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## Kautilya Is Indian Machiavelli: Why?

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### Abstract:

Both Kautilya and Machiavelli have been compared for their practical guidance on State Craft, Power, and governance in their respective works, 'Arthashastra' and 'The Prince'. Both agree that anarchy is a condition that arises from human self-interest, ambition and lack of effective control, where Lawlessness and disorder are predominant. It is agreed upon by them that in this state, force or strict Control is necessary to prevent chaos and maintain political stability. Both place State welfare ahead of ethics or religion. Both prioritized realism over idealism and had imperial ambitions to maintain stability. They offered a practical Solution for rulers facing real world challenge by providing an example and focusing on power acquisition and maintenance. Kautilya strongly advocated for monarchy as an ideal form of government, believing that a powerful central ruler was necessary for State security. Machiavelli provided conditional endorsement for monarchy, particularly in 'The Prince', advocating for a strong prince to unify and stabilize an unstable state like Italy. Both dealt with ethics in Pragmatic manner during statecraft. Both acknowledged the importance of realism in politics, recommending that rulers adapt to human flaws and use power strategically. Their recommendation was to separate politics from ethics when required, utilizing deception, force (Kautilya's dandaniti and Machiavelli's fear or love) and espionage to safeguard the realm. Kautilya and Machiavelli share many similarities in their realistic approach to statecraft, Kautilya being called the 'Indian Machiavelli'.

**Keywords:-** Anarchy, Monarchy, ethical aspect, realistic, diplomacy, strategy, Prince (King).

**Introduction:** Kautilya, who was also known as Chanakya or Vishnugupta and Machiavelli were political philosopher who lived in disparate places throughout history. Around 350-283 BCE, Kautilya, a strategist and advisor, was instrumental in establishment of the Mauryan empire under Chandragupta Maurya. He was born in to Brahmin Family, Possibly in Patliputra or Taxila. Kautilya wrote the 'Arthashastra' that deals with Statecraft, economics, governance, strategy, and ethics. Machiavelli (1469-1527) born in Florence, was an Italian diplomat guide to political power. He served as a key official. In his book 'The Prince' (1513), he gave advice to rulers on maintaining power through cunning and force.

### In view of anarchy and disorder condition: -

Italy did not unite during the Renaissance Period at the time of Machiavelli. The country was divided into several, separate city states. The disorder caused by conflicts among city states led foreign countries like France, Spain, Germany and others to attack Italy. The result was a decreased in Political Stability across the country. In Italy, the Production competition between the capitalist class was increasing. The country is facing a tendency toward separation due to irresistible competition at this time. As a consequence, Italy was split into multiple independent city states. Competition, opposition, and non-cooperation were prominent in city states. The foreign power was attacking Italy. Machiavelli dreamed of uniting Italy when political life was in danger and this is shown in his novel 'The Prince' (on the other hand Kautilya spoke in 'Arthashastra' about the matasanay (big fish swallow to small fish) condition that became a social Problem,

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resulting in People's miserable lives. To escape from this chaotic situation, People went to king Manu who agreed to take responsibility for his subjects and Provide security for an organized society. Kautilya's account of the state's creation resembles that of Hobs, who condemned the anarchy state. The welfare of subjects is dependent on the welfare of the king in this situation, which is the basis of Kautilya's political thought.

So it could be said that Kautilya and Machiaveli both were involved in a critical situation. A critical political crisis occurred during the time of Kautilya when King was Chandragupta Maurya. During his time, national unity was absent. Collisions between Kings were a regular occurrence. Similar conditions were observed in Machiaveli's home country of Italy. Italy was split into multiple province led to continued bloody struggles.

#### **in view of approaches:**

Machiaveli mentioned in his book 'The Prince' that he taught everything during his long dangerous life, as explained here. In his word ".....all that I have learnt in so many years and so many troubled and danger"- His political thought was derived from real experience. For a lengthy Period from 1498 to 1512, Machiaveli was an administrator and diplomat in the democratic regime of Florence in Italy. So, 'The Prince' was written by him based on practical experience. Before Kautilya some scholar who focus on Politics, economics, and philosophy but Kautilya reviews them and Presents them scientifically. Analyzing all subject with a true sense leads him to make decisions and recommendations. So both Machiaveli and Kautilya can be classified as positivist. Professor E.N. Ghosal said- "The empirical method of Machiaveli supported as it is by frequent references to the history of classical antiquity, has its parallel in the empiricism of Kautilya which is fortified by his occasional references to Indian traditional history"<sup>1</sup>.

#### **Supporter of monarchy:**

Machiaveli Provided an explanation for how to develop and succeed with monarchy rule in certain situations and problems in his book "The prince." His Support for the monarchy is strong and he trusts it. Machiaveli lived in Florence and devoted his work "The Prince" to King Piero de Medici of that kingdom.

At first, he was skeptical of democracy, but later he turned to support for monarchy. Machiaveli mainly concentrated on difficulties and prospects of establishing a new monarchy. In his words "It is in the new monarchies the difficulties are found".<sup>2</sup> Professor Gettel has written- "in the conditions existing in Italy, and in the rivalries of France, Spain, and Germany that turned. Italy into the battle ground of the stronger monarchies, the little Italian States, unable to maintain themselves by force, became skilled in the use of craft and diplomacy".<sup>3</sup> According to Machiaveli, republican governments are not suited where corruption and disorder are present. He demonstrated Italy

as an example of a society that is corrupt, in his time. He comprehended that disorder and anarchy were absent in France and Spain, yet Present in Italy. He also realized that the people of France and Spain are good, which makes it possible for that situation to happen, unfortunately it is not accurate and main factor is the Kings of those two countries keeping unity. Therefore, corruption and disorder are not given the chance. To restore unity in Italy, it is necessary to establish a monopoly monarchy, and any other type of government is not suitable. Machiaveli realized this by taking into account the contemporary condition of Italy. He advocated for a monarchy to restructure the political situation of Italy.

On the other hand Kautilya wrote the Arthashastra, which was written by an important figure during king Chandra Gupta Mourya's reign in the fourth century before Christianity in India. Arthashastra was founded on the context of the Indian Social system before Christianity. During that period, there were various political systems, but the monarchy system was the most prevalent. Direct, democracy and oligarchy system was prevalent in some place.

So, Kautilya and Machiaveli both were priests of the absolute monarchy. According to them, a king can change all customs and be the main decision maker for the welfare of Society. Therefore, they wanted to offer a vast amount of power to the king.

**consideration on ethical aspect:** According to Machiaveli, there is no value in ethics or religion in case of gaining power. The image of a ruler is significant to his followers. In the language of Machiaveli – 'The mass of mankind is always swayed by appearances and by the outcome of an enterprise.'<sup>4</sup> Machiaveli asserted that 'cleverness' is the only way to achieve power. He acknowledged that Politics is a game of diplomatic tactics. His suggestion was that rulers or governments should adopt administrative policies that aim to enhance their power. The policies that strengthen states and those that harm them all are reflected in this thinking and writing. He has Justified the quality of State power in the face of success and failure. He wanted to say that the sense of value on ethics should not come into the explanation of politics. A ruler should be self-controlled and wise, and should maintain a distance from women and the property of subjects. In keeping with Machiaveli's thinking, Sabine stated that- 'Machiaveli "Despite the cynicism of Machiaveli's political judgement, there is no mistaking his esteem for liberal and lawful government. It is this which explains the administration for him felt by a constitutionalist like Harrington".<sup>5</sup>

on the other hand, Kautilya viewed the state as an ethical institution, but in terms of international relations, he has disconnected religion and ethics from politics. From this side, Machiaveli is a similar aspect. so, Dr. Bharati Mukherjee rightly remarked that -The Principle of Kautilya is not based on religion or ethics, but on Political utility. Thus, Kautilya has completely disconnected diplomacy

from religion and ethics. Thus Kautilya identifies himself as a modern politician by separating ethics and religion from politics.

Though Kautilya and Machiavelli both did not refuse ethics, religion, or a sense of value, and said that the king should keep these in mind during their ruling period. King should pay attention so that citizens cannot move away from these. There may be raised a question that Kautilya suggested being as dual character as king, but it is not correct. Because Kautilya was patriot, he suggested that the king may take any measure to protect the country from foreign enemies and for the welfare of the citizens. This tactic could not actually mean dual character. Machiavelli also admits the necessity of ethics, religion, justice in his work 'The Discourse' In 'the Discourse' he mentioned: "well constituted Republics have in the nature of things, a succession of virtuous rulers"<sup>6</sup>.

#### **In the context of war Power and strategy:**

According to Machiavelli, a king should obtain a strong ruling strategy and skill to improve his self-image. A king should be powerful through war Power. In language of Machiavelli- "Those princes can stand alone who have sufficient manpower or money to assemble an army equal to encounter with any aggressor."<sup>7</sup> He rightly said that after collecting military from citizens, it should provide appropriate training to build a well-organized military power. In his words "wise princes---- have always shunned auxiliaries and made use of their own forces. They have preferred to lose battles with their own forces than win them with others, in the belief that no true victory is possible with alien arms."<sup>8</sup> He notes that acquiring knowledge about military order and organization is great virtue for a king. According to him- "A prince should have no other object or thought, nor acquire skill in any thing, expect war, its organisation and its discipline. The act of the war is all that is expected of a ruler"<sup>9</sup>.

On the other hand, according to Kautilya, a king is responsible for protecting the state if foreign aggression occurs. It is important for king to pay attention to a well-organized protection system. It is important for a king to recruit eligible and trusted military Personnel and have a chief army officer. In his time, war was mainly held by elephants and horses. Every day, king was responsible for supervising them. King used to supervise the foot soldier as well. The King would suggest to the chief army officer.

#### **Focus on code of conduct of King (Ruler):**

Machiavelli not only emphasizes war strategy or administrative style as a consideration for the greatness of a king. He has given importance to a code of conduct for a king or ruler. The suggestion of Machiavelli on how a king should conduct himself towards his citizens is an important issue. According to him the success of direct monarchy rule is closely associated with the personal character and conduct of the king. For this, he does not accept any imagination but presents ideas based on real experience. He simply stated that- "the gulf between how one should live and how one does live is so wide that a man who

neglects what is actually done for what should be done learns the way to self-destruction rather than self-preservation."<sup>10</sup>

He showed that two opposite tendencies prevail in human character, like those who are honest and dishonest. Some people are liberal, while others are miserly. There are those who are benevolent, while others are grasping. Machiavelli says that -"Human nature being what it is, a Prince cannot possess those qualities, or rather they cannot always exhibit them"<sup>11</sup> Machiavelli allowed unethical activities in order to establish a dominant position among subjects or protect the kingdom if a king fell in sin. Generousness is a great virtue of the king, but if it results in damage to kingdom or empty royal treasury, then there is no value in being generous. He mentioned that- "it is wiser to incur the reputation of being a miser, which invites ignominy but not hatred"<sup>12</sup>.

To maintain power, a king would create fear among his people. The subjects are obedient to the king because they are afraid of punishment. In language of Machiavelli - "man worry less about doing an injury to one who makes himself less about doing an injury to one who makes himself loved than to one who makes himself feared. The bond of love is one which men, wretched creatures that they are, break when it is to their advantage to do so, but fear is strengthened by a dread of punishment which is always effective."<sup>13</sup> According to Machiavelli, the subjects will fear the king but not hate him. The King will refrain from interfering with the property of his subjects.

In the language of Machiavelli "Man sooner forget the death of their father than the loss of their patrimony." "So as a Prince is forced to know how to act like beast, he should learn from the fox and the lion; because the lion is defenceless against traps and fox is a defenceless against wolves. Therefore one must be a fox in order to recognise traps, and a lion to frighten off wolves"<sup>14</sup>. According to him, kings must pretend to be king hearted, religious and faithful to their subjects because they consider all seeing through their eyes. In words of Machiavelli- "everyone is in a position to watch, few are in a position to come in close touch with you. Everyone what that you appear to be, few experience what you really are"<sup>15</sup>. A king would be a determined ruler. "Nothing brings a Prince more prestige than great campaigns and striking demonstration of his personal abilities".

On the other hand, Kautilya told that the king would only be responsible for the interest of states, and in this case, there is no impediment to the king's friendship, relativeness, or sense of value. In politics, there are no permanent friends or enemies for a king. Kautilya understood that protecting the subjects is the main responsibility of a king. He brought attention to the fact the subjects sought shelter under king Manu to avoid the disorder environment known as matsanay. At any cost, a king should give attention to security issues. He said that a king would obey settled customs and edicts to mitigate debate among his subjects. Here, the king would not

impose arbitrary power on this issue. In “Arthashastra” Kautilya mentioned that – “Where the text of the science may be in conflict with any edict in matter of law, there the edict shall prevail for, there the written text loses its validity -3/1/45.<sup>16</sup> Kautilya gives priority to the king as the most important element for a state. It should be essential for a king to have intelligence and zeal to maintain a state. Kautilya recommends that the king should be virtuous, religious, grateful, honest to be an ideal ruler of a state King will give, his volatile mind. He would refrain from engaging in any activity that unethical, unjust or sinful. The character of the king should be free from emotion, anger, greed and other negative issue.

#### **Other Similar views:**

Both Machiavelli and Kautilya offered valuable advice to the king about his responsibility and administration. Laterally both of them, conversed about the social, political, economical condition of the State, along with the duty of the king. To both of them, national interest was of utmost importance. It is accurate to say that they were excellent patriots. Kautilya and Machiavelli both believe that a powerful king or ruler can provide a way for a country to search for freedom. They had faith in the King’s authority. Kautilya’s faith was in king Chandragupta Mourya, while Machiavelli’s faith was in Cesare Borgia.

The aims are importance to both of them. To reach any goal, the king may follow any dishonesty or unsupportable measure that is not a factor. “The end's justify the means” is most appropriate for them. Machiavelli and Kautilya shared a desire to remove ethics and sense of value from political science. Both of them thought that expanding an empire for a king is another important aspect. Both individual give hint about power politics. Kautilya spoke about various wars and kings. The idea of both is associated with diplomacy, which is component of power politics. Both were expert in internal and foreign policy.

**Conclusion:** The translation of Kautilya’s Arthashastra in to English in 1915 by shyam shastri. It is compared to Machiavelli’s ‘The Prince’ especially by western Indian-ologist. Kautilya wrote Arthashastra, which is a treatise on statecraft, law, military strategy and other government-related subjects. Arthashastra is the oldest book on Political Science and political ethics. Machiavelli was an Italian diplomat and political theorist who wrote ‘The Prince’ which advises rulers on how to maintain power and navigate political intrigue. Real politick, Pragmatic, and sometimes ruthless approaches to power are associated with both thinker. Since Kautilya was born much earlier than Machiavelli, it is appropriate to call Machiavelli as ‘Italian Kautilya’ based on their similarities.

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