreign Policy, Arthashastra, Saptang Theory

Introduction

The Arthashastra represents the original political thought of Kautilya was probably written in 250 CE. This book was regarded as guide book for those kings who want to run an effective government, though there is detail discussion about each and every activity a king should follow but the most prominent discussion is on war and diplomacy. Arthashastra is not only a hand book for king in running his day to day state affairs but also a path finder in making international relations with other countries. It is nothing but a book of certain laws followed by the king of ancient times for successfully governing a state there is quite similarity between

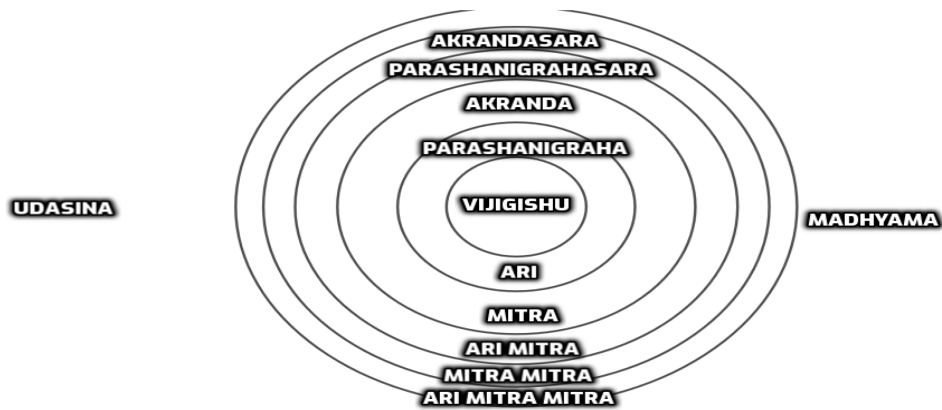
Kautilya's "Arthashastra" and Machiavelli's "The Prince" as both are regarded as a coded book for the rulers to follow. Arthashastra has a book has two fold first one is preservation of states that is related to internal security and second one is accusation of territories through expansion. As an expansionist Kautilya has advocated about preservation of states through good governance and welfareism and expansion of territory through to aggressive foreign policy (at that time it was aggressive war). Kautilya's Mandala theory is the basic of his foreign policy which are even followed by Indian foreign policy maker now a day. Mandala theory written by Kautilya is a theory of world conquest. In contemporary international relations, India is regarded as an impring power because of her fast economic development, wide cultural influence and strong military standings India's stance in international relations is very farm due to her strong foreign policy also. Which has its origin in Kautilya's Arthashastra. Till date Rajamandala theory of Kautilya as written in Arthashastra has strong relevance in India's foreign policy in 21st century.

Kautilya's foreign policy is not only based on preservation of state and maintainance of friendly relationship with other states only rather it is on expansion of state as well. According to him every state has an aim of conquering the whole world and this can be happened if the state will follow certain policies of her own. In eye on this he propounded the theory of Rajamandala or circle of the states along with six fold policies.

Theory of Rajamandala i.e Circle of States

During Kautilya time the Indian subcontinent was divided in too many Janpada's or small states. All the Janapada's were not so big in size but they had very hostile relationship between them. Janapada's or states were busy in war with one another. In this critical juncture the duty of the king was not only to protect his state but also deal with hostile king of the neighbouring states and had a thought in mind for expansion of his own state. Rajamandala theory was the plan or the blue print by following which a king can be successful in his world conquest¹.

The basic thought behind Kautilya's Rajamandala theory is that, your neighbour is your enemy and your neighbour's neighbor is your friend. According to Kautilya every sovereign state/ruler is surrounded by many similar sovereign states. Though all the adjoining states might have friendly appearance but they are not true friends and cannot be trusted. In this regards Mandala theory explains that if a state is at the middle of the centre her immediate circle will be her enemy, the next circle to the immediate circle will be the friend and this will continue in the same manner. The main objectives behind introduction of Mandala theory were only to maintain relationship among independent states. Kautilya named this theory "Mandala Sidhanta" because this theory advocate about working of states as a Mandala or Group. The Mandala concept is one in which there are circles of friends and adversaries with the king at the central point and his states. In Mandala theory Kautilya advocated about 12 types of king's states these are like².



Sources: chanakya's-mandal-theory-on-geo-politics-its-relevance-in- today-s-world

In Mandala Sidhant there is mention about fold policy to interact with neighbours which are Co-Existence, Neutrality, Alliance, Double Policy, March and War to achieve this king can apply five tactics such as conciliation Gift/Bribary, Dissention, Decide and Pretence and Open attack.

Importance of 'State' and Foreign Policy in Kautilya's Arthashastra

According to Kautilya state is not a creation of God as believed in theory of divine origin, rather it is a product of social contract by humans. The major objective of the state is to provide good governance to its citizen. Kautilya also gives importance to religion as a means to accomplish political ends. In Arthashastra Kautilya has advocated about different concept only with one aim that is the prosperity and well being of the state and its subject. He stated a detail about the role and responsibilities of the king in maintaining day to day administration and internal and external security of the state. The king should have fatherly attitude towards his subject. At the starting of his epic book i.e. Arthashastra Kautilya mentioned about seven elements of the state (Saptanga Theory). These are like the king, minister, country, fort, treasury, army and ally. Without these seven elements a state can't exist. Among these seven elements 'The King' is the most important one as if it is the brain and other six are limbs functioning, according to the instruction of the brain. It all these seven elements have proper co-ordination between them a state can became a powerful state³.

Being a practical statesman Kautilya realized that ethics and religion has no scope and values in international relations as all the states are busy in accumulating power and their focus is in fulfilling their national interest. Each and every steps of a king towards his friend and foes is based on the interest of the state. Kautilya was very honest with his teaching and arguments and followed principles which were actually in practice in inter-state level during that time and these are still followed by the statesmen in modern times.

Relevance of Mandala theory in India's Foreign Policy

In international relation you can change your friends but you can change your neighbours. Which suggest that geographic neighbours are fixed factor in relation making India as a country always believes in neighbourhood first policy in international relation. Being an active actor in international politics India always emphasized upon peaceful and stable neighbourhood based upon equality and mutual respects. India's foreign policy in 21st century also follows some principles but this strategy of India does not work always due to presence of certain

hostile neighbour's like China and Pakistan whose intention is always to harm India's strategy interest in international arena. Though India tried her best to maintain friendly relation with her immediate neighbor but failed very badly in her endeavour. In present day foreign policy of India Kautilya's Rajamandal Sidhanta is widely felt and accepted. In reference to Rajamandal India is surrounded by both friendly and unfriendly neighbours. India is surrounded by friendly countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan in one hand and foe countries like Pakistan and China and others⁴.

The constituent of the Rajamandal includes Vijigishu, (the Ambitious one), Ari (Enemy), Mitra (Friend), Ari Mitra (Enemy's friend), Mitra's Mitra (Friends Friend), Parshnigraha (Adversary in the Rear), Aklanda (Alley in the Rear), Madhyama (Middle King), Udasina (Neutral King) and Antardhi (Weak Intervening King). This representation is not permanent and can be changed as per the situation demands in international politics. In international politics there are permanent friends or enemies. The problem that faced Vigigishu (the ambitious one) faced in Kautilya's Mandal theory the same is facing by India in the 21st century. India has two adversaries in the name of Pakistan and China in the neighbourhood for balancing them India is developing military cooperation with Japan, Australia, USA, Vietnam, Singapore and etc. Though all the small states of South and South East Asia are being lured by the economic debt trap policy of China still New Delhi has applied four means of policies (Upayas) as mentioned in Arthashastra to please these small states. These four upayas are Sam, Dama, Danda, Veda. Repeatedly New Delhi is trying to lure Ari Mitra (Friend of Enemy) and at the same time maintaining Mitrata (Friendship) with traditional friend⁵.

In order to deal with the presence of China in South Asian States, India is perceived as Vijigishu as India in Rajamandala considers small states as its conventional sphere of influence and not just for strategic, but also for cultural historical and economic reasons. In the lens of Mandal theory South Asia states are Mitra (Ally) against China which is Ari (Adversary). In eye of above India's acceptance of India pacific strategy led by USA can be widely visible. The frame work for India's vision of Indo-Pacific is determined by creating a maritime Mandala along with Act East policy in search of ally to counter China's 21st century maritime Silk Road. As mentioned in Arthashastra India is also developing relationship with Himalayan states through Sandhi (Treaty) and Adistasandhi (Cession of part of Territory)⁶. New Delhi has treaty of friendship with Bhutan and Nepal to counter China's viable presence there. Neighbourhood first is the prime focus of the current foreign policy of India. In South Asian context India's application of four Upayas (Sam, Dama, Danda, Veda) has strengthen India's foreign policy. In 2022 Indian Prime Minister visited Nepal and offered prayer in different places of religious importance to gain attention of the public of Nepal. This an act of Sama meanwhile when there was economic crises in Nepal due to sudden earthquake India was the first country to offer help and provide economic packages for Nepal. This is regarded as an act of Dama. However economic blockade of 2015 was an action of Danda and use of domestic policy of Nepal to gain advantage is regarded as Veda with support of Indian Madhesi people are challenging the supremacy of Pahadis in each and every aspect of domestic policy of Nepal⁷.

Bhutan is a small country having common border with India and China. Traditionally Bhutan as a monarchy has maintained friendly relation with India. But in 2013 it was observed that Bhutan is gradually inching closer towards China. In results India imposed an artificial shortage of oil in Bhutan just before the national election there. This caused a political earthquake in Bhutan. It is regarded as a policy of Danda of New Delhi towards Thimpu. In current stage India prefers relation Sama and Dama over Danda as far as India's relations with Bhutan is considered. In case of Doklam conflict India with strong determination protected the territorial integrity of Bhutan from Chinese intrusion.

Other important factor in South Asian continent are Srilanka, Maldives, Bangladesh, whose are gradually swinging towards China now a days here New Delhi's foreign policy towards these states is primarily based on Sama (Appeasement). In recent economic crises in Srilanka India is the first country to send economic package and line of credit to Srilanka for survival of her staggering economic. Though, Srilanka has handover her one of the important port Hambantota to China for a 99 years lease strategically through policy of appeasement. India is able to get the right of developing one of the containers of business Colombo port in recent days. In case of Maldives though 'India out' movement is gradually gaining strength there still New Delhi has wide influence on Mahe. Through different project related to Urban Development, Health, Sports and education India is developing her relation with Maldives only to counter Chinese influence there⁸.

Conclusion

Kautilya's Mandala theory of foreign policy and international relation is not completely applicable in present scenario though we can't completely ignore its relevance it's very fortunate that the current foreign policy of India is based on Kutilya assumption of Rajamandals and Upayas. The application of the Kautilya approach to Indian neighbourhood policy indicates how Indian political destiny is driven by geography and policy choice and its execution (Upayas). India's current policies with South Asian states is based on Rajamdala or Mandala Sidhanta only to counter China's influence over these states. Though Indian policy maker has successfully suppress the Chinese threat though Upayas (Ways) mentioned by Kautilya but time has come to adopt a strong institutional approach to push India as chakravartin or the conqueror in world politics.

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Endnotes

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