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Anvikshiki in Arthashastra: Kautilyan perspective of economy and philosophy

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Abstract

This paper aims to discuss Kautilya's perspective of Anvikshiki in the context of Statecraft. The effort has been taken here to understand Kautilyan way of justifying the purpose of Anvikshiki in running state affairs. In general, the term Anvikshiki means Metaphysics or Logical Philosophy and Kautilya justified the addition of the same in the study of statecraft.

Key words: Anvikshiki, 3 branches of knowledge, Arthashastra, Kautilya, Economy, Philosophy

Methodology

This article is analytical qualitative and exploratory by nature. Primary data for this work has been collected from ancient texts like Arthashastra and other texts of Dharmashastra. Secondary data has been collected from, various books, online articles and database. The data used here is multi-dimensionally interpreted. Collection of information through review of Arthashastra and interpreting the classical thoughts went simultaneously.

Introduction

The study of Vedic text, Puranas and other classical literary works is an essential part of Indian tradition. Both the Orthodox and Heterodox schools of Philosophy have had immense influence on the socio-cultural environment of ancient India. As it is observed, Vedic or Orthodox Hindu Philosophy was in every sphere of life, starting from articulating the laws that the king used to make for his judicial system to the narration of story collections like Panchatantra. Precisely both Orthodox and Heterodox philosophies are inseparable parts of Indian life. Thus, it won't be an exaggeration to the fact to say that, philosophy and Indian civilization have adopted each other. Kautilya (c.350-275 BCE) was a visionary Prime Minister, founder of Mauryan dynasty, an economist, a diplomat and most importantly a man of Realism^[1] who composed Arthashastra and enabled King Chandragupta Maurya (reign c. 324 or 321- c. 297 BCE)^[2] to create a huge kingdom and brought almost all smaller kingdoms under one sovereignty. Kautilya's Arthashastra is a hugely popularized treatise that talks about the science of economics and at the same time combines the study and practice of Anvikshiki and Arthaneeti in Arthashastra.

Discussion

What is Anvikshiki –

The term 'Anvikshiki'^[3] is traditionally meant Logical Philosophy and Metaphysics. Anvikshiki, the word is originated from the root verb Iksh. The verb Iksh not only means 'to see', it also conveys; perceive, observe, regard, consider, think, reflect and investigate. Bhagavadgita explains the root iksh as, "Sarvabhutasthamatmaanam...ikshate yogayuktatma"^[4] here the vision is about perceiving Atman in all existing entities. In SiddhantaKaumudi the root iksh has been used in a different way, for example, 'Krishnaaya ikshate Gargah', here the verb 'Ikshate' is used in the sense of 'looking after' or 'taking care'. Apte explains it as follows, shubhaashubha paryalochayati^[5]. Thus, the meaning of the verb 'iksh' can be expanded much further than just 'Seeing'. Anu-ikshana can be taken in the sense, 'A minute search (within the self)'. 'The search within the self' can be interpreted or considered in many ways. As we have mentioned before, Anvikshiki refers Metaphysics. Although the term 'Metaphysics' have been explained in various senses and aspects by both Eastern and Western philosophers of various times.

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Metaphysics generally means the relation of mind and body; for example, the freedom of will or personal identity across time [6]. Thus, Metaphysics is related to observation through inner soul or Antaraatma and it denotes Atmavidya or the knowledge of Atman (Soul) [7]. Kamandakiya Nitisara [8] has explained it explicitly saying,

“Anvikshyatmavidya syaadkshnaatsukhadukhayoh |
Ikshamanostaya tatvam harshashokau vyudasyati ||”

The statement explains thus, “Anvikshiki is the science of spiritual knowledge, for it investigates the nature of weal and woe of mankind, through its assistance the real nature of things being seen persons renounce, both joy and grief” [9]. The knowledge of Anvikshiki is about the well-being of human life and by gaining this knowledge, happiness can be achieved, while grief may follow when the knowledge is lost.

The scope of adaptation of Atmavidya as a part of the study of Arthashastra has been vividly explained by Kautilya.

In his treatise, Kautilya referred the opinions of his preceding scholars and Dharmashastravids regarding the branches of knowledge but lastly concluded the discussion with his opinion saying that,

“Anvikshiki trayee varta dandaneetishcheta vidyāh”
[10] |

The sentence reads, Anvikshiki along with Trayee (3 Vedas), Varta (agriculture and industry) and Danda Neeti (law and order) completes the core of the four branches of knowledge. We will discuss this in more elaborative matter contextually.

What is Arthashastra –

Kautilya has started his book with a very significant statement that says,

“Prithivyaa laabhe paalane cha yvanyarthashastrani
poorvachaaryaihih prasthaapitaani praayashstaani
sanhrityaikamidamrthashastram kritam ||”

The sentence reads, ‘To achieve the wealth that has yet not achieved and to maintain the wealth that has been achieved, the older texts on the same subjects has been referred and an abstract compilation has been written.’ [11] Moreover,

“Manushyanaam Vritirartha | Manushyavati bhumiirarthah |
Tasyaah prithivyaa labhapanopayah
shastramarthashastramiti ||” [12]

The sloka conveys the meaning of Arthashastra in a simple manner saying, the profession of common people is Artha. The land related to the profession of people is called Artha, so the scripture that teaches about the procedures of getting land (as wealth) and maintaining the same is known as Arthashastra. Kautilya Arthashastra is a book of statecraft, that emphasized Artha Neeti which is generally known as the Science of Economics, although Arthashastra is having a multi-dimensional analysis of socio-cultural-economical standard of a state. Artha as manifested by Kautilya is one of the 3 pursuits (Dharma, Artha and Kama) of Moksha and signifies much more than only ‘wealth’, where material wellbeing is just a part of this study. Kautilyan perspective of Artha is much broader in sense and deeper in connotation. Kangle contends about Kautilya’s intension in conveying the essence of the term Artha as ‘sources of livelihood’ [13]. Sources of livelihood involves achievement, protection and increment of wealth for common

people and state, which can bring into happiness. Achievement of happiness and prosperity in a *positive* manner has been referred in a compact term, ‘Yogakshemasadhanam’ [14]. Arthashastra discusses about prosperous livelihood for individual as well as for society and administrative system.

Kautilya combined Anvikshiki and Artha Neeti in Arthashastra. At the very beginning of his treatise Kautilya have mentioned Anvikshiki or Logical Philosophy as an inseparable part of the study of common human life since it deals with the peripheral knowledge and at the same time holds a deep understanding of the ethical aspect of life.

Apparently, this great Economist tried to bring philosophy into the study of statecraft for keeping the standard of common life as well-structured as possible. He says in Vinayadhikaranam that,

“Samkhyam yogo lokayatam chetyanvikshiki” [15]

Anvikshiki or the knowledge of metaphysical world, is a combination of Samkhya [16], Yoga [17] and Lokaayata [18] Darshana. Out of the 6 schools of Indian Hindu philosophy [19], 3 schools are included in Anvikshiki and Kautilya estimated those to be effectively giving support to create a strong base to his theories of statecraft. Samkhya and Yoga are recognised as Aastika or Orthodox (schools of philosophy who believe in the supremacy of Veda) school of philosophy. Samkhya Darshana of sage Kapila (c. 6th century BCE) adopts a theory of Dualism where matter, known as Prakriti and the eternal spirit, known as Purusha emerges with each other [20]. Yoga Darshana embedded on Yoga Sutras of Patañjali (2nd century BCE to 5th century BCE). The practical aspect of Yoga Darshana is much more significant than its intellectual content which is largely based on the philosophy of Samkhya [21]. Thus, both Samkhya and Yoga philosophy hold that, spiritual liberation or Moksha can be achieved when Purusha (consciousness) is liberated from the bondage of Prakriti (matter). Yoga Darshana helps in achieving this liberation through acquisition and perpetuation of various states of mind. Liberating the conscious soul from matter can be done through meditation which can also be defined as a variation of perception or Ikshana. This perception is for spiritual liberation that happens on the Soul getting freed from the bondage of materialistic world which is originated from ignorance or Agyanam [22] and illusion or Maya [23].

On the other hand, Charvak or Lokayata is an ancient school of philosophy that talks about direct perception, denies the acceptance of knowledge without adequate evidence and refuse to accept ritualism and supernaturalism [24]. The term ‘Supernaturalism’ is directed from the term ‘Supernatural’, it refers, the concept of the existence of entity beyond the world of perception or space time universe [25].

While analysing the reason for Kautilya’s preference in including Anvikshiki as one of the four branches of knowledge, the answer lies in the following shloka,

“Pradeepah sarvavidyaanaamupayah
sarvakarmanaam |
Aashrayah sarvadharmanaam
shashwadaanvikshakee mataa ||”

The sloka conveys the meaning as follows, the knowledge of Anvikshiki is like the illuminator of all other branches of knowledge, the medium for all actions and the protector of all principles. Kautilya might have considered the consciousness as self-introspection or Svadhyaya. Svadhyaya is a virtuous

observance that is associated with introspection and ‘study of self’, according to various scholars [26]. Self-introspection is required to have a balanced life. When narrating about the purpose of the study of Arthashastra, it appears to be a conscious effort taken by Kautilya to convey that, this text is not only about economics, statecraft or taxation, it gives an overall idea about the responsible handling of resources, life and livelihood by individual and state. The mature handling of life is possible through self-introspection and self-introspection is possible only when Anvikshiki is adopted in life as a part of knowledge. Apparently self-introspection helps in reviving the ‘ethical self’ of individual.

Kautilya imposes morality in his treatise on people of all levels of society including king. The Six Elements of Prakriti [27], known as Rajasampatti [28] must be maintained and enhanced by an Atmasampanna [29] king and once the king is successful to establish himself as an ideal ruler, the ethical standard of his people likely to get maintained. As a visionary statesman and a realist, Kautilya realised the need of responsible management of the Elements of states (which are the wealth of the state) for the sustainable development of it. A conscious consumption of resources of the state appears to be the key message given by Kautilya in Arthashastra and the conscious consumption of elements in life and ethics in soul needs consciousness. In his point of analysis Arthashastra gets its root strengthened by the inclusion of Samkhya and Yoga philosophy. Whereas the realist approach of Lokayata Darshana has been perceived in every sphere of the narrative development of Arthashastra. Moreover, a realist approach towards life can get sustainable happiness and content to the individual. A happy and content human can lead an ethically stable life and can gradually progress towards spiritual liberation in the mortal life itself. Here the *probable* meaning of liberation is the freedom from vices in the present human life and not exactly the liberation of soul after the destruction of body. Kautilya strongly proposes the practice of morality in life that can possibly liberate one from the vices generated out of Vyasanas. In the 5th chapter of Arthashastra, named Indriyajayah: Arishadvargatyagah, a supportive narration is given in an elaborate manner [30]. There are good number of examples of kings being imperialist yet successfully ruling the benevolent kingdom. King Ashoka (r. 268-232BCE) of Mauryan dynasty is one among them. Ashoka expressed his concern for the ‘welfare of the whole world’ in his Kalinga Edict VI [31]. King Ashoka is honoured as one of the greatest kings of India due to his policy of *Ahimsa* (non-violence) that was able to spread the message of love and compassion across the continent. King Ashoka’s self-introspection and transformation post Kalinga War (262 BC) is significant from the political, social, religious and ethical perspective. Akbar the Great (1542AD- 1605AD), was another name that surely requires a mention in this context. Mughal emperor Akbar gave a large boundary to Mughal kingdom during his rule, although his feudal policies and indiscriminating nature of administration made him popular among both of his Muslim and Hindu subjects. His policy of conciliation and conquest with Rajput and other kings gave him diplomatic victory, economic support by collecting tributes and supply of troops when needed. Akbar waived off Zizia tax from Hindu pilgrims and appointed Rajput princes for highest ranks as generals and provincial governors. Thus, he became an emperor far more successful than any previous Muslim ruler in winning the cooperation of Hindus in all levels of his administration [32]. Ashoka and Akbar, have shown their respect towards rights of common people, going above the political or diplomatic achievement. Both these rulers have

conquered many battles, ruled huge kingdom and at the same time win over the heart of their people by showing compassion towards them.

Arthashastra has an analytical read on Dharmadharma [33] (righteous or sinful act) and Arthaanartha (financial loss and profit) and Shasana or administrative system-oriented discussions as he mentions about Vedic knowledge, knowledge of Varta (livelihood) and Danda Neeti (law and order) respectively. It appears, the treatise of Kautilya doesn’t stick to the analytical discussion of economy but spreads over to the socio-political-cultural aspect of common life too. Arthashastra talks about how Anvikshiki helps implementing the knowledge of shastras by putting logistics into it while prioritising the practical application of the same. The theory of spiritual liberation is taken into consideration by Kautilya as a goal of human life where means of attaining liberation is direct perception towards life and livelihood in order to enjoy the maximum possible opportunities provided by Metaphysical world.

Kautilya advocated the imperialistic approach of a victorious king and suggests every possible decision to be taken that empowers the king diplomatically and economically. Shaadgunya or the Six-fold policies of inter-state relationship contains the analysis about the flexible implementation of theoretical knowledge [34] and being a realist statesman, he says,

“Vivaade Dharmamanusaret” | [35]

Which means, the righteous path should be followed while in conflict. This approach of Kautilya appears to be a result of his analytical skills in leadership ethics. Being a visionary statesman, he understood the need of making a system through ethical yet diplomatic path. The inclusion of Lokayata Darshana in Anvikshiki along with Samkhya -Yoga appears to be an interesting concept of *merging spiritualism with realism*. The same can be said about Anvikshiki and Arthashastra too. A conscious harmonisation between the practice of philosophy and economics in life might be the reason why Arthashastra is vastly accepted in the world of scholars from various domains. While standardizing livelihood, moral aspect of life must be given high importance. Ostensibly in this point Kautilya wanted to combine philosophy and economics to strengthen the roots of an orthodox society.

Conclusion

The present article tried to encapsulate the way amalgamation of philosophy, economics and statecraft is done by Kautilya in Arthashastra. Arthashastra became an authoritative yet highly popularized text of its kind due to its balanced proposition of handling administrative policies in an ethical way which is embedded on introspective analysis of human rights and regulations.

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