

Understanding of kautilya on good governance



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

According to the Arthashastra, good governance comes with peace and order which can be achieved through the collaboration of different factors in a community. The first of these factors is the leader. The leader is the one held responsible for everything that is happening in a community. In Indian society, the leader or the king plays a very important role as he is the one leading the nation and thus, must exhibit a lot of virtues. Because the Arthashastra's main goal is to maintain the welfare of the people, called Yoga-kshema, the leader of the society must work for this goal[1]. This goal must be the most important priority even against the leader's own needs. This is what true service is all about.

Considering this principle in the present-day Philippines, all the "kings," from the Barangay Captains to the President, must be dedicated in serving the people. These "kings" should exercise true service not because they will gain something from it personally but because it is for the betterment of the people. Quoting from President Noynoy's campaign line, "Kayo ang boss ko! (You are my boss!)", exemplifies this principle.

Aside from rendering service to the people, the king's deference to the law is the second factor. As said before, the king must be virtuous and must be an example to his people. As what stated in the first chapter of the Arthashastra, "...when the king is active the servants become active following his example. If he is too remiss, they too become remiss along with him." So, if the king looked up to by the people, humbly follows rules and regulations, so will the people.

Also, the king should be morally upright in every way. The Arthashastra provides various traits that describe a good leader and most of stresses on honesty and trustworthiness. Kautilya gave much emphasis on this issue as corruption ravaged the Indian society during his time. Even through the passage of time, corruption still remains up to the present society. According to the Hong Kong-based Political and Economic Risk Consultancy (PERC), the Philippines is the fourth most corrupt country in the Asia-Pacific Region[2]. This is truly alarming as the Philippines not only loses its budget to private individuals, it also loses possible foreign investors. Now, if the president is a part of this corruption in the country, what happens then to the goal of serving the people? Because of this, the Arthashastra's invokes the people to have a king worthy enough to be entrusted the welfare of the nation.

As said before, the kings of the country not only mean the President, but also the low-ranking officials, such as the Barangay Captains. These kings should exercise service for the betterment of the people. Because of this, these people are just as important as the President, hence, they should also possess the qualities stated by the Arthashastra about the King. According to the article, Summary on Kautilya's Arthashastra: It's Contemporary Relevance, since these officials are the ones responsible for a project's budget and the details of the work, there must be someone who will be scrutinizing every part of the official's work not just the expenses but also the output of the project[3]. This will diminish questionable expenses or inefficient implantation of the project due to the official's irresponsibility.

In the Philippines, these officials are the ones from the Senate and Congress who are given pork barrel for project implementation. In Earl Parreño's

<https://assignbuster.com/understanding-of-kautilya-on-good-governance/>

article, Pork, pork barrels of the congress were actually intended to avoid the bias priorities of the national government to rural areas. Because of these, every area is assured of a budget for beneficial projects managed by these officials. However, because of corruption, these congressmen do “ money-saving tactics” to gain kickbacks out of the budget which produces substandard projects. To exemplify this, Parreño set an airport that was given fifty-seven million pesos (Php 57 million) in 1993. But, after three years, only one hundred meters of the runway are paved[4]. According to Representative Teodoro Casiño, “ in the 2004 elections, the administration spent an estimated Php 7. 3 billion in government funds to ensure Mrs. Arroyo’s victory over presidential aspirant, Fernando Poe, Jr.”[5].

Aside from this, there is also an issue with regards to the attendance in Congress. Added to that is that some of the congressmen are not even listening to the speeches given by their fellow congressmen.

To remedy these, accountability and transparency is what Kautilya requires of these officials. Looking at the present Philippine situation, it is of great dismay that most of them are not doing what they should be doing as they are elected to power. It would seem that they have forgotten why they are in position.

The Arthashastra also addresses the magistrates of their jobs. In the 4th chapter it states that, “ The magistrate should be impartial, and decide on a case, remaining neutral between the King and the subjects.” This means that they should be unbiased in every trial or case they are handling no matter who the people are involved. This reflects true justice: punishing the guilty

and releasing the innocent - an ideal justice system where everyone is judged equally. The Philippines is indeed still very far from this ideal justice system. Take the Maguindanao Massacre last 23 November 2009, where more than fifty (50) journalists and civilians were killed like animals because of politics. Up to now, no one has been convicted because the suspects are prominent in the area, if not, the whole nation. Justice has not yet been achieved. Some cases lasted for decades like the Dacer-Corbato Double Murder Case and still no one has been convicted.

Another factor in successful governance is the presence and accomplishments of projects that will improve the nation. In the Arthashastra, Kautilya presented concrete proposals that must be implemented properly. The most important of these is the prioritization of education. This is because in any society, having a good number of human capital is necessary to let the economy run and improve[6]. In the Arthashastra, Kautilya mentioned the requirement of extensive training of the people in various fields which resulted to a good outcome in those times. At present, the people know how important education is. In the context of the Philippines, although awareness is there, problems on education still exist. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, only twenty-nine percent (29%) of the total tertiary age Filipinos are studying in college. Numerous news articles have been made regarding the lack of teachers and classrooms in the country, especially in the rural areas. There have been problems in these areas since the day we can remember and yet they are still present. This just proves that the awareness of the problem is not enough to solve these. Action is what is really needed.

However, for a project to be concretized, proper deliberation must first be done by all the officials to decide whether the project can cause good to the people and is worth the budget allotment. Through this process, instant-decision-making is impossible and everyone is given the assurance that the projects have are passed for the benefit of the society. In the Philippines, we are made to believe that the politicians are “deliberating” the projects. If it is true, we do hope that they are doing it properly.

Also, to assure the people of every official's dedication to service, Kautilya says that the nation's stakeholders must be the ones to gather feedbacks on the administration's performance. Moreover, the leader should look after his subordinate official whether they were able to do their job or not. Through this feedback gathering, an evaluation is achieved in which it stands as a critique for the administration. And should the administration take note of the critique, it will stand as a basis for improvement for the years to come. After the evaluation of every official based on their performances, these officials should be subjected to either a promotion or a demotion. This follows the concept of punishment and reward. Following this concept is important because aspiring leaders who believe in true service will be encouraged more by the incentives. In the Indian society during the time of Kautilya, punishment for every corrupt official must be done no matter how high their positions are. On the contrary, if one performs well on his job as an official, the government will either make him permanent on his position or promote him. If this concept is to be implemented here in the Philippines, a huge number of positions will be subject to vacancy.

Lastly, although the Arthashastra's main goal and responsibility is the welfare of the people, Kautilya still includes rules in his treatise the maintenance of the environment and other living things. This is due to the fact that the Indian society values all living things because of their belief.

Kautilya on Economics: Theory and Application

According to the Arthashastra, there is a strong connection between good governance and the economy of a nation. As stated in the Summary on Kautilya's Arthashastra: It's Contemporary Relevance, "the end is economic governance while political governance is the means" (Chapter 2). It means that proper management and good governance has an effect on the economic aspect of a nation. The Arthashastra then serves as basic guidelines for the proper management of the economy of the country. Knowing how to manage resources, such as monetary funds, can contribute to the development of the economy.

We have said before that corruption is still present in the modern-day society and in the Philippines. The Philippines have been affected by corruption because of lack of good governance. However, in order to lessen or eradicate corruption certain principles must be followed in order to gain good governance which have been stated in the previous section. And since, the political governance is the means for economic governance, there is a need for good political governance.

Kautilya explicitly states that,

adulteration of grains, oils, alkalis, salts, scents, and medicinal articles with similar articles of no quality shall be punished with a fine... the sale or mortgage of articles such as timber, iron, brilliant stones, ropes, skins... as superior, although they are really inferior, shall be punished with a fine (Chapter 5).

This clearly states that piracy of the products should not be done and practitioners of said act should be dealt with accordingly. In addition, the need for products whose quality is trusted enough or better is because of the need for increasing and strengthening of trade with other nations. In addition to achieving this economic development, according to the Arthashastra, is to ensure the good quality of products, accompanied by reasonable rates which would not only benefit the consumers but the producers as well.

Another factor that has been given emphasis by the Arthashastra is agriculture. " The importance of irrigation and providing amenities could be taken up on a priority basis. Systematic cropping patterns and irrigation systems followed by Kautilya is what today's experts need to recognize"[7]. Kautilya also recognizes organic farming because of its non-usage of chemicals. Also, aside from this, it is also necessary to learn different agricultural processes because it will help in the production and storage of sources that will be used by the people. In the case of the Philippines, agriculture is widely spread as our climate is perfect for farming and that the lands are extensive enough for farm use. Because of this, farming is considered as a very important sector and is a major part of the country's economic development. However, during the last few months, typhoons have destroyed various crops which resulted in a massive loss of agricultural

<https://assignbuster.com/understanding-of-kautilya-on-good-governance/>

products. This had affected the farmers and the huge investments are being lost. This is one problem that the country constantly faces and it is essential to find ways on how it can be solved. Better irrigation, improved farming processes and preparedness for such situations can be a big help in achieving this.

Lastly, Kautilya expressed in the Arthashastra that a nation would benefit from trade if certain “safeguards and policy measures” are present (Chapter 7 and 8). Thus, making certain that the trade policies of the country are implemented and are not abusive for the other parties would ensure the benefits of the nation when it comes to trading. This then promotes trust and well-being for both parties.

Conclusion

With the elucidation by Kautilya, in his book the Arthashastra, about the conditions of good governance, we insist that the government officials take a look at the world’s oldest book on management that contains modern-day ideas of governance. Knowing that such ideas have been around for the past hundreds of years and that it can be applied to present-day societies puts us in a better perspective of how to possibly attain the sought-after peace in government. With this knowledge, the way to our country’s good governance has been made clear.