

KAUTILYAN PRINCIPLES AND ITS RELEVANCE IN INDIA'S MISSION LIFE

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ABSTRACT

Kautilya served as the chief advisor to both Emperors Chandragupta and his son Bindusara, he has been called Indian Machiavelli. He recommended a sustainable system of living that could go on indefinitely in time. The way of life presented by Kautilya cannot be dispensed with as traditional and outdated, for, his method of approach was time-tested. The ancient Bharat had been a world leader in all fields of knowledge – scientific and humanistic. India emerged as a sovereign, independent nation, proud of their indigenous capabilities and pledged to get rid of the curse of dependence. "Self-reliance", therefore, became an integral part of that pledge and a jealously guarded principle of independence. The generations of leaders were greatly inspired by the principles of Kautilya and tried to focus these on the formulation of the policies for sustainable development in India. Mission LiFE is one such India-led global sustainable effort to adopt a healthy lifestyle and mitigate climate change-induced devastations.

KEYWORDS: *Kautilya, Sustainable Development, Climate Change, LiFE.*

Introduction

The great Indian strategic statesman Kautilya (also known as Chanakya) lived around 23 centuries ago. Kautilya's opus, Arthaśāstra, accredited him to be India's greatest statesman-philosopher. Arthasastra is a timeless classic of the ancient skills of warfare, and political and economic governance, written in the late fourth century BCE. It went missing after the Gupta Empire fell (about 550 CE) and reappeared in 1904 after more than 1400 years of obscurity. The Arthasastra was discovered and published by Rudrapatnam Shamasastri, a Sanskrit scholar and librarian at the Oriental Research Institute in Mysore. In 1891, the Mysore Oriental Library became the Oriental Research Institute. The detailed explanation of statecraft in Arthasastra is remarkably up-to-date. It makes sense since human nature has not evolved much through the millennia: people like power, and absolute power corrupts totally. The text is incomparable as a practical manual on how to run a nation¹. People in Kautilyan society believed in simple living with high thinking. Moderate consumption is a source of pleasure. As a result, the enormous trade activity coupled with the natural resources of the country made India then very wealthy². Kautilya argued that economic activity is the source of wealth, and its absence causes material suffering. Both current affluence and future growth are in jeopardy in the absence of productive economic activity³.

The objective of the present study is to assess the relevance of the Kautilyan model of sustainable development in the context of Mission LiFE initiated in India as an ambitious vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to achieve sustainable development. The study is based on Qualitative research methods with importance on Narrative methods and secondary sources of materials.

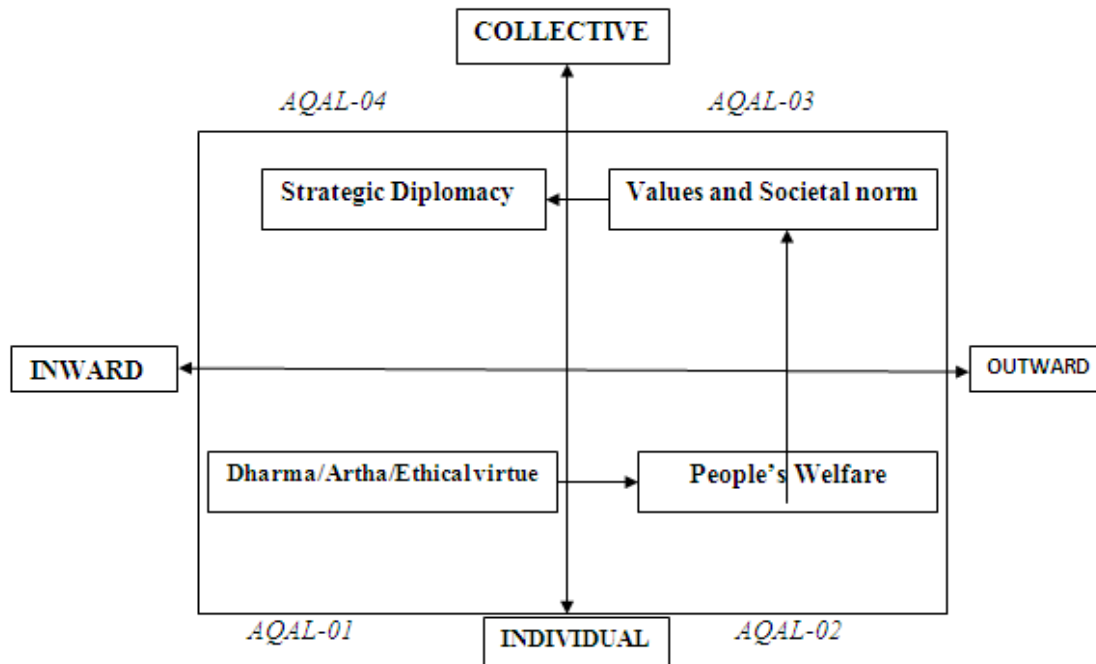
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Kautilya's Multifaceted Personality

Wilber (2000⁴, 2006⁵) and Gehani (2019)⁶ tried to unify a wide range of theories and thinkers under the umbrella of Integral theory which is based on All Quadrants All Levels (AQAL). It made use of two dimensions: (1) inward to outward orientation and (2) individual-to-collective actions. According to this model, the axes of interior-exterior and individual-collective can be used to arrange all human knowledge and experience in a four-quadrant grid. In the 21st century technological disruptions complexity and dynamic economic and ecological uncertainty will likely cause chaos. This 4-quadrant model of an integral leader is better equipped to handle these challenges.

The foundation of governance of the kingdom is Kautilya's emphasis on *rajadharma* as one of the four *purusharthas*—*dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*. Furthermore, he promoted the moral virtue of using one's wealth and income to advance societal welfare as a proponent of dharmic capitalism. This reflects the leader's interpersonal character and falls into the AQAL Quadrant 1. Kautilya was very transparent and disciplined in his leadership as focused on AQAL Quadrant-1 and he consistently counselled the King to make public the policies that had been implemented for the good of the people. He was guided by his fundamental principle of *rajadharma* devotion rather than an exploitative nature. Kautilya is an Individual-Outward leader (Behavioral) who is motivated by the welfare of the people as emphasised in AQAL Quadrant-2. Kautilya's values and deeds which reflected his goals of improving everyone's benefit without causing harm to anyone are highly pertinent to this AQAL Quadrant-2. Kautilya consistently taught, encouraged and inspired his King for his belief in *dharma* because the King's actions were more visible. In AQAL Quadrant-3 Kautilya a Collective-Outward transformational leader (Systemic) outlined values and social standards to foster moral solidarity and unity within the Kingdom. He consistently emphasised moral and cultural standards as a representation of a contented kingdom. His external system which is the feature of the Collective-Inward Integral leader of AQAL Quadrant-4 based on economic policies, statecraft, strategic diplomacy and defense systems. Kautilya like other integral leaders is very introspective. But to achieve robust external systems and control, he did not act alone rather he worked closely with a sizable contingent of spies and defence personnel associates.

Fig. 1: Integral Theory depicting Kautilya



Source: Adapted from Wilber (2000; 2006), Gehani (2019) and conceptualized by the author

The various phases of individual and collective consciousness development are reflected in Kautilya's thinking. He makes sure that the state and its citizens survive by emphasising security, resource management and wealth (*artha*). He addresses the ambitions and power dynamics of rulers in both his war and governance strategies. Kautilya stressed that moral principles and power must be balanced with unethical means becoming necessary at times but ultimately leading to ethical ends. He frequently discusses self-realisation, greater wisdom and the ultimate objective of establishing a peaceful and prosperous society in his advice to rulers.

Kautilya's vision on Sustainable Development

In his Arthasashtra Kautilya introduced the concept of sustainable development which encompasses both environmental and economic sustainability. He recommended that to harvest timber and other products from forests a Superintendent of Forest Produce should be appointed in collaboration with those who protect productive forests. According to Shamasastri (2023)⁷ he will not only initiate productive forest projects but also establish appropriate penalties and compensation for individuals who harm productive forests excluding natural disasters. Beyond the wild jungles, there are three kinds of useful forests according to Kautilya. These were (i) forests used for hunting and other recreational purposes (ii) ones that are profitable for gathering forest products such as timber and (iii) elephant forests closer to the border where it is possible to capture wild elephants. Rangarajan (1987)⁸ pointed out that there was an abundance of land available for habitation. There were a lot of empty tracts and a low population density. Animal rations, medical facilities and a lengthy list of penalties for animal cruelty were all part of Kautilya's proposed regulations which demonstrated his concern for the welfare and protection of animals. To attain environmental sustainability the Arthasashtra advocated for prudent management of natural resources. Kautilya emphasised the role that soil fertility, water conservation and forests play in fostering sustainable livelihood practices. He underlined how the King has played a vital role in promoting sustainable development by passing laws that protect the environment and take into account the needs of future generations. Kautilya put forth the concept of intergenerational equity to ensure equitable use of natural resources. The intergenerational equity principle which emphasises the equality of generations in using and conserving the environment and natural resources is a prerequisite for sustainable development. According to Krugman (2013)⁹ future generations are suffering more from the current generations disregard for public investment and job creation than from merely passing on debt.

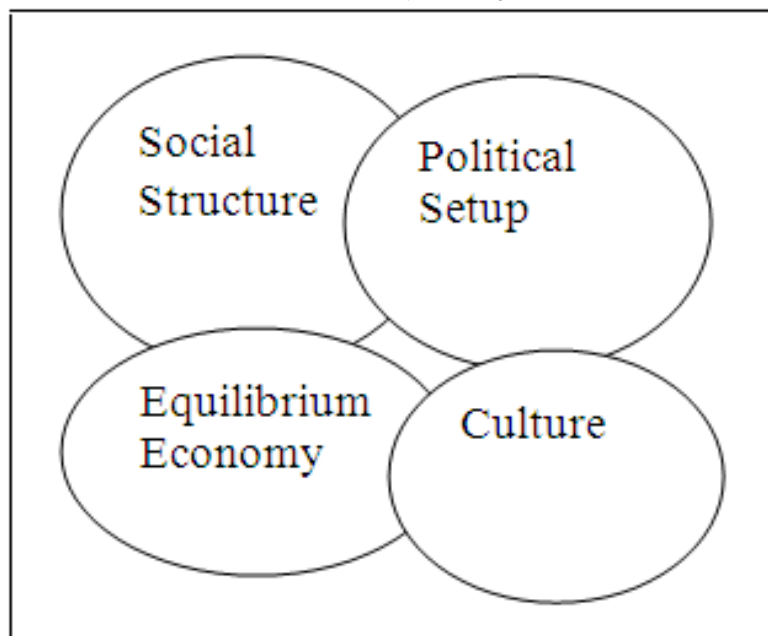


Fig. 2: Stimulants of Kautilya's Sustainable Development

Source: (Adapted from Bhalachandran, 2011)

Kautilya's model of sustainable development was envisioned with four structured stimulants. These are: equilibrium economy, political system, social structure and culture (see Fig.2) ¹⁰. People in Kautilyan society valued high thinking and simple living. Kautilya maintained that economic activity was the foundation of wealth and its absence causes material distress. Current prosperity and future growth are at risk of being destroyed in the absence of productive economic activity ¹¹. In describing a state's political structure Kautilya went into detail about the state's constituent parts and its dangers. Kautilya believed that a king with the best leadership, intelligence, vitality and personal qualities would be the ideal monarch. The equilibrium economy which prioritised maintaining the well-being of the population was the third driver of Kautilya's sustainable development strategy. His concept of economic emancipation placed a high priority on protecting the weaker segments of society by guaranteeing minimum wage grants and subsidies in times of disaster. The fourth stimulant that Kautilya suggested for the sustainable model was culture. He highlighted the importance of cultural settings to fortify society the state and ultimately the economy which can endure for a long time. Kautilya established a cohesive society and the king's job was to maintain and promote social harmony.

Mission LiFE and Kautilya's Relevance

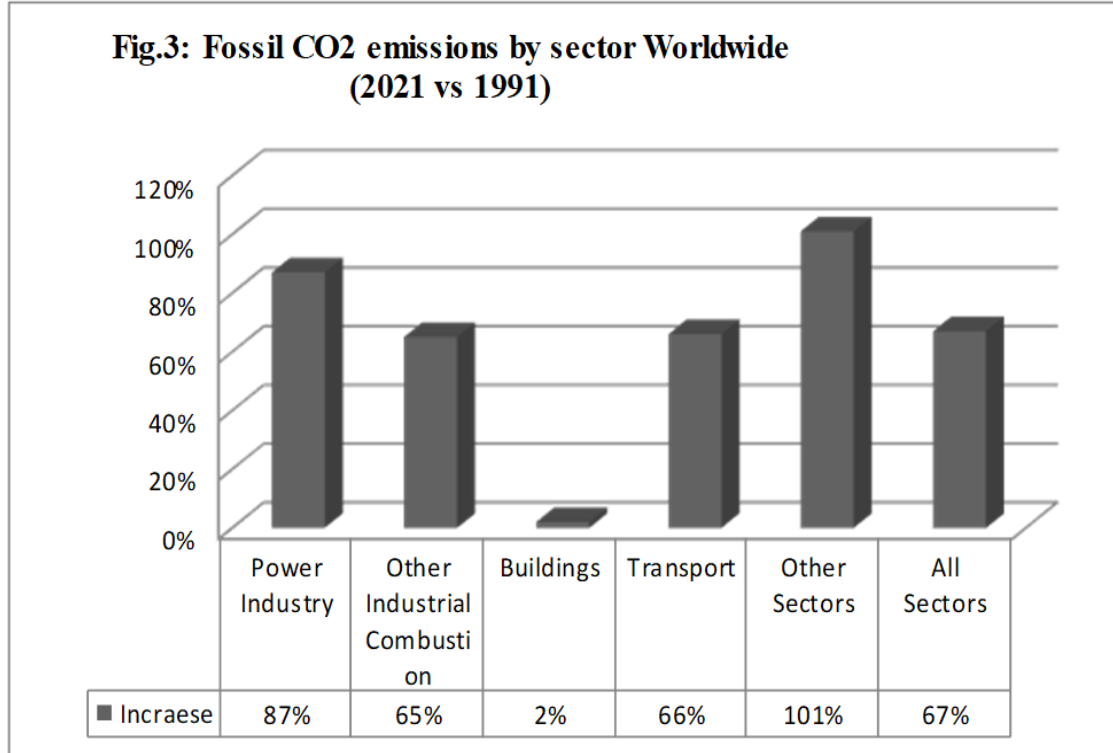
Since a five-year plan in 1951 was adopted as a means of addressing economic social and environmental issues independent India has been a leading proponent of sustainable development practices. The founding leaders decided that the socialistic pattern of society was the best way to plan for development in India. The Indian Constitution included the Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV under Articles 38 and 39 which essentially emphasised the state's obligation to prevent economic power from being concentrated in a small number of hands to ensure welfare and reduce inequality. These State Policy Directive Principles were primarily in line with Kautilyan State's principles for encouraging sustainable development methods.

Most of the Indian planners were influenced by the text Arthashastra and tried to focus in its basic principles for delivering the welfare of the people. the first global earth summit was convened in Stockholm, Sweden with the theme "Only One Earth" from 5-16 June, 1972 to create a global framework for environmental and natural resources diplomacy. Out of 132 members of the United Nations, 113 nations attended the summit with two heads of state, the Prime Minister of India and the Prime Minister of Sweden. The summit unanimously decided to create Environment Ministry in every country, to declare 5th June as World Environment Day, to create an UN Environment Programme (UNEP) among others. The Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India was created in 1985. Other significant efforts for the sustainable development of energy resources the Ministry of Non-conventional Energy Sources, Government of India was created in 1992 to promote renewable energy sources like solar, wind and air. At the same time, the Ministry of Environment and Forest published the national conservation strategy and policy statement on environment and development in 1992. India's commitment to the concern of global climate change has been unparalleled. The period 2014 onwards the emphasis on global commitments has been strengthened with the initiative of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The world is looking at India to act pragmatically in the post covid-19 period to emerge as a leading nation. India is leading the global platform in making peace through productive understandings with its counterparts as emphasised by Kautilya in his foreign policy consisting of six methods : (1) making peace (2) waging war (3) staying quiet (4) preparing for war (5) seeking support and (6) dual policy ¹². The mission LiFE (Life Style for Environment) is one such commitment for the global community introduced by Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi in 26th UN Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow:

"Mission LiFE can become a mass movement of Environmental Conscious Lifestyle. What is needed today is mindful and deliberate utilization, instead of mindless and destructive consumption".¹³

The mission LiFE has become a global public movement to mobilise individuals to become pro-planet people. India possesses extensive experience in putting large-scale behavioural change initiatives into action. The global community is concentrating on legislative and regulatory actions to tackle the environmental crisis. India has proven to be effective at using the strength of group effort to resolve challenging issues resulting in carbon footprint which is 60% lower than the global per capita average. The sustainability practices in lifestyles are rooted in India's ethos, culture and traditions. The first method of Kautilya's foreign policy principle, i.e making peace is very relevant in this context of conceptualizing the mission LiFE by India with a call for global commitments. There are seven lifestyle actions included in this mission as part of India's nationally determined contributions: (i) Save Energy (ii) Save water (iii) Say No to single use-plastics (iv) Adopt sustainable food systems (v) Reduce waste (vi) Adopt healthy lifestyle and

(vii) Reduce E-waste. Global fossil CO₂ emissions have been increasing steadily since the start of the twenty-first century compared to the three decades prior primarily as a result of rising emissions from such as China and other emerging economies. It is to be mentioned that CO₂ emissions worldwide increased to 87% fossil CO₂ during 1991 to 2021 as per the estimate of the Joint Research Centre (JRC), European Commission, Italy. The other sectors constituted increased fossil CO₂ including transport by 66%, industrial combustion by 65% and all sectors by 67% (refer Fig.3) ¹⁴.



Source: JRC, European Commission, 2022

Probable Impact of Mission LiFE

Encouraging sustainable lifestyle choices will result in a smaller environmental impact, better public health and a more thoughtful approach to resource consumption LiFE can considerably benefit the global community. It may also help to mitigate climate change and promote a more sustainable way of life globally. LiFE policies can combat climate change by promoting energy conservation reducing waste and transitioning to renewable energy sources. By encouraging sustainable practices and lowering resource consumption ecosystems and biodiversity can be safeguarded. Public health can be enhanced by cleaner air and water which can be achieved through reduced emissions and waste management. By encouraging physical activity a balanced diet and less stress LiFE initiatives can enhance general well-being and lower the risk of chronic illnesses. Promoting group efforts and awareness-raising about sustainable practices can help people feel more accountable to their communities and give them the confidence to change for the better. A more sustainable economy has the potential to generate new markets and employment opportunities in green technology sustainable agriculture and renewable energy. Particular LiFE measures and the possible effects they may have.

Translating sustainable development strategies into quantifiable impact is the goal of Mission LiFE. The objective is to inspire at least one billion Indians and other people around the world to take both individual and group action to preserve and protect the environment between 2022 and 2028 (refer to Table 1). By 2028 at least 80% of Indian villages and urban local governments want to be environmentally friendly. The mission LiFE's key performance indicators and associated goals are as follows. These are merely indicative goals that could alter and more positive impact may emerge in the course of time.

Table 1: Key Performance Indicators and Targets

Results Framework Matrix							
Key performance indicators	Unit	Target Value					Total value as of the Yr.V
		Yr I	Yr.II	Yr.III	Yr.IV	Yr.V	
No. of pro-planet people	million	150	400	650	900	1000	1 Billion
No. of LiFE villages	Thousand	77	206	335	463	515	515,000
No. of LiFE ULBs	Hundred	5	15	24	33	37	3700
No. of LiFE districts	No.	115	306	496	690	766	766

Source: LiFE, <https://missionlife-moefcc.nic.in/>

It is to be noted that human history traversed more than 2 lakhs years to reach one billion people and it took just 219 years to reach eight billion which puts inconceivable pressure on the earth to transform into a global climate change era (refer to Table 2). Concerns about the ozone layer desertification and global warming are just a few of the pressing and complicated issues that scientists bring to light and that have an impact on our very survival. Once viewed as a major issue for wealthy countries and a by-product of industry-linked environmental degradation is now a threat to developing nation's ability to survive. Many of the world's poorest countries are caught in a downward spiral of interconnected ecological and economic decline. An international mass movement led by India's brainchild 'LiFE' encourages both individual and collective action to safeguard and conserve the environment.

Table 2: Global Population Scenario

Year	Population (in billion)	Time Taken (in years)
1804	1	2 lakh +
1930	2	126
1960	3	30
1974	4	14
1987	5	13
1999	6	12
2011	7	12
2022	8	11
2037	9	15
2057	10	20

Source: <https://www.worldometers.info>

Conclusion

Kautilya's significance on Indian polity, governance, economic policy framework and global sustainability initiatives has been unparalleled since independence. The planners and leaders have been greatly influenced by Arthashastra. The sustainable development practices as envisioned in Kautilya's Arthashastra have greatly contributed to the development of suitable models adopted in different parts of the world. Since the antiquity India has shown its commitment to sustainable development not only by regulations and Acts but by the traditions and practices over generations which are rooted in its culture and ethos. As a proponent of rational policy prescriptions for foreign policy, Kautilya had prescribed the commitment of a kingdom to waging global peace. India's initiative towards commitments to climate change mitigation practices has been widely acknowledged on different global platforms. Mission LiFE as propagated by India exemplifies adopting sustainable practices in lifestyle so as to make a proper balance in intergeneration equity in sustaining resources for development. India is on the transformational stage to regain its past glory to become '*viswaguru*', Kautilya's principles inspire a generation of leaders for its commitment towards the welfare of the global community.

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