



FORUM ON INDIAN STRATEGIC CULTURE & THOUGHT 2024-25

FROM THE PATRON'S DESK...



India's strategic thought is a legacy of wisdom, resilience, and foresight, shaped over millennia by scholars, statesmen and warriors. From Bhgawat Gita to the Kautilya Arthashastra's discourse on duty, from Thirukkural's principles of governance to the Panchatantra's diplomatic acumen, Indian strategic Culture offers timeless insights into leadership, statecraft, and warfare.

The annual journal of **Forum on Indian Strategic Culture & Thought (FISCT) Annual Journal** is a step towards reviving and integrating this profound wisdom in contemporary context. In an era of turbulent global power dynamics, hybrid warfare, and complex security challenges, India's indigenous knowledge must not remain confined to history but actively shape modern decision-making. This edition, curated by the FISCT at the College of Defence Management, meticulously examines ancient texts and historical accounts to derive lessons for today's policymakers, military leaders, and scholars.

FISCT has emerged as a vital platform for intellectual inquiry and exploring India's rich heritage. The articles in this journal bridge the past with the present, demonstrating the enduring relevance of Indian wisdom in governance, military strategy, and international relations. Each contribution reflects rigorous research, factual accuracy and practical application, making this edition a valuable resource for professionals across domains.

I commend the dedication of the authors, the editorial team, and FISCT's mentors for their relentless pursuit of excellence. This journal is not just an academic endeavour but a call to action—to rediscover, apply, and evolve India's strategic thought in shaping the nation's future.

(Harsh Chhibber)
Maj General
Commandant

Date: Mar 2025

FOREWORD BY SENIOR MENTOR



Indian knowledge traditions provide invaluable lessons for contemporary challenges. The need to integrate this indigenous wisdom with modern strategic thinking has never been more pressing.

The **Annual Journal** published by Forum on Indian Strategic Culture & Thought (FISCT) is a testament to this endeavour. Under the aegis of FISCT at the College of Defence Management, this edition brings together rigorous research and scholarly discourse, examining ancient Indian texts through the lens of contemporary strategic needs. FISCT has consistently fostered intellectual curiosity, encouraging officers and scholars to explore India's strategic depth and extract relevant insights for today's complex security environment.

In an era defined by rapid geopolitical shifts, multi-domain threats, and evolving military doctrines, it is imperative to look beyond conventional frameworks. This journal serves as a bridge between timeless Indian strategic principles and present-day applications, reinforcing the idea that the wisdom of our past is not just historical knowledge but a dynamic tool for policy and decision-making.

I extend my appreciation to the dedicated contributors, editorial team, and mentors of FISCT for their tireless efforts in producing this outstanding volume. This journal is a crucial step towards reclaiming and refining India's strategic discourse, and I am confident it will inspire deeper inquiry and practical application among military professionals and scholars alike.

(MK Sharma)
Brigadier
Head of Faculty
Strategic and Behavioural Sciences

Date: Mar 2025

SECRETARY



India's strategic thought is an evolving continuum—rooted in ancient wisdom, tested through historical experiences, and refined by contemporary challenges. Indian knowledge systems offer profound insights into statecraft, warfare, and management. The need to bridge this indigenous wisdom with modern strategic discourse is more pressing than ever.

The Fourth Edition of this **Journal** is a humble yet determined effort to contribute to this intellectual revival. This edition, curated under the guidance of the Forum on Indian Strategic Culture & Thought (FISCT) at the College of Defence Management, presents a collection of scholarly perspectives that analyse India's rich strategic traditions in the context of contemporary security, governance, and leadership challenges. Each article reflects rigorous research and critical inquiry, offering thought-provoking insights into the relevance of ancient Indian principles for today's decision-makers.

The insights presented in this volume aim to enrich the discourse and inspire further research into India's vast intellectual traditions.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the contributors, reviewers, and mentors of FISCT for their dedication and scholarship. I also invite our readers to engage, critique, and contribute, ensuring that this journal remains a dynamic platform for the exploration and application of Indian strategic wisdom.

Date: Mar 25

B S Katal
Colonel
Directing Staff

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FORUM ON INDIAN STRATEGIC CULTURE & THOUGHT (FISCT) 2024-25



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FISCT Group Article



Cover Page Designed By

Col K Viswanadham, HDMC-20

Theme

This cover page design aims to encapsulate the essence of Military leadership, where the words of wisdom from the Hitopadesha Text, extoll the virtuous courage of the unknown Military Leader. A warrior who leads from the front, and prefers to court death on the battlefield compared to the ignominy of turning tail or surrender to the enemy's will. The cover sets stage to the theme of this yearbook, "Military leadership Lessons from the Ancient Indian Knowledge System" and endeavours to provoke and revive a strategic thought & culture, stemming from the wisdom of our ancient texts and sages of yore.



KAUTILYA'S ARTHASHASTRA: ANCIENT INDIAN TRADITIONS OF MILITARY ETHICS AND CULTURE

Dr. Kajari Kamal

Introduction

Any investigation into ancient Indian traditions of military ethics and culture must necessarily appreciate the taxonomical richness and diversity of the discourse in the ancestry of Indian political thought. Incisive references to political and military affairs, strategizing and war making have been made in different genres of ancient Indian literature – Epics, religious texts, treatises on statecraft, and poems and plays, spanning India's civilizational history. While the contextual variables lend an appreciable amount of particularity to the texts, including an adaptation or updation of received wisdom, arguably the perceptible change/divergence exists along with certain continuities, and the core of ancient Indian political thought has broadly remained unchanged.

There is a general understanding among scholars that there exist two strategic traditions in India – realist (kuta yuddha) and moralist (dharma yuddha), roughly translated to just and unjust war. The tradition of dharma yuddha emanates from the Epics and Dharmashastra literature, has a deontological approach emphasizing heroism and proportionality, and therefore exhibits a disregard of jus ad bellum (reason to go to war); Kuta yuddha draws from the Arthashastra tradition, has a consequentialist logic, emphasizing prudence, and therefore disregards jus in bello (proper conduct during war). I would argue that these binaries are erroneous. There are several examples of flouted norms of battle in the Epics and as many examples of jus in bello and jus post bellum in Kautilya's Arthashastra. Perhaps, the "concepts of jus ad bellum and jus in bello prevalent in Christian just war thinking....do not neatly travel across to concepts related to justice, righteousness, and fairness when it comes to Hindu thinking on war. What makes a righteous war is dependent on "context" and "purpose" – both of which are dynamic and ever evolving.

Let us turn our attention to the timeless lessons on strategy and unchanging character of war emanating from the ancient treatise on statecraft – Kautilya's Arthashastra. It is important to understand the pivotal shift in the discourse in kingship, and the comprehensiveness of statecraft that this text has come to represent.

Why Kautilya's Arthashastra?

Kautilya's Arthashastra is an ancient Indian classic on political theory and statecraft. A study of the text reveals the relevance of its basic tenets beyond its historical context, in part, due to its grounding in unchanging human nature and laws that still govern relations between nations. It is an important strategic-cultural resource which has a self-conscious understanding of security in holistic terms, and therefore dwells on both grand strategy, and military ethics and culture.

The Arthashastra is a quintessential text on ancient Indian strategic and military traditions for several important reasons. One, that it was written in a political context where, for the first time, there existed a cohesive Indian geo-cultural space with the desire to establish a pan-Indian empire encompassing it. Two, it is an eminent compilation of antecedent artha tradition, exercising a substantive influence on writings on statecraft that followed it. The Indologist, J.C. Heesterman has asserted that even Kautilya's notorious work on the Arthashastra does not break with the literature on dharma – the Dharmashastra – to formulate an independent *raison d'état*.

Three, it is a masterly exposition of a political-economic approach to statecraft which potentially gave a spin to the idea of military ethic and culture of the antecedent texts, thereby having a direct bearing on military strategy.

Five Key Lessons from the Arthashastra

Matsya-nyaya

The political anthropology of the text is *matsya-nyaya* (law of the fish), i.e. in the absence of a central authority, the big fish devours the small. The monarch is bound by *Rajadharma* (duties of kingship) to protect, augment, and consolidate land. Therefore, wars are a recurrent and inevitable phenomenon. Benoy Kumar Sarkar contends that the Kautilyan theory of state is reared on “two diametrically opposite conceptions” - the doctrine of *danda* that curbs *matsya-nyaya* in the domestic realm, and the doctrine of *mandala* that maintains international anarchy (*matsya-nyaya*) because of the absence of a central authority.

The text, therefore, acknowledges, deliberates, and proposes calibrated use of force with much nuance and judgement, delineating distinct methods for internal and interstate realm. Contrary to Torkel Brekke's contention that Indian classical literature did not differentiate between internal and external enemies, Kautilya identifies them as separate but interrelated threats and suggests countermeasures based on type of association. Kautilya is categorical about use of all means excepting force against the country people if discontented and treasonable; inflictment of secret punishment for the leaders among them; and use of dissension (*bheda*) and force (*danda*) for people in the 'outer.' The nuanced 'tool box' of the 'upayas' equip the state with both remedial and suppressive approaches.

Conception of Power

Kautilya's conception of state power is an aggregate of seven constituent elements - *Saptanga* (literally the seven parts of a body politic). The seven state factors are hierarchically arranged in order of importance - *Swami* (ruler), *Amatya* (ministers), *Janapada* (people and territory), *Durga* (fort), *Kosa* (treasury), *Danda* (armed might) and *Mitra* (ally). This understanding of power encapsulates important lessons for contemporary statecraft -

The King (*swami*) and ministers (*amatya*) are the two most important components of state power; and treasury (*kosa*) and military might (*danda*) are the last two of the internal state factors. This potentially suggests that *mantrashakti* (power of counsel) trumps *prabhavashakti* (power of economic and military might).

There is a greater emphasis on non-material aspects of power than material ones. It is mantrashakti that proposes the use of prabhavshakti optimally.

Danda (armed might) is the last internal state factor but its health is dependent on the excellences of the top five (king, ministers, people and territory, fort and capital city, and treasury). The deterrent value of the army is important because “When one has an army, one’s ally remains friendly, or (even) the enemy becomes friendly.”

Mitra (ally) is the external state factor and last in order, to be sought only if the six internal state factors do not perform optimally to achieve political end goals. There is a definite preference for internal balancing.

Most importantly, the seven organs of the body politic had to work synergistically for optimal outcomes.

Relative Strength

The rajamandala (concentric circle of states) or the interstate system has 12 categories of states, and the characteristic traits of each of these is determined by geography, correlation of forces, and disposition (bhavin). Madhayama is the middle king, sitting abutting the territories of the vijigishu (conqueror) and the ari (enemy), more powerful than the strength of both (ari and vijigishu) put together, and capable of keeping them united or disunited based on its own national interest. Neutral king (Udasina) sits outside, larger than three (ari, vijigishu and madhyama) and capable of helping them when they are united or disunited. Relative strength, therefore, is an important input factor in categorizing the state, and oftentimes has a direct bearing on the intentions that it may harbour. The rajamandala is also in a constant state of flux because every state is trying to move up the cycle of advancement and the power dynamics between them is changing swiftly. The relative strength of a state (determined by the saptanga aggregate) helps preselect if not predetermine sadgunyas (foreign policy action). The foreign policy of peace (samdhi) is chosen when the rival power is rising, war (vigraha) when rival power is declining, remaining quiet (asana) when correlation of forces is balanced, marching (yana) when there is a preponderance of excellences, dual policy (dvaidhibhava) when one needs an associate to accomplish tasks, and shelter (samshraya) when depleted in power.

Ally (mitra) is the seventh and the last state factor. While it is a novel inclusion, its position in the ladder suggests that it should be resorted to last. Kautilya advises that it is better to march with two equals rather than one stronger; two weaker rather than one equal; partnering based on strength, convergence of interest and reliability. Importantly, an ally looks to the securing of his own interests in the event of simultaneity of calamities and in the event of the growth of the enemy’s power.

Force as the last resort

Despite the political anthropology of Matsya-nyaya, Kautilya suggests caution and nuance with respect to ‘use of force’. He reaffirms the usage of upaya cluster – sama (conciliation)-dana (gift giving) -bheda (dissension) -danda (use of force)– which are hierarchically ordered. He discusses different usages of the upayas based on the concrete situation on the ground – exclusive, alternate and a combination.

One of the clearest messages emanating from the treatise is the use of force as the last resort because wars cause kshaya (losses), vyaya (expenses) and

pravasa (demoralisation of the army). This is in tandem with the materialist stance of the text, maximizing profits and minimizing losses. The deliberation on types of wars and victories reveals the nuanced understanding of when and how to go to war, and what should be the conduct during and after war.

There is also an ethical undertone to the calibrated use of force – The monarch who has the supreme executive authority is the wielder of the rod (danda), and is trained to use the rod justly. If the rod is used severely, it leads to revolts; if used meekly, the king is despised; only an optimal use of the rod wins the king honour and respect. Use of force in the external realm is typically against an unjust king with weak political legitimacy. Between an unjust and strong king and a weak and just king, the target of attack was the strong king.

Upinder Singh notices the emphasis on levels of righteousness even in an assessment marked by calculation of profit and loss – “Honor and righteousness are also part of Kautilya’s enumeration of the three types of attacking king - Dharma-vijayin – satisfied only with submission, lobha-vijayin – satisfied with seizure of land and goods, asura-vijayin – satisfied only with the seizure of enemy’s land, goods, sons, wives and life.”

Knowledge is Power

Knowledge is the bedrock of Kautilyan statecraft. Both internal and external dimensions of security are strongly predicated on sound intelligence and analysis. Information gathering and assessment is critical to evaluate capacity, intention, and to degrade the capacity of the adversary.

The king with the eyes of intelligence and [political] science” can overcome rival kings even if they possess greater economic and military resources and personal valor.” (KA, IX, 1, 15)

Kautilya emphasizes three kinds of intelligence – collection centric (spies, double agents, informants, agent recruitment); cognition centric (generating knowledge through analysis and assessment); and action centric (covert actions, active measures, psywar, destabilization). As the monarch is the key decision maker, Kautilya emphasizes training of the ruler first in the science of inquiry (anvikshiki), which lends him a scientific temper and develops an intentness on truth, both being critical to good decision making. The ruler arrives at a policy choice through an analysis of information that he directly perceives, indirectly through communication by others, and through inference (forming an idea of what has not been done from what is done).

Conclusion

The essence of military ethics and culture emanating from Kautilya’s Arthashastra lies at the convergence of realpolitik and moralpolitik. It is a realist text because military power and economic strength are important (power capabilities). States are motivated by national interest and do not shy from applying power when needed. Concomitantly, it’s evident and persuasive normative stance which endeavours to bring about the welfare of the people points to its moralist undertones.

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About the Author



Dr. Kajari Kamal is an Associate Professor at Takshashila Institution, Bangalore. She has designed the course curriculum and teaches Kautilya's Arthashastra through webinars and contact workshops. Her research focuses on the concept of Strategic Culture in the Indian Context. She has received her doctoral degree from University of Hyderabad. Her PhD thesis titled, *Kautilya's Arthashastra and Indian Strategic Culture: A Comparative Study of two phases of India's foreign policy, 1947-64 and 1998-2014*, reflects the convergence of her interest in ancient Indian historical text and contemporary strategic studies. She is one of the distinguished mentors and member of the SME Consultant Group for the Forum on Indian Strategic Culture & Thought (FISCT) at CDM



AN OVERVIEW OF EVOLUTION OF INDIAN WARFARE

Col Ajay Singh (Retd)

“Those who do not remember the lessons of History are condemned to re-live them”



Indian Warfare across the Millenia

The story of Indian warfare does not make pleasant reading. It has been a distressing tale of foreigners invading the sub-continent, defeating Indian armies often numerically superior to them, looting, pillaging and then ruling. It is quite strange that a nation that was economically so strong (India contributed over 20% of the global GDP till the advent of the British) could never develop as a commensurate military power. The reasons lie in the Indian psyche, the often-outdated manner of war-fighting, lack of coherent organizations and most of all, divisions from within.

But then that is not the full story. Although India has been painted as a weak nation that was ripe for the picking by outsiders, that period refers to a sad era beginning around the 13th Century till Independence, when most of India was ruled by the Sultanate, the Mughals and the British. But it overlooks the fact that India is a civilization over 7-10 millennia old and for much of its history has been a strong,

prosperous power which was secure and militarily strong – even though no Indian ruler tried to expand beyond sub-continental India.

Much has been made of an Aryan invasion that took place around 1500 BC. But the so-called 'Aryan Invasion' was actually a slow transmigration of shepherds and migrating tribes from Iran, the Caucasus and some parts of Eastern Europe and nothing more. There has been no historical evidence to support the theory and it was largely propagated by the British to create the myth of western superiority.

The Indian kingdoms and empires that flourished in sub-continental India around the period from 500 BC to 1000 AD, created an era which can be considered Golden Age of Indian civilization. But it is unfortunate that so little is known about it, because most of the existing materiel was destroyed by successive invaders. But even the local kingdoms – though often at war with each other, were still bound by strong ethnic, religious and cultural ties. The process of unification of these kingdoms and the rise of a truly pan-India Empire first began around 300 BC, with the rise of the Mauryan empire. In 326 BC, Alexandra had reached India and fought Puru, the King of Pauravas on the banks of the Jhelum River. Though a tactical victory for him, his soldiers mutinied after the battle and refused to advance further – forcing him to return to Greece, leaving behind a garrison under General Seleucus in the area of modern day Taxila. The presence of Greeks on Indian soil led to the first call for Indian nationalism, raised by Chanakya, who called on the perpetually warring kingdoms to unite to fight the foreign invader under the leadership of Chandragupta Maurya. The Greeks were expelled and this led to the rise of the Mauryan Empire which then lasted almost three centuries and at its prime expanded from Afghanistan to Bengal.

The Mauryan Empire was followed by the Guptas, the Rastrakutas, the Cholas, the Pallavas, the Rajputs and others who ruled over most of sub-continental India for over a millennium. There were invasions from outside – the Huns, the Kushans, the Mongols and others – but they were invariably repelled and defeated. India, as a subcontinental entity remained strong and secure, with the Cholas even expanding the frontiers up to Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and South East Asia. That Age, is unfortunately not documented and has faded from collective memory.

The change began when the Arabs conquered Sindh in the 8th Century around 711 AD after launching repeated land and naval expeditions over a period of 80 years. That actually started the process of outsiders coming into the sub-continent and then establishing their writ. The invasions from across the Hindu Kush mountains also

began around reaching a crescendo with the repeated invasions of Mohammed Ghazni in the 10th and 11th Century. But these were raids for loot and plunder and did not have much lasting impact. The moment of change came when Mohammed Ghori defeated Prithviraj Chauhan in the Second Battle of Tarain in 1192, and established the Sultanate in North India. It is a tragedy, that since then, it has been outsiders who have occupied the throne of Delhi.

The Sultanate presided over Delhi and expanded across much of northern India over 300 years, till 1526, when the Afghan ruler Ibrahim Lodhi was defeated by Babur, in the First Battle of Panipat in 1526. That ushered in the Mughal dynasty which lasted over 300 years, till 1857. The Mughal Empire was undoubtedly a large and powerful empire holding sway over much of India. But even in its prime, other indigenous empires continued to hold them back. The Ahom Dynasty in Assam and the Brahmaputra basin beat back repeated attacks by the Moghuls. The Vijaynagar Empire flourished in the south from 1336 to 1565 AD. It was the richest and most prosperous civilization of the time, rich in art and culture, with its capital Vijaynagara (modern day Hampi) considered the most beautiful city in the world. This Empire was unfortunately defeated by the combined armies of the Nizams of the Deccan in the battle of Talikota in 1565 and the city razed to the ground. Even at the prime of the Mughal empire, the Rajputs were never truly subjugated, and continued their resistance, best personified by the stout resistance of Rana Pratap. The Maratha Empire too arose around the end of the 16th Century, under Shivaji and then the Peshwas, who carved out an empire spanning from Madras to Calcutta and Gujarat and had even reached Kandahar in Afghanistan. The Sikhs too carved their own empire in Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. But the unfortunate defeat of the Marathas in the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761, weakened the strongest empire in India capable of defeating the British. Their defeat coincided with the British victory at Palashi in 1757 and set the stage for the rise of the British Empire in India which lasted 190 years till 1947.

The British did not conquer India. They merely allowed us to defeat ourselves as they used time-tested policies of 'divide and rule' to turn ruler against ruler. First, they defeated Tipu Sultan in the 30 year long Anglo-Mysore wars, by enlisting the Marathas and the Nizam of Hyderabad against him. Then they turned the Marathas and the Nizam against each other. Then, used the troops of the south to fight the armies of Awadh and Bengal. In the Sikh wars, troops of the Bengal regiment were

used, and when the First War of Independence broke out in 1857, they used Sikh troops to put down the uprising instigating them, by saying that the revolting troops were the same that had fought them earlier. Using race, religion, caste skillfully they turned Indian against Indian, and even when they left in 1947, used the trump card of religion to partition India and created a Pakistan.

Post-Independence Battles

After Independence, the story of Indian warfare continued. The first war of Independent India was fought just two and a half months after the birth of the nation, when Pakistani tribesmen invaded Kashmir on 22 October 1947. They came within a hair's breadth of seizing Srinagar till they were repelled by the Indian army in a year and a half long campaign till Dec 1948. That was just the beginning. The India-China War broke out in 1962 and the ill-prepared, badly equipped and unacclimatised Indian soldiers, who had spent much of their time, constructing barracks instead of training, were routed and comprehensively defeated. But the very scale of the defeat had a blessing. It convinced the nation and the political leadership that utopian pacifist ideas had no place in the real world, and India had to strengthen and modernize its military. The expansion and modernization of the armed forces, was tested just three years later when Pakistan attacked in September 1965.

The 22 day long September war was a bloody stalemate, in which India virtually decimated the Pakistani 1 Armoured Division in the flooded fields of Asal Uttar, even though our own offensive in Pakistani Punjab could only make limited headway. But that war set the tone for India's greatest victory – when we created a new nation, Bangladesh, in just 13 days, and cut Pakistan down to size.

But the victory of the 1971 War were squandered away at the Shimla Agreement in 1972 and the 93,000 Pakistani POWs taken were returned without any lasting guarantees, or a permanent solution to Kashmir. Pakistan continued fomenting trouble and terrorism in Kashmir and sponsored a two decade long insurgency that was got under control with great difficulty, but immense will. And in between came the Kargil War of 1999, when the Pakistani Army Chief Gen Parvez Musharraf sent Pakistani soldiers to occupy positions on heights on the India side of the LOC, even as the Indian and Pakistani Prime Ministers were shaking hands at a historic meet in Lahore. Pakistan's Kargil misadventure was repulsed but at the cost of 526 officers and men, and scores other wounded. That two month long border war

was won by sheer blood and guts, and the willingness of the Indian soldier to fight all odds in those daunting heights.

The Story of Indian Warfare is a mixed bag. But to understand it better we must study the Indian concept of war fighting and also examine some of the major battles that have shaped the course of our nation.

The Indian Concept of Warfighting

For over 2000 years there was a rigid adherence to the traditional, conventional way of war-fighting. Emphasis was always on individual prowess, (Perhaps that trait goes back to the Mahabharata when the skills of individuals were glorified and hero-worshipped) Individually Indians were skilled and courageous warriors. But they invariably lacked a clear organization for their armies and administrative structure that could synergize their capabilities. Chanakya, in the Arthashashtra had laid down an organizational structure for the army down to squad level as far back as 300 BC, and while these were followed in the great Indian Empires – the Mauryas and the Guptas - they were ignored later. In most cases Indian armies were a hotch-potch of troops hastily assembled together, which often succumbed to smaller but better organized and equipped forces.

The lack of a strategic sense also led to failure in successive battles. For example, India's strategic location made it beautifully defensible, with the ocean on three sides, the Himalayas on the North and North East, and the Hindu Kush mountains on the borders of undivided India to the North West. Yet, no Indian ruler ever built up the navy or focused on the maritime aspects. The Himalayas were a virtually impregnable defensive line (at least, till the Chinese crossed it in 1962) and all that had to be done to defend India was to hold the passes of the Hindu Kush mountains and block the only approach to India. Yet, invader after invader was allowed to cross these mountains and come all the way to the gates of Delhi before its rulers marched out to confront them. The concept of pre-empting an enemy, keeping the threat at bay and fighting the opponent on his turf was never followed. Instead, we waited, let the opponent seize the initiative, and responded too late and too feebly.

Neglect of technology also cost us dear. The chariot and the elephant remained the pre-dominant weapon for over 2000 years, holding sway till the mid-sixteenth Century, long after their 'use-by' date. New technology, like new tactics were ignored. Gunpowder, the most significant game-changer in warfare, came to India

from China a good 200 years before reaching the rest of Asia. Yet we chose to use it as fire-crackers and its potential as a weapon of war was never realized till we were at the receiving end of this technology.

If technology was ignored, so too was innovation and the concept of maneuver. Indians always favored a set-piece, positional battle. The lack of mobility – both mental and physical - reflected in the manner we waged war. This led us to being repeated out-manuevered by an opponent who did. The blind insistence on individual prowess could never overcome the stark deficiencies of poor organization, rigid tactics and outdated technology.

There have been changes, especially in the post-independence era, but even then, there is much ground to cover. Let us have a look at some of India's major battles to highlight these aspects and evaluate our war-fighting down the ages.

Pre-Independence Battles

The Battle of Jhelum River (327 BC)

India - and by that, I mean India as a geographical landmass, and not a political entity – faced its first external threat, when Alexandra marched his legions through the passes of the Hindu Kush mountains and entered Punjab. Here, he was confronted by Porus, the King of the Paurava kingdom. (Porus was the name given to him by the Greeks. It is unfortunate that the true name of this son of India has been lost to history). In the battle that took place on the banks of the Jhelum River, Porus' army, which was based on elephants and chariots was outmaneuvered by the Greek cavalry. Notwithstanding that, the Indians fought the Greeks to a standstill, till a truce was called.

The battle in a way, set the trend for others to follow. The Indians fought bravely and skillfully (The Greeks called them 'the most courageous foe we have faced') but individual prowess, and the personal leadership of Porus, was not enough. There was another distressing fact. Poros was let down by the neighboring rulers who not only refused to help him, but actually sided with Alexandra. This trend of local rulers fighting each other instead of uniting against a common foe would continue over the centuries.

Victory and Defeat at Tarain

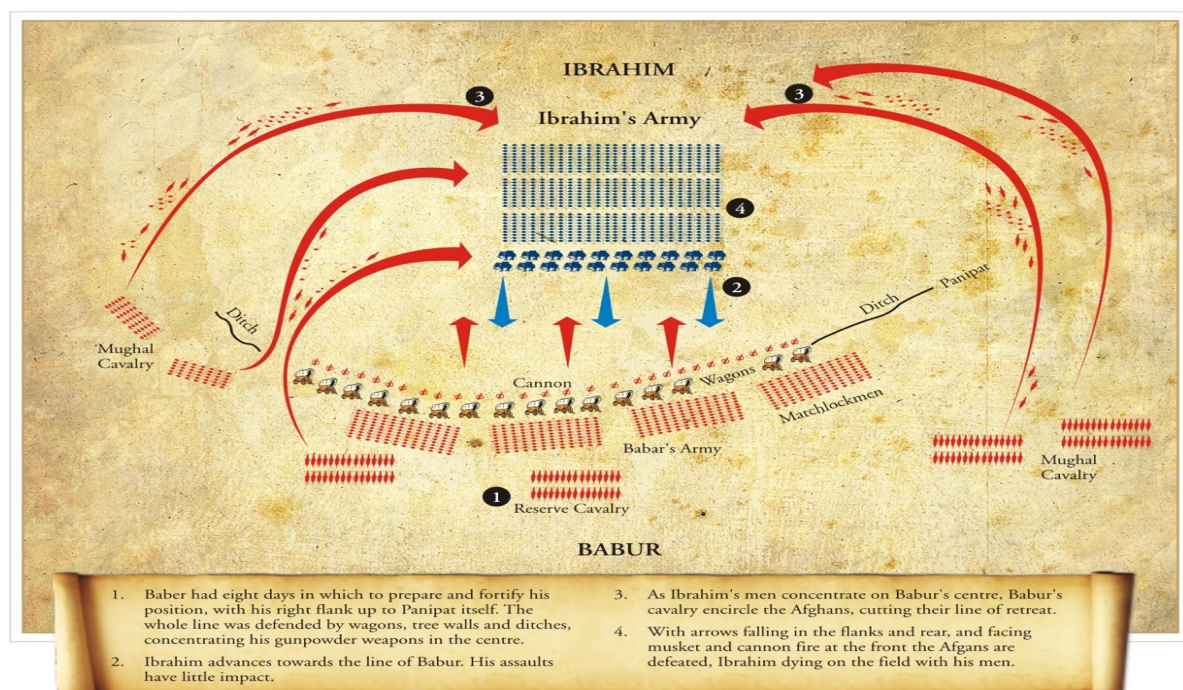
The most significant turning point in Indian history came when Prithviraj Chauhan was defeated by Mohammed Ghori in the Second Battle of Tarain in 1192. Prithviraj Chauhan and his Rajput confederacy had defeated Ghori just a year earlier

in the First Battle of Tarain. This battle had been fought in a conventional manner in which the individual skill and prowess of the Rajputs prevailed. In the Second Battle of Tarain, the Rajputs persisted with their old positional tactics, whereas Ghori used cavalry attacks from the flanks to wear out the Rajput formation, before delivering the *coup de grace* with heavy cavalry. In a nutshell, maneuver and innovative tactics simply overcame the outmoded form of warfare that the Indian armies resorted to. After the defeat at Tarain in 1192, the Sultanate was established in Delhi and India (or rather North India) came under foreign rule. And that set the unfortunate trend virtually up to Independence in 1947.

Panipat and Khanua

Two other battles fought 300 years later – the First battle of Panipat and the Battle of Khanua - brought out the deficiencies in Indian war fighting techniques and ushered in Mughal rule in India. Much is written about the First Battle of Panipat in 1526, but it was the Battle of Khanua fought a year later between Babur and the Rajputs under Rana Sangha that held far greater consequences for India.

In 1526, Babur came to India (invited by Indian rulers themselves) not just to raid and loot, but to establish an Empire. On the throne of Delhi, sat Ibrahim Lodhi, who vacillated for six months as Babur crossed the Hindu Kush mountains, crossed all the rivers of Punjab and reached Panipat uncontested. That has been another traditional Indian weakness. To ignore a threat till it is virtually at your door step. During the First battle of Panipat, Babur's smaller, but better equipped and organized army defeated Ibrahim Lodhi's much larger force of around 60 – 70,000 men in just five hours of battle.



What decided the issue were around 24 *Kazans* – heavy mortars – 80- 100 *zarbzans* – light cannon, and around 500 matchlocks. It was the first time gunpowder was seen in battle in India. The use of firepower, coupled with cavalry attacks from the flanks decimated Ibrahim Lodhi's force which still relied on old concepts and outdated technology.

Virtually a replay of this battle took place a year later in the Battle of Khanua, this time against the Rajputs under Rana Sangha. The Rajputs were numerically stronger and individually skilled warriors who had defeated the Mughals in a series of encounters. Yet, during the battle, Rajput cavalry charged headlong against the Mughal positions to be cut down by waves of fire which they had never encountered before.

It was this neglect of technology – the technology of gunpower – which changed the course of Indian history. The Mughals had identified it, while Indians remained oblivious to its use. The lack of understanding of new technologies and the ability to shape our war fighting concepts around them has cost us dear. Technology has always been a major determinate of war. Identifying and using emerging technologies such as cyber warfare, space warfare, unmanned vehicles, Artificial intelligence, robotics and others – will prevent us from being blind-sided as we were 500 years ago.

Subsequent Battles

In the years that followed, the only ruler who understood the changing nature of warfare was Shivaji, who adopted guerilla warfare to wear down his stronger adversaries. His skilful deployment of forts along crucial axes, use of light, fast-moving cavalry for hit-and-run tactics, helped create a Maratha Empire in the 17th Century. Yet more than his understanding of land warfare, Shivaji was the only Indian leader to realize the maritime aspects. He was the first ruler to develop a naval arm, reinforced by a string of coastal forts to protect his empire from the seas. If only other rulers had revealed the same tactical and strategic clarity, the history of India would have been different.

As it was the history of India would be altered once again in the Battle of Palashi in 1757, when the Nawab of Awadh with an army of 40,000 succumbed to a British army of less than 7000. The numerical superiority was misleading. Most of the Nawab's generals had been bribed and did not fight. In spite of treachery, the result could have been different had it not been for sheer carelessness. The Nawab's

gunners had forgotten to bring tarpaulins to cover their cannons. Midway in the battle it began to rain, dampening their gunpowder and preventing them from firing their cannons. The British guns continued cannonading, and without any fire to oppose them, their infantry swept across the Nawab's forces, captured him and took over his kingdom. It would be not too much of an exaggeration to say that just the lack of 30 odd tarpaulins cost us an empire – that, and the traditional bane of treachery from within.

India's Stalingrad – The Third Battle of Panipat

As the British were creating their Empire in India using superior tactics and organization, they were aided by the fact that the most powerful empire of the time – the Marathas lost the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761 in what was the darkest day in Indian history. The rising Maratha Empire confronted a coalition of Afghans under Ahmad Shah Abdali and the Nawabs of North India. Shivaji had created the Maratha Empire using fast, light battle groups that hit and vanished. The Marathas forgot these precepts as they marched a huge ponderous army, without adequate logistic resources halfway across India to fight Abdali in North India. The Marathas reached Delhi after a six month long march – along with women and children – and then moved further towards Panipat, where Abdali came from behind them, cut them off from their routes of logistics and supply, and slowly starved them over a period of three months. When the final battle took place at Panipat on 14 Jan 1761, the Marathas were simply decimated. Over 30,000 fell that day – the bloodiest day in India's history – all because the Marathas flouted two basic tenets of warfare – they did not fight to their strengths and they did not tend to their logistics. The defeat of the Marathas enabled the British to come into power and in a way set the stage for 190 years of Imperial rule that followed.

The Post Independence Era

The Wars of 1947 – 48 and 1962

India's lack of a strategic culture manifested itself even in the wars after independence. Within three months of attaining freedom, its forces engaged in a year-long campaign to save Kashmir from Pakistani raiders. The race to air-lift troops to Srinagar saved the valley from Pakistani raiders, and pushed the raiders back towards Muzzafarabad. Over a year, Indian troops recaptured many of the lost areas – including Uri, Poonch, Rajauri, Zojila Pass and much of Ladakh. But unfortunately,

we agreed to a United Nations cease-fire, just when the momentum was shifting our way. That has let the issue fester for decades thereafter.

Yet, it was the bruising defeat of 1962, that brought out our weaknesses to the fore. A weak and incompetent military and political leadership provided the recipe for disaster. Isolated acts of bravery apart, it was an unmitigated rout, both in Arunachal Pradesh (then NEFA) and Ladakh. In NEFA, the Chinese advanced virtually till the foothills of Assam, before it withdrew after a unilateral ceasefire. In Ladakh, the performance of Indian troops was better, and was the same story. The fact that the Air Force was not brought to play – even though we had an advantage in Air power in the sector - revealed a lack of a joint culture, and more than that, strategic timidity. The only saving grace of that debacle was that it shook the army and the political leadership out of its slumber and led to the much-needed modernization of the army.

Redemption in 1965

India's military humiliation of 1962 had weakened it considerably and Pakistan sensed an opportunity to attain Kashmir by military force. They began by incursions in to Kutch in April 1965 with their newly received tanks, howitzers and jets helpfully provided by the USA, and then followed up by launching OP GIBRALTER – a plan to send armed raiders into Kashmir to foment revolt. Unfortunately for them, the Kashmiri populace did not revolt. Instead, Indian forces launched two brilliant strikes inside Pakistani occupied territory to capture Haji Pir and Kishenganga passes cutting off the launch pads of the invaders.

With its Kashmir campaign unraveling, Pakistan launched an all-out offensive into Chhamb to cut off Kashmir from the rest of India. It was then that the Indian military and political leadership revealed great strategic sense and decisiveness and launched a counter-offensive in Punjab. Yet, the Indian offensives – both towards Lahore and Sialkot were jerky and did not completely attain their objectives. Pakistan launched its the newly created 1 Armoured Division on its own counter-offensive in Indian Punjab directed at Amritsar and the Beas River bridge, which was halted by some resolute defense and the simple stratagem of flooding the fields in the path of the advancing tanks. 97 Pakistani tanks were captured or destroyed around Asal Uttar. This war was a stalemate at best, but it revealed a new found willingness to take the battle to the other side. The pro-activeness set the stage for the larger victory of 1971.

The 1971 Indo-Pak War

The victory in the 1971 Indo-Pak war was perhaps the most decisive victory of an Indian army in over a millennium. The seeds of victory were put in place by General Sam Manekshaw - India's greatest soldier - who refused to launch his attack in April 1971, as demanded by Mrs Gandhi. Rather he chose to wait till November when his forces were better prepared, his logistics in place and most importantly, the Himalayan Mountain passes would be closed preventing the Chinese from intervening. This sense of strategic timing ensured victory.

When war broke out on 03 December 71 (though operations in East Pakistan had broken out in a series of skirmishes, much before) the Indian strategy was to attack in the East and contain in the West. In East Pakistan, the plan was for a four-pronged attack (with 2 Corps from the South West, 33 Corps from the North West, 4 Corps from the East and 101 Communications Area from the North) that would capture enough territory to enable the declaration of Bangladesh. There were no plans for the capture of Dacca. As events unfolded, the Indian thrusts faced stiff resistance from the Pakistanis at strongpoints such as Sylhet, Jessore, Akhaura, Hili and others. And then the forces revealed a flexibility not usually associated with Indian arms. They merely by-passed the strongpoints and continued moving deeper inwards towards Dacca.

The rapid advance was reinforced by the launch of heliborne troops in Sylhet, and a para-drop at Tangail, on the outskirts of Dacca. (Just two companies initially, but perceived to be a Brigade by the Pakistanis – a misconception furthered by the media). Isolated from West Pakistan and completely cut-off, General Niazi and the Pakistani Eastern Command surrendered. 93,000 Pakistani soldiers, the largest haul of prisoners since World War II, laid down their arms on 16 Dec 71. Strategically, operationally and tactically, it was one of India's best executed operations and provided a complete victory. Yet, while militarily a success, the larger strategic aim of resolving the Kashmir issue was lost on the negotiating table during the Shimla Agreement of 1972.

The Future

The victory in 1971 did not ensure a permanent solution with Pakistan. Rather, they continued fomenting an insurgency in Kashmir which was got under control with much difficulty and also initiated the Kargil war of 1999. Yet, even at Kargil, the failure of intelligence enabled the Pakistanis to enter Indian territory undetected and attain

initial surprise. Our victory was due more to the doggedness and courage of our troops rather than any grand stratagem. And yet, we do not seem to have learnt the lessons of Kargil. The same situation was repeated by the Chinese with their incursions in Ladakh in 2020. Indian strategic thinking has become more aggressive and pro-active have shown a willingness to carry the battle into enemy turf. That is exactly as it should be, and as we rise as a regional power, our ability to safeguard national interests both within our geographical area and in the area of interest should increase. We are fortunately moving away from the dogmas of the past, and evolving newer concepts to deal with future threats. We must learn from the past, as we move in to the future and recollect the words, “Those who do not remember the lessons of history are condemned to relive them”

About the Author



Col Ajay Singh, a former Armoured Corps officer, is an international award winning author who has written seven books and over 200 articles. He is a recipient of the Rabindranath Tagore International Award for Art and Literature.



ENIGMA OF HUMAN EXISTENCE :UNDERSTANDING IN THE LIGHT OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

Prof Dr. Shashiprabha Kumar

I

Human existence has been the profoundest puzzle for human beings themselves since times immemorial. It poses one of the most basic and intrinsic questions which finds new resonance in every period across the world. In the current age of extreme specialisations, this urge for understanding human existence has been delegated to the discipline of philosophy.

In India, philosophy is understood as *darśana* and the term signifies an immediate perception of reality. It is held that the study of *darśana* provides a corrective to the entire outlook of a human being, chastening and chiselling all aspects of his personality to an extent that he is free from the bondage of his actions.

It is in this background [that](#) Indian philosophy has set the highest goal of human existence as self-realisation through union with the divine. Accordingly the journey of a human being's life begins with the quest for self-identity (*ko'ham*) at individual level and culminates in the fulfilment of this quest at the cosmic level (*so'ham*).

II

Human beings are inherently attuned towards ascending higher according to Indian philosophy. In other words, each one of us is born with a purpose to be achieved through this life and so human existence is a rare opportunity in itself. It is not without reason then that human beings are said to be blessed and best of all the beings, but not because 'Man is the measure of all things' – (as is usually held in the western view), but because this is the rarest opportunity to fulfil the quest for human existence; no other being has the capacity to do so.

Notably, Indian knowledge tradition holds *darśana* as a sub-subsidiary (*upāṅga*) of Vedic literature. Therefore Vedic view of life is reflected in all the subsequent systems of Indian philosophy. According to it, self-realisation is the ultimate aim of all human pursuits; the whole exercise of philosophising stems from this deep-rooted desire to know oneself. Accordingly the Vedas and Upanishads

present different dimensions of reality such as individual (*vyaṣṭi*) and the universal (*samaṣṭi*); gross (*sthūla*) and the subtle (*sūkṣma*); microcosmic (*piṇḍa*) and the macrocosmic (*brahmāṇḍa*) etc.

However it is worth mentioning here that the Vedic world-view enunciates perfect parity between these seemingly opposite binaries of existence. Hence, this is a model of coordination and complementarity rather than the contemporary model of conflict and competition.

III

Indian philosophical thought is basically holistic, so it adopts an integral approach and propounds equality among all human beings; it exhorts them all as 'progeny of the immortal divine': Significantly, all humans are stated to be interconnected and interdependent. Not only this, but human existence is also said to be intertwined with all other forms of existence; living or non-living: such as animals, birds, earth, water, fire and air, sun, moon, stars, trees, rivers and mountains etc. This is an evidence to the deep emotional bonding of human beings with various aspects of Nature, percolating throughout the tradition of Indian philosophy.

It is therefore that although human beings are held to be the most evolved beings of creation in Indian thought, yet they are not the centre of existence like the western anthropocentric view holds. As already stated, humans are said to be an integral part of the world and being the most intelligent ones, they are obliged to take care of everything around them. In fact they are said to be born indebted towards these three aspects of existence as follows:

- (a) Towards divine forces of nature (*deva-ṛṇa*)
- (b) Towards seers and preceptors (*ṛṣi-ṛṇa*)
- (c) Towards ancestors/parents (*pitṛ-ṛṇa*)

The integral approach of Indian philosophy is also reflected in the holistic conception of human personality within itself. Accordingly, human existence is not just the physical body; nor the sense organs or thinking minds only; not even mere intellect but an integrated whole of all these aspects impregnated with the spirit of consciousness or self (*ātman*). There is an inherent organicismic relation among all these aspects of human existence but there is never any doubt regarding supremacy of the self (*ātman*) as the essence of existence. It is therefore that according to Indian

philosophy nothing can lead to an understanding of human existence if self is not known and everything is known once it is known.

Obviously, the above model of understanding human existence through the inclusive prism of Indian philosophy is in sharp contrast to the popularly prevalent but strictly exclusive Cartesian model which is based on the following dictum:

Cogito, ergo sum.

i.e., I think, therefore I am.

Above statement indicates that thinking alone is the foundation of human existence since mind (thinking) and matter (body) are totally separate entities. Besides, this view excludes all those aspects of existence which cannot think. On the other hand, Indian philosophy not only includes much more beyond human beings in the realm of existence but also covers many more aspects besides thinking in the gamut of human existence.

To explicate, four states of consciousness have been expounded in the Upanishdas, out of which only waking state pertains to thinking while deep sleep, dream or even unconscious states like coma etc. do not involve reflective thought. Nonetheless all of these are definitely parts of human existence. In fact, the most essential aspect of human existence according to Indian philosophy is the consciousness, self or *ātman*. This is the agent or abode of understanding/ experiencing and has been described as: *sat* (existent), *cit* (conscious) and *ānanda* (bliss) in essence-besides *nāma* (name) and *rūpa* (form) the two external qualities which are also added to it. More importantly, the earlier three are held to be the constituents of self while the later two qualities are only its external attributes.

What follows from the above is that the nature of human existence is held to be the whole of human persona: thinking (cognition), feeling (conation) and doing (action). All these aspects of human existence are inherently connected, so none of them can prove it exclusively. It is more so because the human existence is a matter of self-experience (*ātma-anubhava*). We find repeated statements in the source texts of Indian philosophy that one's own self cannot be explained by others through instruction, nor can it be attained by oneself through listening to discourses or by one's sharp intellect. Rather it has to be sought by oneself with deep faith and not by mere rationality – it can be realised only after the touch of divine grace. In this regard, the *Kena Upaniṣad* incorporates a paradoxical statement according to which those

who claim to know themselves, they do not know at all but those who feel that they do not know, they at least know a bit of it.

IV

In view of the above delineation, it will be quite rewarding to expound the nature of human existence through numerical digits from one to nine as available in various sources of Indian philosophy such as follow:

- (a) According to the most popular Indian perspective, reality is said to be **One** though expressed in many ways. The variety of visible world is nothing but a manifestation of the One Supreme.
- (b) From another point of view it is said that there are **two** reals: self (*jīvātmā*) and God (*paramātmā*) – but an inherent relation subsists between both of them.

Besides, we find a narrative in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* according to which the Supreme real was One but he did not like being alone, so he divided himself into **two** – one became the male and another female. This not only demonstrates the duality of reals in the world but also total equality and complementarity between both the genders according to Indian tradition.

As already mentioned, essentially there are **three** constituents of the self-*sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* which denote being, consciousness and bliss respectively. However, at the physical level, three *doṣās* are said to be present in each of us human beings namely wind (*vāta*), bile (*pitta*) and phlegm (*kapha*) according to traditional Indian medicine (*āyurveda*).

Moreover, three types of mental traits are found in all the human beings, hence it is also described in the Sāṅkhya school of Indian philosophical tradition that human nature is constituted of the following three attributes (*guṇās*):

- (a) Transparency/purity (*sattva*)
- (b) Activity/restlessness (*rajas*)
- (c) Dullness/despondency (*tamas*)

According to Indian philosophy, **four** pursuits have been prescribed for all the human beings, namely:

- (a) Fulfilling one's obligation (*dharma*)
- (b) Acquiring adequate wealth (*artha*)
- (c) Having appropriate desires (*kāma*)
- (d) Being liberated forever (*mokṣa*)

In the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* there is a well-known description of **five** sheaths (*pañcakośa*) of human personality as follows:

- (a) Gross/physical → body (*annamaya kośa*)
- (b) Subtle → sense organs (*prāṇamaya kośa*)
- (c) Subtler → mind → mental level (*manomaya kośa*)
- (d) Even more subtle → intellect → intellectual level (*vijñānamaya kośa*)
- (e) Subtlest → self → spiritual level (*ānandamaya kośa*)

This too elucidates a balanced and integrated view of life.

According to Indian philosophy, five sense organs and mind-these **six** are known as six abodes of cognising the physical qualities of various substances. These are stated to be *jñānendriyas/dhīndriyās*

According to Vedic view, five sense organs, mind and intellect are held to be **seven** seers. At another place it is stated that a sort of offering by seven priests is continuously operating within the human organism. So human existence can also be understood from this aspect.

Atharvaveda describes human body as a pious abode which has **eight** circles or *cakras*. Later on Yoga system of Indian philosophy has also described these eight circles as: Crown (*sahasrāra*), Third Eye (*ājñā*), Throat (*viśuddhi*), Heart (*anāhata*), Solar Plexus (*maṇipūra*), Sacral (*svādhiṣṭhāna*), Base (*mūlādhāra*) and Lower mind (*maṇasācakra*).

Evidently the above narrative in Atharvaveda mentions **nine** portals or exit gates in the human form/body. (one mouth, two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, urinary organ, and rectum).

Last but not the least, it is well-known that as per physiology, **ten** systems are working within human frame, namely: skeletal system, nervous system, endocrine system, cardiovascular system, lymphatic system, respiratory system, digestive system, urinary system and reproductive system.

From another perspective, humans are enjoined to accomplish their purpose of life meaningfully in the following manner:

- (a) Human understanding for cognising i.e. intellect (*buddhi*) is **one** – it helps one in determining the nature of reality.
- (b) Life of human beings has been classified in **two** types:
 - (i) Benificial (*hita*) and non-benificial (*ahita*).

- (ii) Three types of inter-personal relationships are possible among human beings based on three traits mentioned above: friend (*mitra*), enemy (*ari*) and indifferent (*udāsīna*).
- (iii) To overcome obstacles and defeat the enemies- **four** types of attitude is possible- doing it peacefully (*sāma*), aggressively (*dāma*), forcefully (*daṇḍa*) or willfully i.e. by dividing (*bheda*).
- (iv) Human beings can conquer the world only if they have control over **five** sense organs.
- (v) One has to refrain from **six** evils, namely: sleep, drowsiness, fear, anger, laziness and procrastination.
- (vi) Humans are enjoined to shun from the **seven** vices, such as- company of vicious women, gambling or dice, hunting, drinking, harshness of speech, severity of punishment and misuse of wealth.
- (vii) **Eight** qualities adorn the persona of a human being- wisdom, noble family, self-restraint, economy in words (taciturnity) valour, charity as per one's capacity and gratitude.
- (viii) There are **nine** planets which govern the life of human beings, namely: Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Rahu and Ketu. This again shows that humans are closely connected with Nature and it affects their life too.
- (ix) There is a beautiful narrative in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* which depicts human body as a chariot. There are **ten** horses (five sense organs and five motor organs) in it but the only one (self) who can restrain these horses, is a successful charioteer (*rathī*).

On the basis of above it may be concluded that according to Indian philosophy, human existence has been explained in different dimensions and through diverse depictions. But the eternal enigma evades limited understanding of us humans. Nonetheless efforts for resolving it are still continuing in the realms of philosophy as well as science.

However, there is no doubt regarding the fact that the depth and breadth of Indian philosophy stands unparalleled in this realm for exploring and expounding the domains of human existence and no serious seeker on this journey can ignore the findings arrived at by our seers/scholars as suggested above.

In brief, according to Indian philosophy, we, the human beings, are not only inclined with the curiosity to comprehend our own existence and the world around us but also endowed with the capacity to pursue the path of perfection in following ways:

- (a) Self-Exploration (*ātma-anveṣaṇa*)
- (b) Self-Awareness (*ātma-bodha*)
- (c) self-Knowledge (*ātma-jñāna*)
- (d) self-Experience (*ātma-anubhava*)
- (e) self-Expansion (*ātma-vistāra*)

Finally, we aim to reach at an ultimate level of all-encompassing understanding which transcends from **mine** (*sva*) to **our** (*sarva*) of human existence by seeing all in oneself and oneself in all the beings (*sarvātmabhāva*).

Needless to say that such an understanding of human existence leads to –

- (a) harmony among human beings
- (b) synergy between humans and nature
- (c) complementarity between males and females
- (d) synthesis among various aspects of existence
- (e) amity among different quarters of the world
- (f) peace across different regions of the universe as aspired in the following prayer-

May earth be at peace, firmament be at peace, heaven be at peace; waters, oceans and spatial vapours be at peace, herbs be at peace, trees be at peace, all divinities of the world be at peace for me. May all forces of nature and humanity bring me peace, peace and peace, with all forms and shades of peace in every phase of life, society and the environment. With all those forms of peace all those modes and methods and sources of peace, let us all attain peace, let me be at peace. Whatever is awful here, whatever is cruel here, whatever is fearful here, let all that be at peace, be good and beneficial, Let all and everything be at peace, peaceful.

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About the Author



Professor Dr. Shashiprabha Kumar is a distinguished scholar in **Indian Philosophy and Sanskrit Studies**, currently serving as **Chairperson of IAS, Shimla, Distinguished Fellow at VIF**, and **Dean at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, New Delhi**. With **50 years of teaching and 20 years in administration**, she was the **Founder Vice-Chancellor of Sanchi University** and **Chairperson at JNU's Sanskrit Centre**. She has supervised **21 Ph.D. and 28 M.Phil. scholars**, authored **14 books**, edited **17**, and published **160+ research papers**. Recognized with **prestigious awards**, including the **President's Certificate of Honour**, she specializes in **Vaiśeṣika, Nyāya, Vedānta, and Buddhist philosophy**. Her contributions span **academic leadership, research, Sanskrit education, and Indian knowledge systems**.



WISDOM FROM KURUKSHETRA: LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES FROM THE MAHABHARATA

षडेव तु गुणाः पुंसा न हातव्याः कदाचन।

सत्यं दानमनालस्यमनसूया क्षमा धृतिः॥

-Vidura Niti (1.86)

Verily, those six qualities should never be forsaken by men, viz., truth, charity, diligence, benevolence, forgiveness and patience.

Introduction

Quick decisions have always presented some level of challenge for leaders, however, the pace today is astonishingly quicker than it's ever been. In high-stakes contexts like leaders in crises, they oftentimes leap to decisions based upon data and analytics and without enough deliberation. Between all of this, they may not even recognize when to stay put and when to shift. Such behaviours can provoke poor choices that may go against the values of the organization or the leader and can similarly lead to strained relationships and must bear expensive outcomes.

The concept of "Dharma" is extremely intricate, and verbalising is one self-rewarding. The story of the Mahabharata depicts supreme weaponry and skilled armies, whereas the weapon-less skilful diplomacy is nowhere to be seen. There is no doubt that these stories have remarkable insight into the mythical worlds, and how we should interpret them does not have to be literally so. Even without leading formal armies, these short stories aid us to think and rethink modern problems, and especially the modern empathy, strength, and integrity that is needed.

One of the most inspiring forms of leadership is that which can bring an organisation up to even greater heights and an example of that is found in the Indian epic of Mahabharata. The Pandavas achieved victory, due to the inspirational leadership of Lord Krishna. The lessons Krishna taught them are as applicable in the world of today. This paper examines the attributes of a strong leader as exemplified

by Krishna in the Mahabharata, emphasising how modern executives might draw inspiration from these attributes.

The Mahabharata is a comprehensive epic that highlights the principles, leadership of some of India's most notable historical personalities. The fight for justice and righteousness, or Dharma-yudha, is the central topic of the Mahabharata. The epic battle of Kurukshetra is the story's climax, and it centres on the struggle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas for control of Hastinapur. At the time, despite lacking wealth, power, and an established empire, the Pandavas emerged victorious, driven by Krishna's guidance. Have strong morals, ethics, and effective management principles. Lord Krishna, an important figure, is considered to be a master strategist, visionary leader, crisis manager and the forerunner. His teachings and actions throughout the epic offer valuable insights into modern management. Including strategic planning Leadership Qualities, Motivation and Decision Making Bhagavad Gita, in which Krishna imparts profound lessons to Arjuna on the battlefield. It serves as a treasure trove of management principles. It doesn't just address individual challenges, but it also deals with broader organizational dynamics, making Black the ideal "management guru."

Values and Learning from Mahabharata

Value 1- It's not the resources you have, but how you use them that determines your success.

In the Mahabharata, the Kauravas had a clear advantage over the Pandavas in terms of physical strength and military prowess. They had 11 legions, more than the Pandavas' only seven. In addition, the Kaurava Army was supported by formidable warriors such as the immortal Bhishma and Ashwatthama, as well as the highly skilled Dronacharya, Kripacharya, Kritavarma, Duryodhana, and Karna. On paper, the Kauravas appear to have the upper hand with superior numbers and legendary warriors on their side. But the Pandavas won the battle at Kurukshetra. It wasn't because they had more resources or stronger warriors. But it is because of Lord Krishna's unmatched ability to make use of his limited resources and he does not rely on strength or numbers alone. Instead, Krishna used strategy, intelligence, and tactical acumen. By using every asset you have to get the most benefit. By focusing on smart resource management and making the most of their strengths,

whether through alliances, time, or innovation the Pandavas were able to outpace the Kauravas and claim victory.

Learning. This lesson translates directly to leadership in the modern world. The ability of organizational leaders to optimize the use of limited resources. Whether it is human capital Financial assets, or time, are critical to an organization's success. This is because Krishna made the most of the resources of the Pandavas. Today's leaders must have the skills to deploy their teams effectively. Maximize productivity and prioritize efforts; It's about using what you have and being creative. working together and strategies to maximize results to drive results.

Value 2 - Strategy is not about the resources you have, but how you use them to outmanoeuvre your competition. Lord Krishna was a splendid strategist, whose methods have been so unexpected and innovative that nobody could assume them, even remotely. The Pandavas benefited substantially from his strategic brilliance. One of the greatest challenges they faced was Bhishma Pitamah, a powerful obstacle standing between them and victory. Krishna devised a smart plan to take advantage of Bhishma's private beliefs by bringing Shikhandi, a discern Bhishma knew from the beyond and considered unworthy of warfare before him. Knowing Shikhandi's backstory, Bhishma diminished his weapons, allowing Arjuna to strike and in the long run defeat the mighty warrior.

When the tide of battle began to favor the Kauravas, Krishna again intervened by leading the Ghatotkacha, Bheema's mighty son, who entered the battlefield. Using the power of illusion, Ghatotkacha wreaks havoc on the Kaurava forces and becomes an irresistible force on the battlefield. He was so powerful that no Kaurava warrior could resist him. Duryodhana responded by asking Karna to use his most dangerous weapon, the "Shakti Astra" which Karna had reserved for Arjuna to defeat Ghatotkacha. Even though Ghatotkacha was killed in the end, his death did not go in vain because he allowed Karna's deadly weapon to be used upon him, thus rescuing Arjuna from its destructive power.

Learning. This emphasizes that it is not purely military power. But it is a well-planned strategy that leads to victory. Just as Krishna laid the foundation for the success of the Pandavas in every field, the ability to formulate a well thought out and well executed plan is more important than relying on strength or resources alone.

Value 3 - Sometimes the greatest sacrifice for the future is made by letting go of the present.

Krishna understood that Karna had received a powerful 'Shakti Astra' from Indra with the sole purpose of killing Arjuna. In order to avoid a direct confrontation between the two, Krishna made strategic moves such as moving Ghatotkacha to the battlefield. Ghatotkacha wreaked havoc on the Kaurava army, but when Duryodhana insisted, Karna had to use Shakti Astra to kill him, thus saving Arjuna, but in exchange for the sacrifice of Ghatotkacha.

Learning. This shows that true leaders must always focus on the long-term goals of the organization. Even if that means sacrificing a short-term advantage.

Value 4 - A true leader sees beyond the moment of doubt and helps others discover the strength within them to rise and achieve greatness.

On the first day of the battle, Arjuna, the greatest warrior, was overcome by despair to see his friends and family as his enemies. He dropped his weapons and lost all motivation. During this time of crisis, Krishna gave the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita to Arjuna to help him rediscover his true strength and potential. This advice revived Arjuna's determination and he decided to fight.

Learning. This shows that the role of a great leader is to realize the hidden potential of others, and guide them to realize their true potential. This will allow them to grow and succeed.

Value 5 - A true leader adapts to change, stepping out of their comfort zone to find new paths to safety and success.

When it became clear that Jarasandha would not allow the people of Mathura to live in peace, Krishna also did not hesitate to leave his comfort zone. He moved the people to Dwarka, an island that was beyond the reach of Jarasandha's forces - to guarantee their safety. This shows that leaders must be willing to adapt and take appropriate measures when the situation demands it, even if it means leaving behind what is familiar for the greater good of the people.

Learning. Leaders must quickly step out of their comfort zone and adapt to market changes to ensure long-term organizational success.

Value 6 - Leadership is not just about setting goals, but also about guiding others with wisdom and clarity to achieve them.

In the battle between Bheema and Jarasandha, the two were evenly matched. Despite Bheema's repeated efforts to

kill Jarasandha, his body would miraculously rejoin. Seeking guidance, Bheema turned to Krishna, who, knowing the secret of Jarasandha's birth, broke a stick into two and threw the halves in opposite directions. This gave Bheema the insight to do the same with Jarasandha, ultimately defeating him. This shows the importance of a leader offering the right guidance at the right time to help others achieve their goals.

Learning. A true leader should provide clear and insightful direction to their team to help them overcome obstacles and achieve success.

Value 7 - A great leader always has a backup plan, prepared for the unexpected to turn challenges into opportunities. Lord Krishna realized Karna's great potential and tried to convince him to stay with the Pandavas as Kuntis' son. However, Karna, true to his word, remained loyal to Duryodhana. Krishna knew that Karna could pose a serious threat to Arjuna. Therefore, an emergency plan was devised. He approached Indra and tried to remove Karnas' protective armor. This weakened him and made it easier for Arjuna to besiege him.

Learning. This teaches us that leaders should always have a backup plan to respond to unexpected challenges. Strong leaders are always prepared for different situations and ensure that if the master plan fails, There will be contingency strategies to navigate through difficult situations.

Value 8 - A strong leader creates a vision that unites, turning individual efforts into a collective force for success. Although the Kaurava army was much larger and stronger than the Pandava army, they ultimately lost the Battle of Kurukshetra. The main difference was that the Kauravas lacked a unified vision. Each warrior fought for personal reasons rather than for a unified cause. In contrast, Krishna instilled a singular, compelling vision in the Pandavas and their allies. He united them with the belief that their victory would not only secure their kingdom but also uphold truth and righteousness (Dharma) which would benefit the entire world. This shared vision fuelled their determination and gave them the strength to prevail.

Learning. A clear, compelling vision is the foundation that drives individuals through challenges. Leaders must be able to create and communicate a unified vision that aligns the team's goals and efforts.

Value 9 - A great leader looks beyond birth, status, and background, treating all with fairness and understanding, and uniting them for a common purpose.

Krishna never judges people based on their social status, caste or origin. He treats everyone equally and shows love and respect for everyone regardless of their position in the society. Even though he became a King, Krishna maintained a deep friendship with Sudama, who was a poor Brahmin. His loyalty and support were invaluable to the Pandavas who faced injustice at the hands of Dhritarashtra, Duryodhana, and Shakuni. At the same time, Lord Krishna also gave Duryodhana an opportunity to negotiate peace with the Pandavas for the betterment of society. Although the deal failed due to Duryodhana's pride, Krishna continued to treat Arjuna and Duryodhana impartially. He offered a fair deal before the battle between himself and his great Narayanasena.

Learning. True leadership involves overcoming preconceived notions based on external factors such as birth, culture, or status. It is the ability to see the potential within every person, independent of their training.

Value 10 - Effective leadership is knowing when to guide with encouragement and when to challenge with discipline, adapting to the needs of the moment.

Lord Krishna exemplified the power of leadership. Situational Leadership states that leaders should adjust their strategy based on context rather than following a rigid model. When the battle at Kurukshetra was about to begin, Arjuna was reluctant to fight with his friends and relatives. This time, Krishna adopted a persuasive leadership style, inspiring Arjuna with the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita and encouraged him to fight (positive reinforcement). Later, when Arjuna had to wrestle with the idea of fighting Bhishma, His beloved Pitamah, Krishna changed his strategy. Instead of giving additional advice Krishna used the Sudarshan Chakra to personally kill Bhishma. This made Arjuna feel ashamed and ask for forgiveness from Lord Krishna. This change in Krishna's leadership style helped Arjuna regain his courage and fight bravely throughout the battle (negative reinforcement).

Learning. No leadership style is perfect. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses. Great leaders know how to use the right strategy for the situation. Makes them different from others.

Value 11 - Great leaders are skilled negotiators, able to balance diplomacy with strategy, ensuring that even difficult decisions are made with integrity and foresight.

Krishna acted as the ambassador for the Pandavas in the Kaurava court, using his diplomatic skills to try to avoid the war. While outwardly seeking peace, Krishna secretly desired the war to unfold, believing that it was necessary for the triumph of good over evil. His negotiation tactics were masterful, ensuring that the Pandavas would not be blamed for the conflict, regardless of the outcome.

Learning. Negotiation is a key leadership and management skill. In the intricate web of relationships within any organization, every decision and discussion is a thread woven through negotiation.

Value 12 - True leadership lies in having the patience to tolerate differences while maintaining focus on the greater good and the success of the team.

Krishna demonstrated immense tolerance and emotional stability, especially in the face of Sisupala's constant misbehavior. Krishna endured 99 offenses before he finally showed his divine power, bringing an end to Sisupala's arrogance and existence. This shows Krishna's ability to remain composed under pressure until it was necessary to take action.

Learning. A leader must have the emotional maturity and compassion to tolerate people with varying personalities at the workplace, as long as they contribute to the organization's success.

Value 13 - True leaders make the difficult decisions that others shy away from, knowing that short-term pain leads to long-term triumph.

One of Krishna's most defining qualities as a leader was his fearlessness in making tough decisions. He consistently made bold moves that shifted the tide and the structure of the war in the Pandavas' favour. Krishna allowed Ghatotkacha to die in order to protect Arjuna from Karna's divine "Shakti-Astra". He also permitted Abhimanyu's death, despite it violating the established rules of war, as this would give the Pandavas the moral leverage to break the same rules and defeat Duryodhana, Karna, and Drona. Krishna even let Karna die, despite knowing he was the Pandavas' elder brother, for the greater good and the ultimate triumph of righteousness over evil.

Learning. A great leader's ability to make bold decisions, even if they are painful in the short term, is what shapes long-term success and drives positive change.

Value 14 - A true leader does not remain neutral in the face of injustice; they stand firmly on the side of righteousness and lead by example.

During the Kurukshetra war, Balarama, Krishna's elder brother, chose to stay neutral, while Krishna took an active role in the battle. Krishna gave his Narayane Sena to the Kauravas, but he himself served as Arjuna's charioteer, guiding the Pandavas. His participation in the war, though he could have stayed neutral, highlighted his commitment to supporting the side of righteousness.

Learning. A leader must take a stand when the battle is between right and wrong. Neutrality in such situations is not an option, leaders must act in alignment with what is ethical and just.

Value 15 - A great leader is one who places the safety and well-being of their people above all, earning their loyalty through unwavering protection and care.

Jarasandha launched seventeen attacks on Mathura, killing innocent civilians each time. Recognizing that he could not guarantee the safety of his people in Mathura, Krishna made the difficult decision to move them to Dwarka, in order to ensure the safety of his people, thus being flexible enough to handle contingencies. This move was a reflection of Krishna's commitment to the well-being of his people, ensuring their safety from external threats.

Learning. A leader must always prioritize the safety and welfare of their people, especially in times of crisis. By doing so, a leader builds trust and earns the respect of those they lead.

Conclusion

The lessons from the Mahabharata are timeless, offering deep insights into leadership, ethics, decision-making, and human behaviour. From Krishna's strategic genius and his ability to tailor his leadership to the circumstances, to the steadfast dedication of figures like Arjuna and Yudhishtira in upholding dharma, the epic teaches that true leadership is a balance of courage, wisdom, and compassion. It illustrates that great leaders not only inspire others with their vision but also make difficult choices for the greater good, even when those choices require personal

sacrifice. The Mahabharata emphasizes that success goes beyond victory in battle; it's about the integrity, respect, and responsibility a leader demonstrates towards their people and values. Ultimately, it challenges us to lead with a strong sense of duty, fairness, and a commitment to justice, rising above obstacles to create a better world for future generations.

About the Author



Col (Dr) Nitika Singh is a distinguished medical professional and senior officer in the Indian Armed Forces, presently undergoing Higher Defence Management Course at prestigious College of Defence Management, Secunderabad. An alumna of the prestigious Armed Forces Medical College (AFMC), Pune, she furthered her academic pursuits with an MBA in Healthcare Services from Manipal University, an LL.B from Chaudhary Charan Singh University, and a Ph.D. in Hospital Administration from Amity University, Gurgaon.

With over 20 years of diverse and challenging service, she has held several key appointments, including tenure at the Integrated Headquarters of the Ministry of Defence and a foreign deputation to Bhutan. Col Singh's exemplary contributions are reflected in her numerous publications in national and international journals, alongside multiple awards and commendations for her outstanding service.



ANVIKSHIKI STHAPANA : AN ALTERNATE PERSPECTIVE ON CRITICAL THINKING IN THE ARMED FORCES

Col Bhupinder Singh Katal

सांख्य योगो लोकायत चेत्यान्विक्षिकी । धर्मो धर्मो त्रय्यामर्थान्थो वार्ताय

Samkhya, Yoga & Lokayata – these constitute philosophy.

Investigating by means of reasoning, (what is) spiritual good & evil in vedic lore, material gains and loss in economics, good policy and bad policy in the science of politics, as well as the relative strength and weakness of these (three sciences), (philosophy) confers benefit on the people, keeps the mind steady in adversity and in prosperity and brings about proficiency in thought, speech and action.

Kautilya's Arthashastra Book 1, Chapter 2, verse __

Introduction

Kautilya's Arthashastra, an important literary source of Indian Vedic Wisdom and Strategic Culture. Written almost 2500 years ago, is not merely a book of political science and economics, but a comprehensive treatise on developing strategic leadership of a Nation. It has the potential to unlock solutions to contemporary geopolitical challenges, if it is rightly understood and the principles applied holistically. Kautilya's Arthashastra (KA) contains a detailed discourse on philosophy (Science of Enquiry, known as Anvikshiki). Kautilya begins KA with Anvikshiki Sthapana (The discipline of logical and philosophical Enquiry). He does so because Kautilya understood that the intellectual foundation is the backbone for an effective governance, strategy, decision making and war fighting.

Anvikshiki reflects the central role of the philosophical thought to shape a wise, rational and ethical leader who is capable of navigating the complexities and challenges of statecraft unlike purely speculative philosophies, Anvikshiki combines rational enquiry with actionable insights. Kautilya begins Arthashastra with 'Anvikshiki Sthapana' to emphasise that the success of governance, diplomacy, economics and military strategy hinges on a leader's intellectual discipline and rational thinking. Anvikshiki is the foundation of the KA. It clearly underlines the importance of the power of the 'Science of Enquiry' as the most important foundational aspect of leadership which bears the weight of all his actions in the real world. It establishes that art of statecraft is not just about power or wealth but also about wisdom, ethical

conduct and informed decision making. By promoting enquiry and skepticism, Anvikshiki equips leaders to address unforeseen challenges and evolving contexts.

Key Features of Anvikshiki

Anvikshiki in KA is described as the discipline of philosophical inquiry and logical reasoning. It encompasses the study and application of the three schools of philosophy known as 'Darshanas', in Indian context which means 'As I See It', out of the six schools of Indian philosophy also known as 'Shadadarshanas', Kautilya emphasises on the study and application of the three schools of philosophy.

- (a) Samkhya (Rational and Analytical Thinking).
- (b) Yoga (Spiritual and Mental Focus).
- (c) Lokayakta (Empirical observation and Materialism).

Together, these elements provide a framework for balanced, critical and practical thinking and equips the leaders to integrate wisdom from diverse fields such as economics, Law (Dharma) and military strategy (Dandaniti). It equips the leaders to face complex challenges with clarity, discipline and adaptability.

Need for the Infusion of Kautilyan logic into Armed Forces

Kautilya believed that leaders need a sharp and disciplined intellect to navigate the uncertainties and challenges of governance and warfare. By fostering Anvikshiki, military leaders could avoid impulsive decisions, overcome biases and lead the forces with foresight and fairness. Essentially, Anvikshiki is a timeless framework for intellectual discipline and ethical decision making, emphasising a balance between logic, empirical knowledge and moral values.

A thorough understanding of the key aspects of Anvikshiki are a must for its application in the real world scenarios. Therefore there is a need to dwell deeper into this subject to develop its holistic understanding. The key aspects of Anvikshiki are the three schools of Philosophy.

Samkhya Philosophy

It is crucial to understand the essence of the term 'Anvikshiki' as stated in Kautilya's Arthashastra (KA) in terms of its implied meaning in 'Samkhya' Philosophy in line with rational and analytical reasoning. One of the important concepts in 'Samkhya', is based on the understanding between 'Purusha' (pure consciousness) and 'Prakriti' (matter) and their interconnectedness or interdependence. It emphasizes understanding the root cause of any phenomenon, which encourages Structural Analysis and highlights the cause and effect relationship behind them.

This is crucial in military planning, in which the situation must be investigated in order to decide upon a course of action. Just as 'Samkhya' studies interdependencies or duality between 'Purusha' and 'Prakriti', military decision-making requires the consideration of multiple scenarios and the understanding of the interdependencies of a range of factors intangible and tangible, that includes

operational, training, logistics and financial outlays. Thus this understanding of 'Samkhya' theory aids the military leader to adequately differentiate between emotional prejudices and give them analytical insight to understand cause-effect relationships and design audacious counter propaganda which aligns with the ground reality and not based on mere perceptions. This promotes critical thinking, a must have in the context of modern warfare, and it leads to developing adaptive and innovative approach toward problem solving.

The philosophy of 'Yoga'

The 'Yoga' School of philosophy which Kautilya considers relevant for the development of the 'Science of Enquiry', is the 'Yoga' school. In contrast, 'Samkhya' gives prominence to rational and analytical thinking by nature, while 'Yoga' emphasizes mental discipline, harnessing the power of Human mind/ inner self, through yogic practices which promotes inner balance leading to the manifestation of physical and psychological abilities. Intuitively, the word "yoga" comes from the root word "yuj," which means union or integration. This emphasizes the forging of body, mind and spirit through discipline. Practices like "Pranayama" (breath control) and "Dhyana" (meditation) promote concentration and stillness. It promotes the value of detachment in human life. To attain clarity in decision making, it is necessary to diminish the amount of emotional biases you have, this will result in detached decision making by the leader. It alludes to the importance of self-control (Niyama) and the controlling of impulses so that we can judge things better. It seeks to improve the mind's capacity to remain calm under stress, an important quality of a military leader.

Military commanders need sustained attention in order to see situations more clearly. These principles of equanimity help leaders make balanced decisions during emotionally charged or hostile environments. "Yoga" provides tools for calming anxiety, regulating emotion, and exercising mental clarity in difficult situations. Another major aspect of "Yoga" is mindfulness. The long-term, rational versus reactive decisions made by leaders become even more persuasive as a result of meditation encouraging mindfulness. It emphasizes the necessity of following 'Dharma' (righteous duty) which is in line with the commitment of the Armed Forces towards ethical conduct. Altruistic action, a core concept of 'Karma Yoga,' one of the ancient yoga systems, is part of army life. Of reflection and thinking about the common good, not just brooding by yourself. Secondly, it increases the knowledge of the environment and oneself. It is our tool to beat cognitive bias and objectively analyze and decide. These dispositions give a leg-up to the armed forces when soldiers are provided with tools to enhance team cohesion, ethical decision-making, and leadership under duress.

'Lokayata' Philosophy

'Lokayata' Philosophy, also known as 'Charvaka' philosophy, is a materialistic and pragmatic school of thought that emphasises empirical observation, direct experience, and skepticism of metaphysical concepts. Its focus is on realism and practicality which makes it a crucial element of 'Anvikshiki'. 'Lokayata' values sensory perception and tangible evidence as the sole source of reliable knowledge. It

advocates a grounded & fact based approach. It promotes solutions that work in real world rather than idealistic and abstract ideas. It emphasises the importance of tangible resources and material well-being in achieving objectives.

Lokayata focus on real world evidence and aligns the need for pragmatic solutions in military strategy and governance. It encourages leaders to question assumptions, verify facts and avoid reliance on untested theories, which is a key to rational decision making. The emphasis on material well-being translates into effective management of logistics, personal and infrastructure in 'Lokayata'. 'Lokayata' inspired thinking ensures that strategies are realistic, achievable and based on ground realities rather than mere theoretical ideas. Modern military operations rely heavily on intelligence, data analysis and evidence based planning, aligning with 'Lokayata's' empirical approach. 'Lokayata' philosophy advocates tangible outcomes, which dictate how resources are deployed effectively and results are measurable. 'Lokayata' brings necessary balance between 'Samkhya' and 'Yoga' philosophies by focusing on practical realities and actionable themes. It acknowledges the importance of material needs, such as well-being of soldiers, as foundational to any strategic success. Lokayatas focus on realism and align with the 'scenario analysis' approach, wargaming, and simulations. It supports efficient resource allocation and a credible military-industrial complex. When integrated with Sankhya and Yoga, Lokayata completes the triad of Anvikshiki creating a robust intellectual framework for Leadership, Strategy, and Warfare.

An Integrated Approach

The three philosophies of 'Samkhya', 'Yoga' and 'Lokayata' form a holistic framework for balanced, critical, and practical thinking by addressing different aspects of decision-making and leadership. While Samkhya offers a logical and structured approach, Lokayata ensures that these analyses are grounded in empirical realities. Lokayata adds a practical edge to the introspective and ethical dimension of Yoga, ensuring goals are achievable, which advance the strategic interests of the Nation. Samkhya emphasizes a cause-and-effect relationship approach, helping leaders delve into the root cause of the issues and anticipate consequences. 'Yoga detachment & focus, allowing for unbiased evaluation and consideration of long-term impacts. Lokayata fosters skepticism and empiricism, challenging assumptions and verifying facts. By combining these, the framework encourages military leaders to think deeply, question assumptions, and evaluate scenarios from multiple perspectives. Samkhya lays the groundwork for structured problem solving but remains open to adaptation. Yoga promotes focus, mindfulness, ethical decision-making, and detachment, allowing for a balanced and objective analysis. Lokayata ensures these actions are rooted in observable reality, prioritizing feasibility and effectiveness over theoretical ideas.

The Essence of Anvikshiki

Investigating by means of reasoning, what is good & evil in vedic lore, material gain and loss in economics, good policy & bad policy in the science of politics , as well as the relative strengths and weaknesses of these three sciences. Practicing

Anvikshiki requires an indl to critically analyse the pros & cons of his actions utilising the three of the six tools of Indian philosophy (Shadadarshanas) and judging the results of his actions based on these three sciences *tra*i, *Vaarta* and *Dandaniti* as per Kautilya. Anvikshiki is the source of right actions, it helps the indl to exercise the control of mind. Imagine if one can learn how to control his mind, the dividends will be enormous. Anvikshiki teaches us how to understand the two sides of the same argument to understand the sit holistically prior to action. Kautilya, a hardcore realist believed that desires of a human being have to be grounded in reality which is only possible if one understands his operating environment. This will enable him to weave strategies to persue and achieve what he desires in line with the fundamentals of Anvikshiki. Interestingly, Kautilya starts Arthashastra by saluting Shukra, the Guru of asuras first and then Brahspati, the guru of Devas:

‘Om Namah Shukra Brahspati Abhyam’

This itself tells us how important and critical it is to understand one’s enemy first and thereafter to look at our own capabilities. Critical thinking is just that exploring two aspects of the same argument.

Kautilya’s Arthashastra also provides the strategic and military leaders a comprehensive framework to promote critical thinking. However, it is important to understand this framework in its entirety and in depth and not just leave it at a superficial level, which is generally the attitude of an average Indian when it comes to Ancient Indian knowledge System. The theories, such as *Rajmandala*, present the foundational concepts of the everchanging dynamics between Nation states in today’s international order. The *Shadgunya*, also known as six-fold policy provides a holistic overview on the conduct of international relations. The analysis of seven *prakritis*, or the seven constituents of a state helps us understand levels of the three *shaktis* known as *Utsahshakti*, *Mantrashakti*, and *Prabhavashakti* at which a nation-state operates and how various *upayas* of *Sama*, *Dana*, *Bheda* and *Danda* must be put to use to enhance any one or all of the three *shaktis* for the holistic progress of a nation-state. These form the core principles, or the nuts and bolts, of Kautilya’s vision to create a robust framework for strategic and military leaders.

Conclusion

Together *Samkhya*, *Yoga* and *Lokayata* create a comprehensive framework for Anvikshiki which is balanced by integrating logic, emotional discipline and practicality, a framework which is critical to encourage thorough analysis and questioning assumptions and practical by ensuring that strategies are grounded in reality and are actionable. Anvikshiki teaches military leadership to think strategically and act decisively and operate ethically in high-stakes environments.

Anvikshiki is a discipline that equips military leaders with the intellectual tools to evaluate complex situations systematically and make sound decisions. It equips leaders to handle complexity with clarity and precision. These qualities are invaluable for effective leadership and strategic application in modern contexts for effective planning and execution, thereby ensuring operational success. In the Armed Forces,

military leaders can use these tools to analyze intelligence critically, plan operations strategically, and anticipate moves and counter-moves of the adversaries.

Encouraging inquiry and disciplined thinking prepares leaders to make sound decisions in high-pressure environments. Critical thinking reduces errors and ensures that resources are used effectively.

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Col Bhupinder Singh Katal was commissioned into the Corps of Engineers of the Indian Army in Dec 2000. The offr holds a BTech degree in Civ Engg, MSc in Defence Technology and an MMS degree in General Management. The offr has done two staff tenures as Maj/ Lt Col. He has commanded 14 Border Roads Task Force (*FIKAR NOT 14*). Raised immediately after 1962 war, this outfit is responsible to build strategic road infrastructure in the extremely challenging terrain and harsh conditions along the North Eastern Borders. Prior to his nomination for HDMC Course he was tenating the appt of Col GS Engrs at a Corps HQ. He is currently posted as Directing Staff in the Organisational Behaviour Department in the Faculty of Strategic and Behavioural Sciences and is also tenating the appt of Secy, FISCT at CDM.



THE ORIGINS OF INDIAN STRATEGIC CULTURE AND THE 'CONCEPT OF JUST WAR'

Dr R Srinivasan

Abstract

India's strategic culture is bolstered by centuries of thoughts expounded in innumerable treatises dating back to the Vedic age itself. One of the defining features of this thought is the express and emphatic moral foundations for Dharma Yudh (Just War) that each these treatises stress upon. This paper explores the origins of strategic thought and the foundations for Just War by identifying these treatises and briefly outlining their contents with the objective fostering further research into them.

Keywords: India, Strategic Culture, Warfare, Kingship, Dharma, Just War, Dhanur Veda, Strategy

Introduction to Indian Strategic Thought

In popular and scholarly assumption, the Arthashastra of Kautilya is perceived to be the first treatise on political and military strategy. Arthashastra is said to have been written in the 3rd century BC coinciding with the rise of Chandra Gupta Maurya as the first Mauryan emperor. While there have been a lot of efforts to date this treatise, scholars do infer that Arthashastra is a collection of thoughts (with certain original contributions by Kautilya and therefore generally dated to the 3rd century BC) that have been handed down from many centuries beforeⁱ. This inference merits a little exploration.

It is widely accepted that the Vedas are the earliest known literary works that embarked upon the quest for the origins of man and the purpose of human life. Among the Rg-Yajur-Sama-Atharv Vedas, Rg Veda is credited to be the oldest. DD Kosambi dated the Rg Veda to around 1750 BC though some scholars recognize them to be 3000-2500 BC vintageⁱⁱ based on philological evidence. The four Vedas also had a distinctive foundation of thoughts. The Rg Veda centred itself with the invocation of gods, the rites and rituals attached to propitiating them and the conditions of life (dharma) that people were expected to follow. The Yajur Veda concerned itself in two

parts (Krishna i.e. Black and Shukla i.e. White) with the procedures for performing religious rites and rituals. Known as otherwise the Book of Prayers, the Shukla Yajur Veda provides mantras with explanations in postscript whereas the Krishna Yajur Veda appends the meaning of mantras to individual texts. Unlike the prose form in Yajur Veda, Sama Veda is comprises of Rg Vedic texts composed as songs. The hymns are set to musical tones and recited with rhythm. Sama Veda therefore is considered to be the mother text for musical and art traditions in the Indian subcontinent. Atharv Veda is considered as the youngest of the Vedas for its origins are placed around 1200 to 1000 BC though some scholars opine that it was composed along with Yajur and Sama Vedas. Studies suggest that this Veda dealt with the cure of diseases, afflictions and destruction of inimical forces; establishment of peace, protection, health, wealth and long life; and, the nature of supreme reality, time, death and immortality.

Each of these four Vedas also have Upvedas (Applied Vedas). The term Upvedas refers to the four technical disciplines. Dhanurveda (Archery) from the Rgveda, Sthapatyaveda (Architecture) from the Yajurveda, Gāndharvaveda (Music and Sacred dance) from the Samaveda and Āyurveda (Medicine) from the Atharvaveda. Of the four Upvedas, Dhanurveda of the Rg Vedic period is of relevance in the exploration of Indian strategic culture.

Scholars apportion 1000 to 800 BC as the time when Dharnurveda was written. Dhanu (धनुः) in Sanskrit means a bow. This of course when correlated with the date of Mahabharata, would appear to have been composed much earlier and rendered in written text by the timeline agreed by general scholarship. Kulkarni's observation that there are six Dhanurveda lend credit to this assumption. He lists them as below:

- (a) The Dhanurveda of Vasiṣṭha (Published),
- (b) The Dhanurveda of Viśvāmitra (Mss. belongs to Tirupati Library No. 7493b),
- (c) The Dhanurveda of Jāmadagnya,
- (d) The Dhanurveda of Auśanasa,
- (e) The Dhanurveda of Vaiśampāyana.
- (f) The Dhanurveda attributed to Śiva (Mss. belongs to Darbar Library, Nepal No. 557)

Though this Upveda is generally perceived to provide detailed instructions concerning archery, making of different class of bows and arrows and their application in warfare, a brief look at the contents of Dhanurveda of Vasistha reveals (see Fig 1) that it concerned itself with strategy and tactics, training of horses and elephants for war and the treatment of combatants and non-combatants.

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Characteristics of Teacher.	5	Aiming while moving.
Shooting Technique.	9	Method of Aiming.
Measurements of a bow.	10	Aiming through hearing.
Characteristics of a good bow.	11	Returning Arrow.
Prohibited bow.	12	Weapons.
Qualities of good string.	15	(Purification of weapons).
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Fig 1: Contents of Dhanurveda of Vasistha (Source: Vasista's Dhanurveda Samhita, Translated by Purnima Rayⁱⁱⁱ)

Excluding the Dhanurveda and Mahabharata, there are at least 12 more treatises in the subcontinent that deal with statecraft and military strategy. The list of these works are given in Table 3 below.

Table 1: Treatises on Strategy

SI No	Treatise	Written in	Comment
1	Shukra Neeti	Precedes Mahabharata. Abridged edition is ascribed to 5 th century BC and another version to 14 th century AD ^{iv} .	
2	Nitisara	4 th to 3 rd century BC	Also known as Kamadakiya Nitisara. Kamadakiya was a disciple of Kautilya
3	Dhanur Veda	1000 to 800 BC	Six in number
4	Nitiprakashika by Vaisampayana	Usually attributed to 1600 BC (to be related to the dating of Mahabharata)	Attributed to Sage Vaisampayana who learnt Mahabharata from Sage Vyasa and narrated it to King Janamejaya, grandson of Arjuna of the Pandav brothers
5	Asva Sastra, Asvacikitsa, Hastayurveda, and Matangalila	Translated texts in Tibetan are indicate the existence of Sanskrit texts to Maurya King Aśoka (269–232 BCE)	Asva Sastra is attributed to Nakula of the Pandava Brothers in Mahabharata
6	Treatises by Vishalaksha and Bharadwaja	The Mahabharata identifies Visalaksha with Siva and Vahudantiputra ^v By inference (see Note xxxv and xxxviii) these texts can be certainly dated before Buddha	Deal with politics, state administration, warfare, military strategies, other essential aspects of war, etc

SI No	Treatise	Written in	Comment
7	Ramayana	Ramayana is dated to 5677-5577. Sage Valmiki who first wrote it down from oral transmission is dated between 700 to 500 BC	Gangopadhyay dates Lord Rama's birth to 14th February 3348 BCE (Julian day)
8	Mahabharata	3137 BC? 5561 BC?	Please see the discussion on the dating of Mahabharata in earlier pages.
9	Kamandakiya Nitishastra	Earlier than 4 th century BCE	In the first few centuries of the common era, some Indian seafarers had migrated to the island of Java. However, when they were forced to retire to the island of Bali circa fourth century CE, they had carried this preserved treatise with them. The treatise, therefore, belongs to a period no later than the early Gupta empire of the fourth century CE.
10	Harihara Caturanga	1510 AD	Composed by Rajaguru Godavar Misra, the son of Balabhadra Misra was the royal preceptor and the prime Minister of Gajapati Prataparudra Deva of Orissa
11	Sangrama- Vijayodaya	Later than 5 th or 6 th century AD but before 13 th century AD	Refers to Aryabhatta (476-550 AD and Horasastra of Varahamihira (505-587 AD)

SI No	Treatise	Written in	Comment
12	Ranadipika	11 th century AD	Attributed to Kumaraganaka, King of Mahodayapura who lost a battle to Rajendra Chola
12	Tirukkural by Tiruvalluvar	450-550 AD	Counted as part of Padinenkilkanakku (18 scriptures). However, other scholars tend to place it over two millennia before Christ.
13	Pura Nanuru	2 nd century BC	

Source: Compiled by author.

Majumdar notes that:-

In India Politics came to be studied in a scientific way long before the days of Plato and Aristotle. Kautilya helped Chandragupta Maurya to set up an ideal machinery of administration only 27 years after the death of Plato. He begins his Arthashastra with salutation to Sukra and Brahaspati, founders of two schools of Indian Political Thought, and quotes in course of his treatise the opinion of other schools represented by Bharadwaja, Visalaksha, Pisuna, Kaunpadanta, Vatabyadhi, Vahudanti-putra, Parasara and Parasara. The Mahabharata identifies Visalaksha with Siva and Vahudantiputra with Indra, and attempts to give the names of ancient treatises on Political Science in a chronological order as follows: - Paitamahatantra, Vaisalakshatantra, Vahudanrakat antra, Brahaspatyatantra and Ousanasatantra. Bharadwaja was, according to the same authority, the eldest son of Brahaspati, and he must have set up a school of thought different from that of his father. The association of gods with the names of treatises might lead one to think that the whole account is legendary, but Kautilya himself has furnished a clue which demonstrates the historical character of at least one of these authors, namely, Pisuna. Pisuna was engaged by the famous king Pradyota of Ujjain to teach Politics to the latter's son, Pala.

From Table 1, it is evident that Indian subcontinent has a consistent strategic culture of the study of military strategy from 1600 BC. The Vedic and other texts were collected by the authors either from oral traditions that existed before them or composed by drawing from the experiences of their time. It is important to recognize that India has a rich legacy of oral traditions with thousands of hymns or stanzas being committed to memory and reproduced during discourses. This legacy also facilitated adding to them by successive generations of narrators thereby enriching them. Thus, it is also pertinent to note that strategic concepts and tactical lessons incorporated in them have been drawn from the cumulative wisdom derived from battles as early as the origin of states and dominions in the subcontinent.

Concept of 'Just War' in of Indian Strategic Culture

Wars have been fought from time immemorial, even before the formation of kingdoms and states. By definition, they have been violent and by practice, they placed victory over distinction. The sufferings of the civilian population, now referred to as collateral damage, have been hardly a factor for consideration between the warring tribes or nations.

The concepts of compassion and chivalry were considered only during the medieval period, especially during the Crusades. For understandable reasons, religious teachings of Christianity in some ways influenced this change. Peter Wilson pointed out that:

War was certainly not limited in terms of its capacity for violence and destruction, but it nonetheless remained broadly within established Christian concepts of 'just war' directed by a 'proper authority' for legitimate ends.

The terms 'proper authority' and legitimate ends do call for contemplation. In this regard, commenting on the Medieval Ages and violence, Sara Butler discussed many factors and their implications on the society on the heightened sense of violence in the following words:

The reasons for this are manifold, including among others the entrenchment of a crusading mentality, the development of R. I. Moore's 'a persecuting society', the implementation of the Inquisition by the church and the fear mongering over heresy that accompanied it, as well as a sense of crisis

heightened by the Black Death, environmental change, and an almost constant state of war. All of these factors led to a distinct sense that violence was on the rise.....The benefits of widespread fear were not lost on late medieval government. Municipalities across Europe grasped the opportunity to expand their powers into the realm of social control, by criminalising a wide variety of social misbehaviours, such as gambling, eavesdropping, scolding and vagrancy, as well as a variety of sexual and moral offences. Monarchies, too, expanded their armoury of weapons to preserve the social order. In France, Claude Gauvard sees late medieval fear as an essential tool employed by ambitious monarchs to justify paternalistic and oppressive legislation, paving the way for the crisis in order of the early modern era.

To construe therefore that European society found religious and practical arguments to sanction excessive violence both in upholding order in the society and in war, would not be an entirely correct assumption. However, it must be noted that principled conduct of war, especially through a code of conduct for warriors that duly to protected non-combating civil populations and their properties came to be incorporated legally only after the efforts of Henry Dunant and the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907. In due course, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) conventions, more appropriately called the Geneva Conventions 1949, came into effect to regulate the conduct of combatants and protection of non-combatants as a universal code.

In contrast, the Greek Ambassador to the Mauryan Emperor Chandra Gupta observed the conduct of war in the subcontinent in his writings as below:

Megasthenes says: ' Whereas among other nations it is usual in the contests of war to ravage the soil and then reduce it to an uncultivated waste, among the Indians, on the contrary, by whom husbandmen are regarded as a class that is sacred and inviolable, the tillers of the soil, even when battle is raging in their neighbourhood, are undisturbed by any sense of danger from the combatants and either side in waging the conflict make carnage of each other but allow those engaged in husbandry to remain unmolested. Besides they neither ravage an enemy's land with fire nor cut down its trees.' Nor would an enemy coming upon a husbandman at work on land do him harm, for men of this class, being regarded as public benefactors, are protected from all injury

Megasthenes' observation points to yet another unique feature of Indian strategic culture: the concept of righteousness in war or Dharma Yudh. From Apastamba Sutra of the Rg Veda, Dhanur Veda, Mahabharata and Ramayana, and Tirukkural, the entire scriptural teachings in India point to the necessity of the king and his warriors to observe certain norms in war. The violation of these norms led to the denigration of the king and fostered ill will against him in his own territories.

Citing extensively from various Indian sources, Ramachandra Dikshitar provides a comprehensive list of the codes of conduct in wars in ancient India (Table 2):

Table 2: Codes of Conduct in War in Ancient India (Source: Prepared by author from the cited work of Ramachandra Dikshitar. See N. xlix)

1. A warrior in armour must not fight with a Ksatriya who is not clad in a coat of mail.
2. One should fight only one enemy, and cease fighting when the opponent became disabled.
3. If the enemy is clad in mail, his opponent should put on armour.
4. A cavalry soldier should not attack a chariot warrior. But a chariot warrior could attack a chariot warrior. Similarly a horse-warrior could resist another horse-warrior. The general rule is that warriors should fight only with their equals.
5. Poisoned or barbed arrows should not be used
6. A weak or wounded man should not be killed, nor one who has no son.
7. He whose weapon is broken, or whose bow-string is cut, or who has lost his car should not be hit.
8. A warrior who requests to be rescued saying 'I am thine' or joins his hand in supplication, or throws off his weapon, must not be killed. But he can be captured as a prisoner of war.
9. A king should fight only with a king and not with warriors of inferior status.

10. If a Brahman enters the field to bring about peace between the contesting parties, both should stop fighting. And no injury should be inflicted on such a Brahman.

11. He is a wretch who retreats stricken with fear from the field of battle.

12. One should never lament over a hero killed in battle, for he becomes the lord of thousands of nymphs.

13. Aged men, women, children, the retreating, or one who holds a straw in his lips as a sign of unconditional surrender, should not be killed.

14. The panic-stricken and scattered foe should not be pursued hotly.

15. No one should kill the sleepy or the thirsty, or the fatigued, or one whose armour had slipped, a peaceful citizen walking along the road, one engaged in eating or drinking, the mad and the insane, one who went out of the camp to buy provisions, a camp-follower, menials and the guards at the gates.

16. In case of an insufficient supply of numbers in a particular division or divisions of the army, substitutes may be used. An elephant may be opposed by five horses, or fifteen men and four horses; one horseman may be opposed by three footmen and three horsemen by one elephant rider.

17. It is forbidden to kill a Brahman by caste or by profession, or one who declares himself a Brahman, or a cow, or an outcaste.

18. He should not be killed who gets up on an eminence or a tree, who is a eunuch or a war-musician.

The Silappadikdram refers to warriors escaping from the field of battle in disguise as ascetics, Brahmans, musicians, and, last but not least, hermaphrodites. Most of them were allowed to run away, though some were captured and sent to far-off lands. When these captives were presented before the Pandya and Chola monarchs the latter spoke disparagingly of Senguttuvan as having transgressed the limits of fair fighting.

19. It is further prohibited to fight those who do not offer to fight, who hide themselves in fear or who go to the field as spectators. The great war at Kuruksetra affords ample

proof that spectators were admitted into the battle-field during the scene of action, and they were not injured or otherwise harmed.

20. Another feature of the dharma yudh was to leave the fruit and flower gardens, temples, and other places of public worship unmolested. Clausewitz characterises such a direction of war as the necessary consequence of the spirit of progress.

The codes of conduct in the ancient texts cited by Dikshitar were held sacrosanct through many millennia, though some violations did take place as witnessed during the wars of later Chola, Pandya or Pallava kings in the South. One of the rare events when a capitol was destroyed and burnt down occurred in the aftermath of the Battle of Badami between the Pallava monarch Narasimhavarman I and the Chalukyan monarch Pulakesin II in 642-643 AD. As a mark of retribution to his father Mahendravarman defeat at hands of Pulakesin II, Narasimhavarman defeated Pulakesin II in the battle of Manimagalam, pursued his army till Badamai (capital of the Chalukya), killed Pulakesin in battle and seized the capital. Dikshit noted that Narasimhavarman destroyed and burnt Badami, though he also built a temple for Mallikarjuna (Siva) and installed stone inscriptions to commemorate his victory. Dikshit says:

The Pallava victory is further corroborated from an inscription recorded at the back portion of the Mallikarjuna Temple at Vatapi belonging to the 13th regnal year of Narasimhavarman which corresponds to AD 642-643, probably engraved after the capture and burning of the Chalukyan metropolis to avenge the humiliation suffered by the Pallava king Mahendravarman at the hands of Pulakesin II.

Such instances however are rare and occurred by exception (motivated by a sense of revenge as in the Chalukyan episode), than as a rule. History reveals that treating the defeated enemy with compassion and dignity was a norm that the kings of India followed in general. Even in the epics, this aspect of strategic behaviour is evidenced. For example, Valmiki records in Ramayana a conversation between Rama and Ravana in Book VI: Yuddha Kanda - Book of War, Chapter [Sarga] 59.

कृतं त्वया कर्म महत्सुभीमं | हतप्रवीरश्च कृतस्त्वयाहम् |

तस्मात्परिश्रान्त इति व्यवस्य | न्न त्वां शरैर्मृत्युवशम् नयामि || ६-५९-१४२

"You have accomplished a highly terrific great feat and my brave soldiers have succumbed beneath your blows. Now, you are weary and in this condition, I shall not put you under the clutches of Death." (Sloka 142)

प्रयाहि जानामि रणार्दितस्त्वं | प्रविश्य रात्रिचरराज लङ्काम् |

अश्वस्य निर्याहि रथी च धन्वी | तदा बलम् प्रेक्ष्यसि मे रथस्थः || ६-५९-१४३

O, King of the Ranger of night! I know you have been tormented in the battle. Go and return to Lanka. Having regained your breath, come back in your chariot with your bow and then standing in your chariot, you will witness once more my prowess." (Sloka 143)

स एवमुक्तो हतदर्पहर्षो | निकृत्तचापः स हताश्वसूतः |

शरार्दितो भग्नमहाकिरीटो | विवेश लङ्काम् सहसा स्म राजा || ६-५९-१४४

At these words, that King Ravana, his joy boasting subdued, his bow shattered, his horses and chariot slain pierced with arrows, his great diadem broken, he soon returned to Lanka. (Sloka 144).

Pardoning of the vanquished enemy in such cases such as Ramayana is observed to be the norm even through historical practices.

The arrival of the Mughal armies and the wanton destruction and looting that the subcontinent was subjected to from the invasions of Mohammad Gazni, Mohammad Ghore and Allauddin Khilji were to affect these codes in many ways. European forces that came with the Dutch, Portuguese, French and the British further rendered the dilution of the concept of dharma yudh.

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(i) The first edition by Dr. Gustav Oppert in 1882.

(ii) Another edition of the text along with its commentary by name *Tattvavivṛti*, of *Sitārāma* was brought out in 1953, by Sri. T. Chandrasekaran

(iii) Recently in 2014, a critical edition of the text by Dr. Urmi S Shah titled the *Nītiprakāśikā* of *Vaiśampāyana* has been published. This critical edition is based on the four manuscripts collected from GOML, Chennai, three from Oriental Research Institute, Mysore and one from Oriental Institute, Vadodara along with the above mentioned two editions.

[Source:<https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/essay/nitiprakashika-critical-analysis/d/doc1147776.html> Accessed 05 Dec 2024]

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About the Author



Group Captain R Srinivasan, VSM (Retd), PhD, is a distinguished veteran, strategic affairs expert, and researcher with 32 years of military service. He is the Founder-Director of Praghna Centre for Research and Editor-in-Chief of the *Electronic Journal of Social and Strategic Studies* (ISSN 2562-9645). His expertise spans national security, governance, military pedagogy, and Indian Knowledge Systems. He has published numerous books, book chapters, and 29+ research papers, including *Indian Strategic Thought*, covering Kautilyan Realism, Hybrid Warfare, and the Just War Theory. Actively involved in Project Udbhav, he mentors scholars and collaborates with think tanks, defense institutions, and academia to integrate India's ancient strategic wisdom into modern security discourse.



LESSONS ON SELF-CONCEPT AND SELF-AWARENESS: A SUGGESTED MODEL FOR ACTIVE CONTROL OF THE MIND

Maj Gen Anand Saxena

Introduction

It is a known fact that our minds, mischievous as they are, are highly capable of taking us on a wild goose chase. Mind-wandering, daydreaming, dissociative thinking, and ruminations are some of the tools that our minds employ to pull us out of the present moment and catapult us to a past well gone or a future that is years away from manifesting. Our thoughts are also generally prone to be about what went wrong in the past or what can possibly go wrong in the future. A famous study by Harvard psychologists claims that we indulge in mind wandering nearly 47% of the time and most of these thoughts are about things that went wrong or likely to go wrong. The study says, “A wandering mind is an unhappy mind”. Since we associate ourselves with our thoughts, our monkey minds make most of us unhappy/unsatisfied for nearly half of our lives. Thus, to live a happy and contented life, we must be able to control and calm our minds.

‘Happiness’ is one of the most searched words on Google. There are workshops, apps, courses, hacks etc. which claim to make us happy, but barely work, at least for a prolonged time. Angry spouses, obnoxious bosses, naughty children, or rash drivers, all have a magical quality to snatch away our carefully cultivated happiness. What is lacking is mind control in the true sense where the vicissitudes of life don’t rattle us. Things will happen the way they have to, and people will behave in the manner they have to, but we need to put on our ‘bulletproof emotional jacket’ all the time. The cutting-edge science, cognitive psychology and neuroscience are working overtime to find unique solutions for mind control. However, the rich Indian spiritual and philosophical traditions have always taught that our truth is not this body-mind complex and hence our association with the mind is a recipe for unhappiness. This is a radical way of being happy irrespective of what goes around us. Once we realise that our truth (called the ‘Self’) is not the body-mind complex, our head may ache or our minds may be angry, but we can remain serene in the understanding that these so-called problems don’t affect ‘us’.

This article aims to discuss the concept of the mind and the Self as taught by Indian philosophies and its linkages with modern science. Some practical ways for mind control will be given that we can use in our daily lives to break the shackles of the mind over our true Self.

Why is Mind Control Important?

We all have our share of happy and unhappy moments, few serious enough to disturb even the most stoic among us. However, many are thrust upon us by our 'monkey minds' which specialise in finding unhappiness where none exists. My boss barely nodding in reply to my warm 'good morning' or worse still, not even acknowledging my cheerful wishes, is enough to spoil my day. A lukewarm appraisal or a lower-than-expected annual pay raise can result in many unhappy weeks. The unhappiness is compounded when my colleague gets a better report or a higher pay raise. It is almost impossible to give a complete list of 'causes of unhappiness' in this world and as a corollary a complete list of unhappy or partially happy human beings. It seems that our minds hold a PhD in conjuring up unhappiness even among the moments of happiness. Following are some of the more serious manifestations of a lack of mind control in our organisation.

- (a) Moral turpitude and unethical conduct
- (b) Sycophancy to gain career advancements
- (c) Treating the organisation and subordinates as a stepping stone to own career success
- (d) Inappropriate behaviour with the opposite gender
- (e) Materialistic pursuits, vulgar display of wealth and resources
- (f) Moonlighting, and unauthorized economic activities
- (g) Stressed marriages, extramarital affairs, and divorces
- (h) Addiction to social media and honey trapping/blackmailing/espionage etc.
- (i) Deteriorating interpersonal relations
- (j) Suicides/fratricides

The Mind and the Self as per Indian Philosophies

In the Indian system, there are 13 darshanas¹- six of 'Astika' (orthodox) and seven of 'Nastika' (heterodox) kind, the latter don't believe in the validity of the Vedas. The word 'philosophy' is usually considered a synonym of the Sanskrit/Hindi word

¹ I have added Sikhism as the 13th darshana otherwise traditionally there are 12.

‘darshana’ which is slightly imprecise. ‘Darshana’ is more experiential and spiritual, aimed towards the practical realisation of truth. Indian *darshanas*, since time immemorial, have been trying to teach that our truth lies beyond this ‘body-mind complex’ and profess to end our suffering once we understand and apply it in our lives.

Shad (six) Astika Darshana

Saankhya. The root scripture is ‘Saankhya Sutra’ by Rishi Kapila. Saankhya is the oldest Indian darshana. Even Buddha studied it before he became Buddha. The original Saankhya Sutra is lost, what is available today is a reconstruction of the original text.

Nyaya (logic). Rishi Gautama wrote the ‘Nyaya Sutra’. The logicians base their enquiry of the truth only on cold logic.

Vaisheshika. Rishi Kanada is the author of the ‘Vaisheshika Sutra’. It is closely related to Nyaya and posits that the ‘base material’ for creation is atoms (anu).

Yoga. One of the most famous and well-followed systems formally laid down by Rishi Patanjali, in ‘Yoga Sutra’. Yoga, in some form or another, existed well before Patanjali. It is closely linked to the Saankhya school.

Purva Mimamsa. Mimamsa means ‘reverential inquiry.’ The ‘Dharma/Karma Sutra’ is written by Rishi Jaimini. It is based on the ‘Karma Kanda’ of the Vedas and is more ritualistic.

Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta. By Rishi Badarayana, based on ‘Jnana Kanda’ or Upanishads. Rishi Jaimini was entrusted with the *mimamsa* of the karma kanda by Badarayana² himself as he was undertaking a similar task for the Upanishads in Brahma (or Vedanta) Mimamsa or *Brahma Sutra*. The word ‘Sutra’ means a thread or string that stitches together the important ideas and manifold thoughts particular to a topic. To give an example, in the Brahma Sutra’s case, the topic is the ‘primary Upanishads’. The Sutras are thus pithy and concise and need commentaries to unravel.

The first four schools of the ‘astika’ system take the Vedas as the secondary source/authority, relying primarily on logic etc. So, a thing is logically discussed and then indicated as having been given in the Vedas too. That’s why they are called ‘tarkika’ (‘tark’ means logic) schools. The latter two, the ‘mimamsa’ darshanas take

² Rishi Badarayana is considered to be Veda Vyasa himself.

Vedas as the primary authority though they also use 'yukti' (logic) and 'anubhava' (direct experience) to support the Vedic knowledge (Shruti).

Nastika Darshana

Traditionally, there are six heterodox schools but I have taken the liberty to add Sikhism to the list. These are the 'Materialists' (Charvakas), the four major schools of Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. As discussed before, these darshana don't accept the Vedas as the valid means of knowledge or authority.

A Bird's Eye View

The 13 darshana discussed above define the Self differently and also give ways to experientially realise the same. Once we understand that we are not our body-mind, the suffering finishes, though pain (physical or mental) may still be there.

Darshana	School	Who is the Jiva (the Individual Being)?
Charvaka	Lokaayata	Body
	Indriya-atman-vaada	Sense and motor organs
	Manah-atman-vaada	Mind
Buddhists	Vijnana Vaada	Cognition (mind)
	Shunya Vaada	Shunya (Emptiness)
4	Vaisheshika	Samsari (soul)- as doer and experiencer
5	Nyaya	Samsari (soul)- as doer and experiencer
6	Mimamsa	Samsari (soul)- as doer and experiencer
7	Saankhya	Samsari (soul)- as an experiencer alone
8	Yoga	Samsari (soul)- as an experiencer alone
9	Advaita Vedanta	Two levels of reality exist. The samsarika-jiva (you and me), characterised by doership and enjoyership, belongs to the vyavaharika satta (transactional reality) alone and not of paramarthika (absolute reality).
10	Sikhism	Soul (Atman)
11	Jainism	Soul (Jiva)

‘Who am I’? as per Indian Darshanas

If we have a look at the table above, it is clear that except for one school of Charvaakas, none of the philosophies considers the physical body as the Self. Only two philosophies, one school of Charvaakas and ‘Chitta Matra’ or ‘Kshanika Vijnana Vaada’ of Buddhism, consider the mind as the Self. Since as per these schools, the body emerges in the mind only, the focus for spiritual enlightenment has to be the mind. The rest of the philosophies consider the Self to be the one beyond the body and mind, the Consciousness/Awareness, albeit referred to by different names like samsari, soul, Jiva, Atman/Brahman, Purusha, Tathagata Garbha, Buddha Nature etc. Whichever darshana we follow, this truth must also seep into our minds to be realised. Hence, the primacy of mind control for eternal happiness is well established in all the Indian philosophies.

Ancient Methods for Mind Control

A routine answer to the question, “What is it that all beings (humans or otherwise) seek?” is, ‘happiness’ and as a corollary, ‘avoiding unhappiness.’ This truism misses the far deeper truth, “*Who* is the one seeking happiness?” Of course, I know that ‘I’ am seeking happiness but if we probe deeper, the elusiveness of this entity called ‘I’, that takes us on a wild goose chase, becomes stark. Are we our bodies, sense/motor organs, physiological processes, sensations, perceptions, thoughts, emotions, memories, speech, beliefs, values, life roles, relationships, possessions, achievements, or a combination of all of these? If we indeed are this ‘bundled being’ often referred to as ‘Jiva’ (the ‘I’-self), do we enhance/diminish if any of our ‘constituent entities’ is added/deleted? Today, I am a serving General who will retire after a few years; today I have a sharp memory that I might lose tomorrow, but would ‘I’, Anand Saxena diminish in any way? Or, if I am promoted to Field Marshal tomorrow, would ‘I’ get enhanced? In any case, Anand Saxena too is just a label that doesn’t define me. This false sense of ‘I’, the ‘bundled being’, let’s call it the ‘body-mind complex’, is the source of all the sorrows that we bestow on ourselves and others. This sense of ‘I’ and ‘not-I’ is what has created and is creating all the problems in the world, just look around, you can’t miss this simple fact. All these ‘unhappiness tornados’ erupt in our minds and hence the control of our minds becomes our most urgent and important duty.

Amrita Bindu Upanishad says, *"It is indeed the mind that is the cause of men's bondage and liberation. the mind that is attached to sense objects leads to bondage, while disassociated from sense objects it tends to lead to liberation."*

Kena Upanishad takes the enquiry a step further and asks the question, *"By whose will directed does the mind proceed to its object? At whose command does the prana, the foremost, do its duty? At whose will do men utter speech? Who is the god that directs the eyes and ears?"*

As discussed, our minds are prone to having unhappy thoughts but why should we say, "I am unhappy" instead of "My mind is unhappy"? Vedanta, through its teaching methodologies, creates a space between our body and mind (the locus of all sufferings) and Consciousness, our truth. Vedanta teaches that we are never sad/anxious, but only a witness to the mental states of sadness/anxiety etc.

The ultimate stage, samadhi (absorption) as per Patanjali's Yoga Sutra is said to be a mind that is free of all *vrittis* (thought flow). In the Eightfold Path enunciated by Buddha, the final two stages are *sati* (mindfulness) and samadhi, both suggesting the primacy of the mind. Thus, our ancient darshana aimed to pull us out of sorrow by removing our ignorance and revealing our true identity.

Let us now see some modern methods of mind control based on cutting-edge research by neuroscientists and psychologists,

Methods for Mind Control

Diet and Exercise

These two are so fundamental for our mental health that most of us tend to take them for granted. Some basics like low-fat foods, adequate fruits and vegetables, and finishing dinner around two hours before dinner may be reiterated. Similarly, around 45 minutes of moderate to intense exercise on 5-6 days a week is recommended. Exercise releases happy chemicals like dopamine and endorphins which result in a calm and composed mind. In addition, being out in the sun releases another happy chemical called serotonin.

Positive Thinking

You may already be squirming with this cliched phrase but trust me, positive thinking helps in controlling the mind. We must realise that what happens to us is not important, the meaning we assign to it is the key to a happy and calm mind. When we keep our positive thinking going the 'neuroplasticity' of the brain ensures that those neural pathways that give us a happy feeling are strengthened while the

ones making us unhappy are obliterated. It results in an 'Autonomic System Reset'. Positive thinking helps in one more way- it alters our genes. We are not doomed by our genes- a change in mindset is all that is required alongwith lifestyle, feelings and thoughts as the key to a happy mind. Destinies could be changed in just a few weeks. In research, nearly 30% (7000) of genes were altered in six months by only changing the thought pattern.

Sleep- The Super Power

Sleep plays an important role in practically all the systems of the body. Insufficient sleep, for a prolonged period, can adversely affect our cardiovascular and immune systems, cause diabetes, joint pains and obesity, negatively impact mental health, and hormonal imbalance. Some tips for sound sleep are given below.

- (a) **Sleep Efficiency-** It is the best determinant for sleep quality and indicates how long one is asleep from the time one lies down to sleep till waking up. We are awake for some time each night, initially till the onset of sleep and later nocturnal wakings, many of which we are not even aware of. The Ideal sleep efficiency is 90% while poor sleepers are those who are below 65%.
- (b) **Regular Exercise-** The Body Temperature Rhythm is maintained but we should finish exercise within 3 hours of bedtime.
- (c) **Regular Exposure To Sunlight-** As we wake up in the morning we get a 'cortisol pulse' that sets a timer to trigger another hormone in our bodies called melatonin which helps in setting our body clocks towards sleepiness. This cellular timer is set for 12 to 16 hours after the initial cortisol spurt when our pineal gland starts to produce melatonin, the rising levels of which will induce sleepiness in us. This is the reason we should endeavour to wake up early and set the melatonin trigger for an ideal time to sleep later in the night. If we wake up late and then don't get sunlight, melatonin production will be delayed compromising our sleep cycles.
- (d) **A Regular Wake-up Time-** Body Temperature Cycle is maintained which is a cue to the body to wake up and sleep.
- (e) Don't vary wake-up and bedtime by more than 1 hour (max 2 hours).
- (f) **Hot Bath-** Finish 2 hours before bedtime.
- (g) No caffeine after 2-3 PM.

- (a) **Alcohol Before Sleep-** It may induce sleep but the sleep quality is poor. Mostly, the REM sleep is compromised.
- (b) **Nicotine-** It has a stimulant effect and hence the blood pressure, heart rate, and brain waves rise which adversely affects sleep.
- (c) **Napping-** A power nap is good for health but it should not be more than 45 minutes or so and must finish by around 4 PM.

Meditation

Meditation is a basket with many types of fruits that one can choose based on one's temperament and needs. Following are the types of meditations and their scientifically proven benefits.

- (a) **Concentration (attention) Meditation-** Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, Mantra meditation, Transcendental Meditation etc.
- (b) **Observation (or Insight) Meditation-** Vipassana, Mindful Meditation etc.
- (c) **Loving/Kindness & Compassion Meditation**
- (d) **Deconstructing The Self-** Non-dual meditation practices
- (e) **Benefits: Neuroplasticity: Structural and Functional Changes In The Brain**
 - (i) **Pre-frontal cortex-** Becomes thicker resulting in better mood management, rational decision-making, less ruminations and mind-wandering etc.
 - (ii) **Amygdala-** Shrinks after 8 weeks of Mindful Meditation resulting in the dampening of perpetual Stress Response and predominance of Relaxation Response.
 - (iii) **Connectivity-**
 - (iv) The connection between the amygdala and the rest of the brain gets weaker.
 - (v) The connection between areas associated with attention and concentration gets stronger.
 - (vi) **The Recovery From Stress**
 - (aa) Within the first few months of meditation.
 - (ab) Amygdala response dampened in about 30 hours of practice.

- (ac) The production of the stress hormone cortisol is reduced thereby improving a feeling of well-being and calm.
- (f) **To Generate Empathy And Positive Feelings** 'Compassion' meditation for seven hours over two weeks. However, daily practice is needed to maintain this state.
- (g) **Improving Attention** Within eight minutes of Mindful Meditation. However, for a longer-term positive effect, up to two weeks of practice is required.
- (h) **Physical Health** Within thirty hours of practice, the blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate, and metabolic rate come down
- (i) **Kicking Addiction-** Mindful Meditation is very effective in getting rid of addictions by acting on a brain part called the post-cingulate cortex (PCC). The more one meditates, the quieter the PCC becomes. Many smokers have quit cigarettes with the help of meditation.

Pranayama

It is an excellent aid to calm the mind resulting in sustained mind control. Like meditation, even pranayama could be divided as under.

Traditional Practices Yogic Breathing, Kapal Bhati, Bhastrika, Ujjayi, Nadi Shodhana (Anulom Vilom), Left/Right Nostril Breathing, Bhramari, and Udgeeth (OM.)

Modern Practices Physiological or Cyclical Sigh, Resonant/Coherent Breathing (5.5 Secs of inhalation and exhalation each), Buteyko Breathing, Box Breathing (a 4-second 'box' of inhalation, retention, exhalation and retention before inhaling again), Breath-holding Walk, 4-7-8 Breathing (a 4-second inhale through the nose followed by 7 seconds of retention and 8 seconds of exhalation through the mouth with a 'whoosh' sound), Relaxation Response (a normal inhale and mentally uttering a mantra/phrase like 'OM' while exhaling.)

Some advantages of a regular pranayama practice are as under.

- (a) Sympathetic tone dials down
- (b) Amygdala dials down
- (c) Reduced BP
- (d) Reduced heart rate
- (e) Reduced pulse rate

- (f) Lesser cortisol levels (reduction in anxiety)
- (g) Better sleep
- (h) More energy

Mind-Body Medicine

Mind-body medicine (MBM) uses the power of thoughts and emotions to influence physical health. As Hippocrates once wrote, "The natural healing force within each one of us is the greatest force in getting well." This is MBM in a nutshell. This discipline is gaining a lot of traction nowadays by mixing ancient practices with modern ones.

- (a) Gratitude
- (b) Breathwork/Body Awareness
- (c) Movement (Walking, Yoga, Tai Chi)
- (d) Mindful Eating
- (e) Energy-based Techniques Like Qi Gong etc.
- (f) Expressive (Music, Dance, Art Etc.)
- (g) Compassion, Loving/Kindness
- (h) Journalling, Dialogue
- (i) Guided Imagery
- (j) Course/App/Retreat

One can set 'smart goals' with the help of MBM practices which may be very small- from 5 to 30 minutes. Interestingly, these interventions are called 'MBM Snacks' which have to be consumed at recommended intervals. Over time, these interventions will help in quieting our minds and bringing in a happy frame of mind.

Conclusion

One of the reasons that we find it difficult to control the mind is the propensity of the mind to wander, as we have already discussed. Another reason is our perpetually engaged 'Stress Response'. You can say that we are hard-wired to look out for dangers and avoid situations where we feel that we will be vulnerable, exposed and uncomfortable. This is the reason that most of us seek a set routine, familiar surroundings and a fertile environment for us to grow. Thinking first and mostly negative thoughts is not really an aberration, it is normal. There are good reasons for this flood of negative thoughts. The problem in today's stressful times is that the reset mechanism doesn't kick in as we are always on a tenterhook feeling stressed out, looking over our shoulders for 'danger'. Earlier, we could run away from a hungry tiger

but today how do we run away from an obnoxious boss? The result is that our stress response remains switched on in a perpetual state keeping the body tense and keyed up manifesting in various diseases.

We have discussed some spiritual and scientific ways to replace this Stress Response with something more benign- a Relaxation Response (RR), basically switching to the Parasympathetic response from the Sympathetic response. Thus, it is important to learn how the Sympathetic Nervous System is toned down and the Parasympathetic nervous System is activated through the practices recommended in this article. This will calm the mind and help in controlling it.

About The Author



Major General Anand Saxena is an **Indian Military Academy (IMA) alumnus**, commissioned into the **Regiment of Artillery** in **1988**. With **35+ years of service**, he has operated in **Jammu & Kashmir, the Northeast, and the Western border**, commanding both a **regiment and brigade**. He has held **senior policy-making roles** at **Army Headquarters** and completed courses at **NDC and HDMC**. A **fitness enthusiast and author**, he has written **five books**, including the **bestseller *Ananda – Crisis Navigation with Vedanta***. Since **June 2023**, he has served as **Additional Directorate General of Human Rights (IHQ MoD)**, leading reforms in **Army's human rights policies**.



EVOLUTION OF INDIAN STRATEGIC CULTURE: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Col PK Gautam (Retd)

Introduction

Strategic culture since long has been a topic of inquiry. The concept has generated volumes of research work and articles attempting to grapple with various versions of theories propounded by scholars mostly from America and Europe. The paper will cover the following: What is Evolution; Understanding Strategy, Strategic Studies and Strategic Culture; Defining and Locating Texts on Strategic Culture in Case of India; Indian Tradition of Strategic Thought/Triad of Dharma, Artha and Kama; Dharma is the Key; Statecraft and Warcraft; and Continuity of Military Ethos.

What is Evolution?

In Hindi evolution is Udbhav. It is not written in stone but evolves with progress of civilization and experience (*anubhav*). It has human agency. Its foundational base being debates, reflections, and progress.

Anubhav. While in India, the understanding of both *shruti* (what is heard) and *smriti* (what is remembered) was widely known as a high tradition, the inclusion of *anubhav*, or the personal experience was a revolutionary idea theorised by sociologist Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji (1894-1961). Mukerji argued that the principle of change in India society was generalised *anubhav*, or the collective experience of groups. 'The high traditions were centred in *smritis* and *shrutis*, but they were periodically challenged by collective experience of groups and sects.' Examples of collective experience or *anubhav* was in *bhakti* movement and in *sufism*. 'Thus for D.P., the Indian context is not where discursive reason (*buddhi- vichar*) is the dominant force of change; *anubhav* and *prem* (experience and love) have been historically superior as agents of change...Traditions was neither to be worshipped nor ignored, just as modernity was needed but not to be blindly adopted.'

Defining and Locating Texts on Strategic Culture in Case of India

The subject 'Strategic Culture' has its roots in the Cold War era followed by the post-Cold war periods. Undoubtedly it was an invention of the west. Its spread however was like wildfire across the spectrum of scholarship on IR. As the theory of

anubahv, it also touched the Indian shores. It was not realized by others that India had a deep and ancient literature on the subject. Only difference being that it was not prefixed with the fancy title of 'Strategic.' Culture for C. Rajagopalachari is the sum total of the way of living built up by a group of human beings transmitted from one generation to another. Character, he argued is inside of a person. Culture he emphasised is external rather than internal. But the key message was that *Vidya* (knowledge), *Vinay* (humility) form *Sampat* (wealth) and without humility there is no culture. And he stressed that culture is made up of avoidance of three vices - meanness, dishonesty, cruelty. So now we need to hyphenate culture with strategic in case of India and understand the continuities.

Various Definitions of Strategic Culture

One working definition of strategic culture is 'impact of culture on strategy.' Another explanation is that strategic culture is the 'central strategic paradigm' where strategy may be shaped by, but it is also amenable to current circumstances. Michael Liebig shows how Ian Johnston has developed a methodological approach for identifying a state's strategic culture. In this approach answers to questions such as sources, formative historical period and transmission through time are sought. The answers in this methodology are to be found in 'the history of the respective state for *early, endogenous and formative texts dealing with strategic issues*. These texts are then examined for patterns of strategic dispositions and preferences.' Liebig based on Johnston's approach to identify the strategic culture of a country via endogenous, historically, early and formative texts dealing with politico-strategic affairs finds it natural that this approach should apply also to the strategic culture of India – and that means taking Kautilya's *Arthashastra* as the starting point for ascertaining its basic features. Liebig also invites attention to the scholarship of Darryl Howlett who also notes influence of key texts that provide a window to different cultural settings such as Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, Thucydides' commentary on the Peloponnesian Wars, Clausewitz's writings on the nature of war as a result of observations of the Napoleonic period, and 'the writings of Kautilya in ancient India.'

Indic Texts and Traditions Over the Ages

In the framework and understanding Indic traditions and Indian Strategic Culture it needs to be emphasised that it is 'this worldly' or pure political science, statecraft and warcraft and not 'other wordily.' It has also peace science embedded and overall it is eclectic.

The survival of the ethos, habitus, re-use of the past for centuries till today (which echoes the writings of C. Rajagopalachari), recent research of Mitra and Liebig shows that Kautilyan thought up to the present lie in concepts such as 'habitus' of Pierre Bourdieu, political sociology of Max Weber and Pierre Bourdieu, 'hybridization and re-use of the past' as theorized by Subrata K Mitra, Fernand Braudel's concept of 'longue durée', and work such as *The Modernity of Tradition* (1967) by Lloyd Rudolph and Susanne H. Rudolph.

Its uniqueness in brief has the following attributes:

- (a) One fundamental difference in the tradition of Indic philosophy and practice of statecraft and warcraft from the dominant western discourse and theories is that India never had an expansionist strategic culture.
- (b) All concepts beginning with Kautilya's *Arthashastra* are for consolidation of an Indian empire of the Indian subcontinent which has common geo-cultural roots.
- (c) There is greater emphasis on ethics.

Indian Tradition of Strategic Thought/Triad of Dharma, Artha and Kama

Basic framework is the three attributes of life called purushartha: 1. **Dharma**: morals/ethics, righteousness, the Good, piety, society, duty, law, super-ego. 2. **Artha**: wealth and power, the Useful, profit, success, domination, the ego. 3. **Kama**: Desire and Will, the pleasant, pleasure, sex, the id. Strategic culture it can be said the balancing and prioritizing of the three in thought, speech or writing and then action.

Philosophical Debate on Dharma, Artha and Kama. In India history there has been an unending debate on the three. Example from the Mahabharata is one shining example.

Choices by the Pandavas

Once the Pandavas are victorious, Yudhishtira, the son of Dharma, asks others to judge the order of importance. Vidura, the uncle, selects *dharma*. For Arjuna, *artha* is supreme. The twins, Nakula and Sahadeva, acknowledge *artha*, but then argue to press for virtue (*dharma*) first to get the other two (*artha* and *kama*). Bhima bids for desire (*kama*). Yudhishtira rejects all the three and gives priority to emancipation (*moksha* or *nirvana*). In a detailed study of the evolution of the epic including work of other authors, Kanad Sinha explains that based on ideal anukrosa

(commiserait, or 'crying with another'), Yudhisthira's concept of non-cruelty (*anrsamsya*) is crucial:

the highest *dharma* ...*Anrsamsya* is a philosophy of non-cruelty and considerate empathy for all beings ... on the problematic nature of anger and why forgiveness was preferable to cruelty, he (Yudhisthira) declared that anger was the slayer of human beings and should be forsaken...patience and forgiveness were markers of a superior virtue.³

In a comparative perspective Shirshendu Chakrabarti points out that 'Yudhisthira being often accused of irresolution, represents a new idea of 'agency' or 'freedom' on the predominantly deterministic world of Mahabharata.' Further Chakrabarti compares 'Yudhisthira's heroic agency with Hamlet, to understand him through Renaissance idea of self-interrogation as the freedom specific to man.' He questioned the rationale of warfare, Upanisadic rather than Vedic in idea-and subordinates the three values to Upanisadic idea of *Moksha*.

Indian Tradition of Ways, Means and Ends

Strategy is designed to link *ends* (national interests), *ways* (concepts that describe how something might be done) and *means* (resources that are employed as capabilities). Root text of Political Science is Kautilya's Arthashastra. *Arthashastra* is the science of dealing with state affairs in the internal as well as external sphere or in other words it is the science of statecraft or politics and administration. For Kautilya *Artha* is the most important of the three goals, though it needs to be regulated by *dharma* of which *danda* (coercion, punishment, force) is an important constituent based on legitimacy. Strategy does not only mean use of political violence to achieve ends. The end state in Kautilya's Arthashastra is *Yogakshema*. Duties of the Ruler is *Raksha* or protection of the state from external aggression, *palana* or maintenance of law and order within the state and *yogakshema* or safeguarding the welfare of the people. The end state is *Yogakshema* (1.4.3-4) which is '...the acquisition of (things) not possessed, the preservation of (things) possessed, the augmentation of (things) preserved, and bestowal of (things) augmented on a worthy recipient. On it dependent the orderly maintenance of worldly life.' Further the guiding principle in the text is to ensure that no law of fishes or jungle exists where strong devour the weak in the domestic domain called *matsyanyaya*.

³ Kanad Sinha, *From Dasarajna to Kuruksetra: Making of a Historical Tradition*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2021, p.201, 203, 207

Family Tree of Indic Traditions

We can trace that over the ages there exists a strong and enduring family tradition that is to say :

- (a) Indic traditions of science of wealth and power (arthashastra) and pragmatics, politics or statecraft(niti) over the ages have carried forward the key essence of statecraft in India in different forms.
- (b) The only text of Artha and its grand edition and compilation is in Arthashastra of Kautilya (4th century BCE to 3rd century CE).
- (c) 12th rock edict of Ashoka of 250 BCE continues to be a benchmark '...watch your tongue. Glorify your own faith and you do it harm. Praise other faiths, don't slight them. Mix with others, learn from them. This way honour your own faith and benefit every other.'

Continuity of Core Concepts and Vocabulary

In practically all texts and literature on statecraft including the epics various concepts and vocabularies are similar . For example Kalidasa did not spell out or explain them assuming to be well known to the readership of his times like: the seven *angas* or limbs (ruler, minister, populace treasury, fort, army, and ally), six *upayas* or kinds of strategies (peace, war, manoeuvre, attack, division and repose), five *apads* or types of dangers (fire, invasion, illness, famine and death). Further Dandin (650 – 750 CE) was a novelist and poet of classical Sanskrit literature during the Pallava rule in south India. In his *Tales of the Ten Princes (Dasa Kumara Charitam)* in one episode a person fit for the majesty's service is described as ' has studied the four Vedas and grasped the their six limbs(sikhsha,pronunciation; chhanda, prosody; vyakarana , grammar; nirukta, etymology; jyotisha, astronomy; and kalpa, rituals)...well versed in logic...and sixty-four arts and sciences...knowledgeable in the organization of elephants, chariots and cavalry...incomparable in the use of bow and missiles, and in fighting with the mace.He is also competent in history and the epics...and knows the secrets of the *Artha Sastra*.' In another story it is said ' All governance depends on three factors : counsel, authority and energy...The tree of statesmanship ...must have as its roots the five elements of counsel (allies, means, management of time , and space, emergency counter-measures as in Kamandaki's Nitisara 12.26)); the two aspects of authority(abundance of material and human resources) as its trunk ; and the four categories of effort as its branches (conciliation, inducement, disruption and force).'

Grand Compilation and Edition by Kautilya

It is remarkable that Kautilya as a grand editor compiled the entire vocabulary spread across texts and traditions . Summarised are some of the key concepts that figure in all Indic texts as methods or strategies to be followed with due intelligence and wisdom are : Four *Upayas* , Seven *Prakrits*, *Saptanga* or Constituent Elements of a State, *Sadgunya* or the Six Constituents of Foreign Policy , *Rajmandala* , Three types of *Vijay* or Conquest, Three kinds of *Yuddha* or Combat , and three aspects *Shakti* or Power.

Some important texts, traditions and heritage indicating the higher level of strategic culture for a civilized society are now listed.

Rich Indigenous Tradition and Heritage

Self-Control with No Arrogance

For any strategist , Indic traditions have emphasis on self-control. In 1.6.1-3 of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* it is stated in unambiguous terms to give up 'lust, anger, greed, pride, arrogance and fool-hardiness. Absence of improper indulgence in (the pleasure of) sound, touch, colour, taste and smell by the senses of hearing, touch and sight, the tongue and sense of smell, means of control over senses; or, the practice of (this) science (gives such control).' Sukra also enumerates the five causes of arrogance which need to be consciously shunned at 3.172-173. 'One should never be mad or vain with learning, valour, wealth, birth or strength.'

On arrogance , Kshemendra a Sanskrit scholar of 10th century Kashmir lists out seven traits which need to be curbed : family, wealth, learning, beauty, heroism, charity and holy penance.

Essential Qualities of Personality

Kautilya lists a number of qualities of councillors of which three stand out(1.9.8) : 'possessed of the eye (of science), 'upright', and 'endowed with character. Contemporary literature of successful military leaders likewise have emphasised on the aspects of moral courage and its spiritual and intellectual aspects.

Debate and Questioning

Kathopanishad has dialogue between the young Nachiketa(disciple) and Yama(Guru). Multi-layered tradition of disagreements and debate – *poorpaksha* and *uttarpaksha* were expected in a civil manner . One example is Kautilya in his *Arthashastra* disagrees and then rejects views and theories of previous teachers and gurus over two dozen times.

Ramayana and Mahabharata. Ramanya is more focused on ideal ethics and dharma. Udyog, Shanti and Anushasan Parva of the Mahabharata have a rich menu for statecraft with diplomacy in Udyogparva. Mahabharata is also called the fifth veda accessible to all and not like Vedas restricted to the elite. It is a compendium of human nature since ages based on the Indian concept of *itihās* (history):

‘... whatever is here, on Law, on Profit, on Pleasure, and on Salvation, that is found elsewhere. But what is not here is nowhere else...Poets have told it before, poets are telling it now, other poets shall tell this *itihās* on earth in future.’

Hindu Philosophy. Six Darshan Shastras (Samkhya-Yoga, Nyaya-Vaisesika, Purva Mimamsa- Uttar Mimamsa(Vedanta). Vedanta and Advaita is very much in the sub-conscious as has been theorised for Global International Relations Theory.

Jain Philosophy. Anek-anta-vada (non-one sidedness reality)/Syadvada(perhaps)/Nayas (discussion of standpoint).

Buddhist Philosophy. Upaya Kaushalya/ Pratitya-Samutpada /Jataka Tales. Philosophy is discussed in details in the Tamil epic *Manimekhalai*⁴ (see below).

Ajivikas (5th century BCE) Makkhali Gosala- rejected rituals, believed in Niyati (determinism and fate).

Charavaka/Lokayata/Brihaspatiusutra. (Pratayaksha Pramana, part of Kautilyan Anvikshiki. Sage Javali in Ramayana).

The jurist Fali Nariman explains and quotes from the lost treatise by Brihaspati that :

In the smṛiti of Brihaspati, it was written that ‘ no decision should be made exclusively according to the letter of the *Dharmashastra* for, in decision devoid of “yukti” (i.e., reason or equity), failure of justice occurs.

Panchatantra by Vishnu Sharma

It has wisdom of strategic culture and grand strategy to be applied in statecraft and warcraft. These lessons are not fixed or rigid templates or solutions. They are not applied blindly and in fact tell a story for the reader to decide what is right and wrong by application of the mind by reasoning, embedded discrimination for legitimacy of actions and choices. Upinder Singh in her seminal work *Political Violence in Ancient India* (2017) list some of the didactic messages and lessons like

⁴ *Manimekhalai*(*The Dancer with the Magic Bowl*) by Merchant- Prince Shattan, translated by Alain Danielou with collaboration of T.V. Gopala Iyer, New Delhi, Penguin, 1989.

the 'need for effort, intelligence and cunning; solid good sense to survive in a difficult world; listen to good advice; don't talk nonsense; have confidence in yourself; never lose heart; when cornered think fast; don't build castles in the air; money isn't everything; cherish your friends.'

Hitopadesa by Narayana

Hitopadesa (The Wholesome Advice) was composed between ninth and tenth century. It has four books – Gaining Friends, Splitting Partners, War, and Peace. It is yet another masterpiece of literature on *nitishastra*. Besides its originality, it has essence and extracts from *Panchatantra*, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Puranas*, the *Manusmriti*, Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and *Nitishastra* of Kamandaka, focused on diplomacy, war and peace.

To show the continuous strand in strategic thinking over the ages one unique example is found in the five components of counsel and Endeavour as Found in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*(1.15.42), Kamandaka's *Nitishastra* (12.17.36), and *Hitopadesa* by Narayana(4.54) ,viz. :

- (a) Strategy for initiating the undertaking,
- (b) Men and material of exemplary quality,
- (c) Allocation of place and time,
- (d) Precautions against failure, and
- (e) Bringing the undertaking to a successful conclusion.

The Tirukkural by Tiruvalluvar(2 BCE- 5CE) – Tamil Classic/Post Sangam literature (Kural means ' short'). Two Tamil epics – *Shilappadikaram* (The Anklet Story) by Ilango Adigal and *Manimekhalai*(The Dancer with the Magic Bowl) by Shattan (second century).

Kamandaka: Nitisara: The Essence of Politics (ca. 500-700 CE) tr. by Rajendralala Mitra

Kathasaritasagara stories, the histories Harsacarita and Rajatarangini

Raghuvamsam of Kalidasa

Brihartihari's Subhasita(well -spoken words) (mid -first millennium) .

Subhashitas (Sanskrit and Prakrit poetry with inherent moral and ethical messages) Bhartrihari (5th century CE), Sohonka(11th century Bengali poet), Kshmendra (11th century Kashmir) , Bilhana(11th century Kashmir), Kalhana (12th century Kashmir), Subhashitavali(compiled by Vallbhadrar of Kashmir in 15th century, a collection of satirical and comic verses, tr. A.N.D . Haksar).

Simhasana Dvatrimiska(Thirty Two Tales of the Throne of Vikramaditya) and Vetala Panchavimasati

Varahamira's Brihatsamhita (6th century CE, an encyclopedic work)

The Sukraniti tr. by Benoy Kumar Sarkar (wide variation in dates)

Somadeva Suri: Nitivakyamrtam: Nectar of the Science of Polity (Jain scholar , 10th century CE)

Laghu artha-Nitishastra by Hem Chandra, a Jain from Gujarat, 1088 – 1172 AD

Yukti- Kalpataru attributed to King Bhojara of Malva(11 th century)

Niti Ratnakara of Chandesvara (early 14th century)

Samaraanganasutradhara ,and Manasollasa or Abhilasitartha- Chintamni of Somesvara III (1126- 38), Western Chalukya ruler of Kalyani

Vijayanagar kingdom- Canura's Niti (a slight distortion of Chankaya), **Rayavacakamu**, Telegu version of Andhra Kamandaka , and Sakala-niti-sammatamu (SNS), a major anthology of selections from niti texts in Telegu by Madiki Singana in 15th century.

Fatawa- ye- jahandari by Zia Barani (14th century CE)

Abul Fazl,Ain-i-Akabari 16th century CE called Akbar-Niti by Benoy K. Sarkar and **Akbar's doctrine of ' Sulh-i- Kul'**(universal peace) based on non-dualistic Vedantism and Sufi Islam.

Adab n'l Muluk wa Kifayat ul mamluk or Adab u'l Harbwa'sh Shuja'at by Muhammad bin Manusr Quraishi, also called Fakhir ud din Mubarakshah, alias Fakhri I Mudabbir

Dasabodha of Ramdas(teacher of Shivaji) and Agyapatra by Ramchandra Neel Kanth (1715) on niti /tenents/percepts of Shivaji

Regional ballads such as Alah-Udal

Guru Govind Singh's Zafarnama and Sikh other texts

Dharma (Ethics) is the Key

The baseline or basic structure of India strategic culture is built on dharma. 'Those hands that wield power must wear the safety-glove of dharma.' As presented by KS Nair 'Ethics like leadership can't be taught, but it can be learnt.' Thirukkural argues that it is *aram* (dharma) which regulates and needs to check both *porul* (artha) and *imbam* (kama) at any or all levels.

Simhasana Dvatrimiska(Thirty Two Tales of the Throne of Vikramaditya). These 32 fables or stories narrated by thirty- two statuettes which extol in a dharmic

frame courage, compassion and extraordinary magnanimity, and daring by the legendary king called Vikramaditya of Indian folklore. All qualities of the king are positive ones such as daring, magnanimity, helping others, benevolence, heroism, steadfastness, philanthropy, generosity, distribution of wealth to the poor and so on. It is remarkable that these popular tales have nothing of the so called 'Machiavellian' characteristics. The sister volume *Vetala Panchavimasati* is didactic with ingenious plots. The 25 stories of Vikramaditya have the main purpose to illustrate the generous deeds of a model king and emphasizes moral lessons. It further shows the unchanging human nature then and now.

Baddena. It is worth noting that around 12th or 13th century CE, Baddena a Telegu poet in Kakatiya court at Warangal wrote:

To acquire wealth: make the people prosper. To make the people prosper : justice is the means. O Kirti Narayana ! They say that justice is the treasury of kings.

Thus, at the higher level, in Indian political science literature on statecraft across regions justice in the sense of dharma continue to be supreme. Examples being not allowing *matsya-nyaya* to prevail, the principle of *yogakshema*.

Statecraft and Warcraft

In Indic tradition, various works on statecraft deal also with the art of war.

Conquest and War in the *Arthashastra*. A *dharmavijayi* is 'a just conqueror who is satisfied with mere obeisance.' *Dharmavijay* is followed by *lobhavijay* and *asuravijay*. Distinguished from *dharmavijayi* (just conqueror) is *lobhavijayi* that is the one who fights out of covetousness, jealousy and greed for land or money. The worst of the three types is *asuravijayi*, the demon like conqueror who uses forbidden, heinous and unscrupulous methods.

Kautilya's *Arthasāstra* is in Conformity with International Humanitarian Norms and Laws of War

KA asserts 'A country without people makes no sense, and there can be no kingdom without a country (13.4.2-5)'. Rules for war are almost contemporary, viz.:

Jus in bello. *Arthashastra* (13.4.52) when attacking the enemy in open battlefield, or when storming a fort, care should be taken to see that the following categories of persons are not attacked by the troops: (1) those who have fallen down, (2) those who have turned their back on the fight, (3) those who surrender, (4) those as a mark of submission, (5) those who have abandoned their weapons, (6) those whose appearance is changed through fear, and (7) those who are taking no part in

the fight. These dictums about the fair treatment of captured troops and people predate the European origins of International Humanitarian Law and the Law of Armed Conflict.

Jus Post Bellum (Rules as to how the conquered people are to be assimilated and treated).

In capturing a fort, the conqueror (*vijigisu*) should grant safety to the people. Those who have to be removed from the place where fighting may take place should be settled elsewhere and helped in every way. '13.5.3 'After gaining new territory, he should cover enemy's fault with his own virtues, his virtues with double virtues.' Further, Sutra 4 continues: 'He should carry out what is agreeable and beneficial to the subjects by doing his own duty as laid down, granting favours, giving exemptions, making gifts and showing honour.' '13.5.4 He should adopt a similar character, dress, language and behaviour (as the subjects). And he should show the same devotion in festivals in honour of deities of the country, festive gathering and sportive amusements.'

Wg Cdr UC Jha shows how current manuals on the Law of War, a 'politico legal document' for operational training and guidance of the US, Australia and UK militaries have admirably made mention of ancient India traditions.

Apad-Dharma, dharma of distress. MK Gandhi 'did not renounce the inherent right of states to defend themselves when attacked... Indian intervention in Kashmir in 1947 had his tacit approval.'

On Ethics

At 7.5.16-18 Kautilya, celebrates the ethical/moral power to state:

16 (When the choice is) between a strong king unjustly behaved and a weak king justly behaved, he should march against the strong king unjustly behaved. 17 The subjects do not help the strong unjust king when he is attacked, they drive him out or resort to his enemy. 18 But the subjects support in every way the weak but just king when he is attacked or follow him if he has to flee.

Continuity of Military Ethos

One very apt example which differentiates *jus ad bellum* (the justice of war) and *dharma* or *jus in bello* (the justice in war) is given by Gurcharan Das about Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, the German leader of the Afrika Corps during the North African Campaign in World War II. Rommel followed the rules of war and demonstrated how an unjust war (waged by Adolph Hitler) can be fought justly.

General Shankar Roychowdhury former COAS emphasises that the bedrock of leadership power in military still continues to be the grand traditional principles of character: *nishkam karma* (unselfish work) from the Gita, or *izzat aur imam* (honour and honesty) from the Koran...that soldiers and saints have much in common – the theme of *Sant Sipahi* (saint soldier) occurs throughout our history.

Sqn Ldr Rana T.S. Chhina, captures the inherent, subconscious habitus of moral or ethics in the ethos of the Indian Armed Forces in the three components of fighting power: conceptual, physical and moral. In moral or dharma it includes *Sarva Dharma Sambhava* (all belief can co-exist) and the reason to fight as *naam* (name or honour), *namak* (salt or fidelity) and *nishan* (colour of the regiment).

In Military Literature Festival in October 2023 the former COAS(1980s) Gen VK Sharma in the foreword of a book discussion of the role of the armoured corps in liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 gave the following pearls of wisdom:

It is easy to start a war, but once started, it is difficult to terminate hostilities on terms advantageous to oneself. A good general must also attempt to achieve the national aim with minimum loss of men and material, both of oneself and of the enemy, 'hating the enemy' must be avoided as the aim is never to destroy masses of human population or to cause total distress to the civil population by levelling cities and destroying families. Wars are started by political leaders and executed by military forces; soldiers only fight for their country and are not blameworthy for conflict except when they indulge in cruelty, rapine and pointless destruction. Military leaders must become aware of this and never give illegal directions to troops or fail to uphold humanity. Unfortunately, European wars follow 'total destruction philosophy' as we observed in two world wars and now Ukraine war. This only results in great anger and revenge conflict...The UN Charter also requires signatories to abstain from crossing militarily into other nations. If there is a real desire for 'peace on earth' nations need to follow these principles...

Crux of Indian Strategic Culture

During the crisis generated by the December 2001 attack on the Parliament by Pakistani terrorists, Vajpayee (The Prime Minister) responded to military inputs thus:

When the history of this war is written, what name will be given to it? The war of destruction of Pakistan, the liberation of Kashmir, annihilation of the Pakistan army, what? We must have a clear objective before we go to war. We can't launch what

history would merely call a war of anger.... The problem with war is, how you start it, when and where you start it, is in your hands. But how it will end, and when, is never in your control. That is why the decision to go to war is never taken lightly or in anger.

Rather, what the prime minister said is a mirror- image of Yudhishtira's reply to Sanjay 'The absence of war is superior to war... There is nothing more foolish than going to war. Why should a man go to war, unless he has been cursed by destiny.'

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About the Author



Colonel Pradeep Kumar Gautam (Retd) is a 1971 Bangladesh War veteran, former Research Fellow at IDSA, and a consultant for the 'Indigenous Historical Knowledge' project. He has extensively written on Kautilya's Arthashastra, The Kural, Panchatantra, environmental security, and military strategy. A co-editor of the three-volume series *Indigenous Historical Knowledge: Kautilya and His Vocabulary*, he has authored several monographs and research papers. He has delivered lectures at prestigious defense and academic institutions, including CDM, Army War College, and Mumbai University. A Distinguished Fellow at CMHCS-USI, he is a founder of Project Udbhav, integrating Indian strategic thought into modern military studies. He is also the co-editor of an upcoming book on Greek and Indian strategic traditions.



THE PANACEA FOR DILEMMA: DHARM

Col Pankaj Chand

Introduction

The concept of Dharm has long been debated, particularly when applied to warfare. If Dharm is understood as righteousness, it compels us to follow the "right path" ethically even in the conduct of war. But this raises profound questions: Who determines what is "right"? Who decides what is "ethical"? History reveals that what one belligerent considers just and righteous can be viewed as wholly immoral or unethical by their adversary. What looks right in one context becomes wrong in another context. Moreover, the perception of ethics shifts over time and varies across cultures, making universal standards elusive. During World War II, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were justified by the Allies as a swift end to the war, yet viewed by many as a grave breach of humanity. Similarly, concepts like "Jihad," ethical to some, have caused widespread suffering. Ethics in warfare even shift over time— chemical weapons, once widely used in World War I, are now condemned as war crimes under international law, reflecting evolving moral standards.

This is where Dharm provides a guiding framework, offering a nuanced lens to distinguish right from wrong and ethical from unethical. Unlike the more rigid interpretations of morality in Western thought, Dharm adapts to context, time, and circumstance, making it a dynamic and evolving concept. The value of an act, as shown in Mahabharat, depends not only upon one motive wholly, but also upon kaal (the given time) and desh (the given place) (Chaturvedi, 2006). It is precisely this complexity that often eludes Western scholars, who sometimes misinterpret texts like the Bhagavad Gita as advocating violence, failing to grasp its deeper philosophical underpinnings.

In the Mahabharat, the Kurukshetra war is termed Dharmyuddh—a war fought in adherence to Dharm. The Bhagavad Gita, forming the philosophical core of the epic, delves into this intricate relationship between duty, righteousness, and morality in the most challenging of circumstances. This article explores these dimensions, using the Mahabharata and its profound teachings to understand the interplay of ethics, duty, and the conduct of war in a way that transcends simplistic binaries of right and wrong.

Dharm for West

Dharm or 'Dharma', as the Oxford dictionary explains, is "the set of religious and moral laws that is believed to affect the whole universe and that governs individual conduct." (<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com>, 2024) Is it religious? Is it moral? Is it a set of 'laws'? Often, Dharm is literally translated into "Ethics", "Righteousness" or "Duty". Let's explore Mahabharat, maybe the 'context' will help us understand 'Dharm' better.

What Dharm is Not and What It is!

There are a number of places where Dharm appears in Mahabharat, in different folds of events, different contexts and used by different people.

धर्म म एव हतो हन्तत धर्मो रक्षतत रक्षकतः ।

(The one who destroys Dharm, Dharm destroys them, and one who protects Dharm, Dharm also will protect them.)

This verse echoes the Pandavs' journey in the Mahabharat, first shared by sages during their exile. Despite the hardships, the sages urge them to uphold Dharm, highlighting it as an intangible yet protective force that assures justice and restoration for the righteous. The second occasion comes in the Anushasan Parv when Bhishm, lying on his deathbed, reiterates this teaching to Yudhishtir, the future king. Here, the context shifts from personal struggle to the greater responsibility of governance. Bhishm explains that a king's Dharm is to uphold truth, justice and righteousness for his subjects, regardless of the circumstances. Through these two instances, the Mahabharat illustrates that Dharm transcends personal gain and loss.

It is not confined to a particular status or condition but must be sustained universally and unwaveringly, for it protects and elevates those who honour it.

इज्याध्ययनदानातन तपः सत्यं क्षर्ा दर्ः। अलोभ इतत र्गार्गोऽयं धर्म्मयाष्टवधः

स्तः॥२

(The eightfold path of Dharma is as follows: Knowledge, study of sacred texts, charity, penance, truthfulness, forgiveness, self-control, and freedom from greed.)

These eight as explained in Mahabharat, are the paths to Dharm, but interestingly, the events in the epic highlight the challenges of balancing these individual paths (or virtues) with the demands of greater Dharm. Even the Pandavs and other key characters had to compromise these virtues in critical moments. For instance, knowledge was set aside when Arjuna, despite being well-learned, hesitated to fight and needed Krishna's guidance in the form of the Bhagavad Gita to remind him of his KshyatriyaDharm. The lessons of sacred texts were ignored during Draupadi's disrobing by the greatest of the great including Bhishm, Dronacharya, Kripacharya, Dhritrashtra, none of whom made any effort to protect her. Charity, best exemplified by Karn, showed a conflict between personal virtue and allegiance. Karn's decision to give away his Kavach and Kundal (armour & earrings) was ultimately harmful to the greater Dharm of a Kshatriya, which prioritizes ensuring victory and protecting righteousness over personal ideals. By surrendering his divine protection, Karn knowingly weakened his ability to fight. His personal desire to be celebrated as a Daan-veer (great giver) overshadowed the larger responsibility he held in securing victory for Duryodhan. Dronacharya stands as a prime example of the power of penance in the Mahabharata, having attained unparalleled knowledge and mastery in weaponry through intense dedication and discipline. However, his greed for wealth and status, exemplified by his demand for half of Drupad's kingdom as recompense for an old insult, revealed a departure from the selflessness expected of a sage. Furthermore, his unwavering desire to avenge Drupad's earlier humiliation led him to prioritize personal vengeance over the broader principles of Dharm. Krishn in order to contain and weaken Karn, advised Yudhishtira to reveal Karn's true identity as the son of Kunti to Duryodhan. However, Yudhishtir, adhering to his principles of truthfulness, hesitated to exploit this tactic, believing it would be morally

wrong. Arjun forgave Karn during the Viraat war, adhering to the rules of engagement and choosing not to kill an unarmed opponent. However, this act of mercy allowed Karn to return stronger in the Kurukshetra war, where he became a significant threat to the Pandavs.

Similarly, Yudhishtir forgave Jayadrath after he attempted to abduct Draupadi during their exile. This leniency enabled Jayadrath to rejoin the Kauravs and later devise the strategy that led to Abhimanyu's tragic death. Yudhishtira maintained his SelfControl & composure and adhered to the terms of the gambling match, refusing to intervene during Draupadi's humiliation. His restraint in not speaking out against the injustice prioritised adherence to his perceived Dharm of honouring the game but failed to protect Draupadi and uphold Pati Dharm turned out to be one of the biggest reasons to the devastating war. Finally, an example where the Pandavas upheld freedom from greed but it went against the larger RajDharm is during their exile. After losing the dice game, they renounced their kingdom and wealth, adhering to their vow of renunciation. However, by not challenging Duryodhan's unjust rule during their exile, they allowed the Kauravs to continue their tyranny, failing in their duty as Kshatriya to protect their people and uphold justice.

These examples demonstrate that the perceived Dharm-path may go against the greater duties of a warrior, reflecting the Mahabharata's teaching that Dharm is complex and contextual. The concept of Dharma, while often associated with ethics or righteousness, transcends such simplistic definitions. It is not a universal moral code applied uniformly to all individuals. In, Bhagavad Gita, Krishn highlights this distinction:

"श्रेयातस्वधर्ो ववर्गणः परधर्ामत्स्वनु ण्त्तातु ।स्वधर्े तनधनं श्रेयः परधर्ो भयावहः॥"

(It is far better to perform one's natural prescribed duty, though tinged with faults, than to perform another's prescribed duty, though perfectly. In fact, it is preferable to die in the discharge of one's duty, than to follow the path of another, which is fraught with danger.) (Mukundananda, 2024)

This shlok underscores that Dharm is contextual and deeply personal. It varies based on an individual's nature (svabhava), duties (kartavya), and role in society (varnashram Dharm). Therefore, Dharm is not merely a fixed set of ethical rules or moral righteousness. If it were, it would not allow for such individuality. For example, the Dharm of a warrior (Kshatriya) may involve fighting in battle, while the Dharm of a scholar (Brahman) emphasizes knowledge and teaching. What is righteous for one can be dangerous or inappropriate for another.

During their exile, the Pandavs came across a lake guarded by a Yaksh. One by one, Sahadev, Nakul, Arjun, and Bhim approached the lake to drink water but ignored the Yaksh's warning to answer his questions first. They were struck down and left unconscious. When Yudhishtir arrived, he saw his brothers lying lifeless. The Yaksh demanded he answer a series of riddles before drinking from the lake. Yudhishtir answered all questions wisely. Impressed, the Yaksha offered to revive one of his brothers. Yudhishtir chose Nakul. Surprised, the Yaksha asked why he didn't choose Bhim or Arjun, who were mightier and dearer to him. Yudhishtira explained, "I am Kunti's son, and she still has me alive. To ensure fairness, Madri, my second mother, should also have one of her sons alive." Yudhishtir upheld Dharma as a son (PutrDharm) and a brother (BhratriDharm) by ensuring that Nakul was revived. However, the same Yudhishtir bet Nakul first in the game of Dice (द्यूतक्रीडा) and Bhim & Arjun last, since he was a king then and it was incumbent for a king to preserve the mightier one till the end for the sake of RajDharm.

Dharma is also not synonymous with blind adherence to rules or rituals. Had it been so, a set of rules, laws been laid down for all to follow. Bhishm while explaining statecraft to Yudhishtir says “धर्म्मा पालयत लोकान्, सर्वेषां धारणं धर्म्मा” (Dharma protects the world and sustains everyone). (BORI, n.d.) It is a dynamic, living principle that sustains order.

Is it Right to Fight?

Although the word ‘Mahabharat’ is today synonymous with ‘war’, but it is pertinent to mention that the ‘war’ in the epic of Mahabharat, which is written in 18 chapters and over 1,00,000 Shloks is mentioned only from Chapter 6 to 10. The preceding chapters explain the events leading to war, the enormous efforts made to avoid it and the inevitability of war. Only when the Dharm was on the brink of collapse,

‘Dharmyuddh’ was advocated by none other than Lord Krishn himself, who earlier, had personally approached the Kauravs to negotiate peace.

The Pandavs made every possible effort to pursue peace before the great war of Mahabharat. They sent Krishn as a diplomat to the Kauravs, proposing a settlement with minimal demands—just five villages to live peacefully. However, Duryodhan's arrogance and refusal to concede even an inch of land rendered these efforts futile. Even prior to this, Yudhishtir's patient forbearance, despite being cheated in the game of dice and sent into exile, demonstrated their commitment to avoiding conflict. Yet, when all avenues for peace were exhausted, and war became inevitable, the Pandavs understood that weakness was not an option.

It was at this critical juncture, standing on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, that Arjun faltered, overwhelmed by doubt and despair at the prospect of fighting his own kin. To dispel his confusion and reinforce his resolve, the Bhagavad Gita was narrated by Lord Krishn himself. The divine discourse served not just to guide Arjun but to illuminate the eternal principles of duty, Dharm, and the necessity of righteous action. The Gita underscores that once peace has been pursued to the fullest and conflict becomes unavoidable for the greater good, one must rise with unwavering determination and fulfill their Dharm, “SwaDharm”, which for a kshyatriya is to fight.

स्वधर्मवप चावक्षेय न ववकन्पपतर्हमसस। धपयामद्धध यद्धाच्छ्रेयोऽतयत्क्षत्रियस्य न
ववद्यत॥

(Considering your duty as a warrior, you should not waver. Indeed, for a warrior, there is no better engagement than fighting for upholding of Dharm.) (Mukundananda, 2024) Should we Fight Only the ‘Right’ Way?

The Mahabharat’s narrative, often celebrated as the triumph of Dharm over Adharm, is riddled with instances where the Pandavs themselves veered into ethically ambiguous territory. Bhishm, the unyielding guardian of the Kauravs, was defeated not by valour but by exploiting his vow of celibacy through Shikhandi’s presence, an act that tarnished the spirit of fair combat. Drona, the revered teacher, was deceived by Yudhishtir’s half-truth about Ashwatthama’s death, breaking his resolve and leading to a death steeped in manipulation. Karn, unarmed and struggling with his chariot, was killed in a moment that violated the warrior’s code, while Jayadratha fell

to Arjuna's arrow under the illusion of a false sunset, orchestrated by Krishna to fulfill a vow. Bhim's mace-strike on Duryodhan's thigh, urged by Krishna himself, defied the rules of battle, while Shalya's death at the hands of Yudhishtir took advantage of a weary and defenseless foe. The nocturnal slaughter of the Kaurav camp, although a retaliatory act following Ashwatthama's night raid, during which he killed the sons of the Pandavs (the Upapandavs) while they were asleep in the camp defied the sacrosanct rules of warfare, turning victory into a blood-stained spectacle.

These moments, while justified as means to a larger end, force us to grapple with an uncomfortable truth: even the side of Dharm faltered in its path. Did these actions preserve righteousness, or did they betray it, leaving behind a legacy where the victory of virtue came at the cost of its own ideals? Or is it, that to defeat an Adharmic side, it is justified to choose Adharm?

The Kauravas, long vilified as the embodiment of Adharm, occasionally stood as unexpected adherents of Dharm, offering moments of ethical clarity amidst their darker deeds. Duryodhan, displayed unshakable loyalty toward his allies, elevating Karn, the son of a charioteer, to royal status despite societal scorn. In the battlefield, Karn, bound by his word, refused to abandon Duryodhan, upholding the warrior's code with unwavering commitment. Bhishm, the Kaurav commander, honoured his vows till his last breath, fighting for a cause he personally disapproved of, driven by his pledge to protect the throne of Hastinapur. Even Dushasan, whose actions often reeked of malice, demonstrated unflinching devotion to his elder brother. Ashwatthama, though despised for his later transgressions, remained steadfast in his loyalty to his father, Drona, and sought vengeance not for personal gain but to avenge his lineage. These moments of adherence to personal codes of honour, loyalty, and kinship reflect the complexity of the Kauravs' narrative, blurring the rigid dichotomy of Dharm and Adharm. Most importantly, despite these virtues, why were Kauravs admonished in Mahabharat is that they stood with the side of Adharm. So how do you distinguish?

The answer lies in this story. King Ushinara faced a profound test of RajDharm when a dove sought his protection from a hawk. The king vowed to save the dove, but the hawk argued it had a right to its food. Offering alternate meat failed, so the king began cutting his own flesh to match the dove's weight. To his surprise the dove was so heavy that he had to give away his entire body, which the magnanimous king

willingly did. Bhishma shared this story with Yudhishtira to emphasize a leader's duty to protect those who seek refuge, even at great personal cost. However the author feels, there is another greater lesson for a king or a military leader. When only one can survive either the hawk or the dove, how does one decide who does. The otherwise a big dilemma, becomes so easy decision if a leader sees it through the prism of RajDharm which is 'whoever is good for the organization survives, and the other one perishes even if he is the leader's own'. Secondly, does his magnanimity, which brings him personal glory, not devoid a kingdom of a just king? If it does, is it justified for RajDharm? Therefore, here lies the distinction. Even if one needs to give up on his "Dharm-path", in favour of his larger Dharm ie the organizational responsibility, he must readily do it!

Conclusion

त्यजते क्ुलार्थे परुषं ग्रास्यार्थे कुुलं त्यजते ् । ग्रां जनपदस्यार्थे आत्रार्थे पधर्थव ं
त्यजेत् ् ॥

(Renounce one person for the sake of the family, a family for the sake of village; village for the sake of country and even the [kingdom of] earth for one's own sake.)

Vidur, a wise minister, advises the literally blind, but metaphorically blind in son's love, Dhritrashtra to abandon his attachment (moha) to his son, and rather follow Dharma, which even the emperor accepts - "What you say, wise Vidur, of Dharm and Neeti is correct and I like it, but when I think of Duryodhan, I forget your advice."

The Mahabharata's portrayal of Dharm and Dharmyuddh compels us to reflect on the nature of duty, righteousness, and justice in an ever-complex world. It challenges us to consider: Is there ever a singular path to what is right, or must we continually adapt to the nuances of our circumstances? How do we balance personal loyalty and organisational good when the two are in conflict? And in the heat of our own battles—be they personal, professional, or organisational—do we have the wisdom and courage to act with the clarity and purpose that RajDharm, the Dharm of a Military Leader, demands? These questions transcend the epic's narrative, urging us to examine the ethical frameworks that guide our lives. As we navigate our own dilemmas, the Mahabharata invites us to introspect: Are our actions truly aligned with

a higher sense of Dharm, or are we merely justifying them in the name of righteousness?

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Col Pankaj Chand was commissioned into 2 NAGA Regiment in December 2003. The officer has served along the Line of Control, in High Altitude Area, and along the International Border. The officer commanded a company in Rashtriya Rifles on the Pir Panjal ranges and his Battalion along the Line of Control at Poonch, in Shimla, and in Eastern Ladakh. The officer has been Instructor twice in Platoon Weapon Division of Infantry School and an AMS at the MS Branch. The officer is a graduate of DSSC, Wellington, and the George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies, Germany. The officer has served in UN Mission in Sudan (2008-09) and UN Mission in Lebanon (2017-19). He has undertaken the Higher Defence Management Course and is presently posted as Directing Staff in the Strategic Management



ETHICAL LEADERSHIP LESSONS : BHISHMA AND VIDURA NITI

Col KV Singh

"True leaders lead by moral authority, not by power or force."

- Vidura, Mahabharata

Introduction

Leadership is the dynamic process of influencing, inspiring, and guiding individuals or groups toward a shared goal or vision. It requires a diverse set of qualities, including effective communication, empathy, vision-setting, sound decision-making, adaptability, and the ability to empower and nurture the potential of others. Throughout history, various leadership theories have emerged, each offering distinct insights into what defines exceptional leadership and how it drives organizational success.

Ethical leadership is a cornerstone of effective leadership, emphasizing the importance of moral principles and values in decision-making. It focuses on fostering integrity, honesty, and accountability while guiding leaders to make choices that reflect fairness and responsibility. At its core, ethical leadership involves promoting transparency, openness, and ethical conduct, ensuring that leaders serve as role models who inspire trust and respect in their organizations.

Mahabharata

The Mahabharata continues to inspire leaders, artists, and individuals alike, offering a rich literary treasure that explores the complexities of human life. It delves into themes like deceit, love, bravery, and ethical dilemmas, while imparting lessons on dharma, social duties, and moral conduct. Bhishma Pitamah, one of the epic's most revered figures, serves as a nuanced example of ethical leadership. His virtues of selflessness, commitment, and wisdom are undeniable, yet his failure to address critical moral issues, such as Draupadi's disrobing and Duryodhana's tyranny, highlights the limitations in his leadership, especially when faced with ethical dilemmas. The lessons are illustrated below: -

Balancing Institutional Loyalty and Moral Responsibility. Bhishma's unwavering loyalty to the Kuru dynasty, regardless of the ethical ramifications, is one of the most discussed aspects of his leadership. His commitment to his oath

prevented him from intervening during moments of injustice, such as the dice game and Draupadi's humiliation. Leaders must recognize that institutional loyalty cannot override moral responsibility. Loyalty should be subordinate to universal ethical principles. When an institution deviates from its foundational values, ethical leaders must challenge or distance themselves from it. During Draupadi's disrobing, Bhishma cited his duty to the throne as the reason for his inaction. His failure to protect Draupadi, despite being a warrior sworn to uphold dharma, showcases the consequences of blind adherence to hierarchical obligations. A leader's silence in such moments equates to complicity. Ethical leadership demands the courage to speak up against injustice, even when it originates from within the organization.

Flexibility in Interpreting Dharma. Bhishma's rigid interpretation of dharma often rendered him ineffective in resolving moral conflicts. Leaders must adopt a dynamic approach to ethics, interpreting rules in the context of their purpose rather than their literal meaning. They should prioritize the larger goal of justice and welfare over rigid adherence to protocols. When Duryodhana usurped power and exhibited tyrannical behavior, Bhishma chose to remain neutral. His justification was that he had pledged loyalty to the throne. However, his neutrality indirectly enabled Duryodhana's misrule and the eventual destruction of the Kuru dynasty.

Addressing Ethical Paralysis in Leadership. Bhishma often found himself paralyzed in situations requiring decisive action, such as his inability to prevent the dice game or the disrobing of Draupadi. His inaction stemmed from his internal conflict between duty to his vows and duty to justice. Leaders must cultivate decisiveness, especially in morally ambiguous situations. This requires clarity of values and the ability to act swiftly when ethical breaches occur. During the dice game, Bhishma knew that the events were heading toward disaster. Despite his awareness, he remained passive, reasoning that he was bound by his duty to the king.

The Role of Selflessness and Sacrifice. Bhishma's renunciation of personal ambitions for the stability of the Kuru dynasty is one of his greatest virtues. His celibacy and lifelong service to the throne exemplify the selflessness expected of leaders. Leaders should emulate Bhishma's selflessness, placing the collective good above personal gain. However, this selflessness must be balanced with active engagement in decision-making and the courage to oppose unethical practices. Bhishma's decision to step away from kingship to ensure the stability of Hastinapur highlights the importance of personal sacrifice for organizational well-being. However, his passive role later in life diminished the value of this sacrifice.

Recognizing and Addressing Institutional Failures. Bhishma's loyalty to the Kuru dynasty blinded him to its structural flaws. He failed to address the moral decay within the royal family, which ultimately led to the Kurukshetra war. Leaders must proactively identify and address systemic issues within their organizations. This includes fostering accountability, addressing power imbalances, and maintaining ethical oversight. Despite being a guardian of the throne, Bhishma did little to curb

Duryodhana's growing arrogance or Dhritarashtra's favoritism. Leaders must act as ethical custodians of their organizations, ensuring that systemic flaws are addressed before they spiral out of control. This involves regular introspection and implementing checks and balances.

Leading by Example. Bhishma's personal virtues, such as discipline, knowledge, and selflessness, made him a role model. Leaders must ensure their personal conduct aligns with their organizational values and must also act decisively to uphold these values in their sphere of influence. Modern leaders must embody their organization's values while also ensuring these values are upheld at every level.

The Importance of Mentorship and Guidance. Bhishma was a mentor to the Kuru princes but failed to instill ethical behavior in Duryodhana. This shortcoming reflects the limitations of his mentorship approach. Leaders must invest in ethical mentorship, emphasizing moral values and critical thinking in their protégés. Ethical mentorship is an integral part of leadership. Modern leaders must actively engage in shaping the moral compass of their subordinates, ensuring the next generation of leaders embodies ethical principles.

Ethical Leadership Lessons: Vidhura

Vidura, renowned for his wisdom and moral integrity, was born to the sage Vyasa and a handmaid. Though not of royal lineage, his intellect and steadfast virtue earned him a prominent place within the Kuru dynasty. Vidura rose to become the principal advisor to King Dhritarashtra, admired for his discernment, commitment to righteousness, and unwavering loyalty to the kingdom. Throughout the turbulent politics of Hastinapura, he served as a voice of reason, urging adherence to *dharma* (righteousness). Despite the frequent disregard of his counsel, particularly by the ambitious Duryodhana, who resented Vidura's advice, he remained steadfast in his role as the kingdom's moral compass, continually advocating for ethical leadership and virtuous decision-making.

Vidura Niti, or Vidura's counsel, comprises his teachings and views, primarily emphasizing ethics, administration, and the duties of a monarch. Vidura Niti functions as a pragmatic manual for leaders, promoting ethical governance and cautioning against the dangers of avarice, wrath, and egotism. His teachings align with the values of an exemplary statesman, emphasizing that authentic leadership is rooted in serving the populace and upholding ethical standards. The same are illustrated below: -

Integrity and Honesty. Vidura consistently emphasizes the importance of integrity. He believes that honesty forms the foundation of ethical leadership and is essential for gaining trust and respect. Leaders must uphold honesty in their dealings, both with their teams and external stakeholders.

Duty over Personal Gain. Vidura always prioritized duty over personal gain, putting the welfare of the kingdom above his own interests. Despite his advice not

liked by Duryodhana, he remained dedicated to the welfare of Hastinapur. Leaders should prioritize the organization's or society's interests over personal gain.

Courage to Speak the Truth. Vidura didn't shy away from speaking the truth, even if it was uncomfortable or unwelcome. He often advised Dhritarashtra and Duryodhana on the dangers of unethical actions, knowing full well they might reject his advice. Ethical leaders must have the courage to speak the truth, even if it may be unpopular.

Empathy and Compassion. Vidura showed great empathy and compassion, especially towards the Pandavas, who were wronged repeatedly. He believed that true leadership involves understanding and addressing the needs of others. Ethical leaders prioritize empathy and compassion, understanding the challenges and struggles of their teams.

Wisdom in Decision-Making. Vidura's counsel reflects his deep wisdom and prudence. He often advised Dhritarashtra to think about the consequences of his actions, demonstrating the importance of foresight and thoughtful decision-making. Ethical leaders make decisions with foresight, considering potential consequences.

Impartiality and Fairness. Vidura was known for his impartiality and fairness. He treated all members of the Kuru family equally, irrespective of his personal relationships, and always sought justice. Leaders should avoid favoritism, treating all team members fairly and providing equal opportunities.

Self-Control and Restraint. Vidura often emphasized self-control, viewing it as a virtue essential for wise leadership. He believed that a leader must control impulses and act thoughtfully. Self-control enables leaders to respond thoughtfully rather than reacting impulsively, especially in crises.

Advising against Greed and Attachment. Vidura warned against the dangers of greed and excessive attachment, which he believed cloud judgment and lead to unethical behavior. Ethical leaders avoid excessive focus on material gain or personal ambition. They make balanced decisions that consider both the organization's success and broader ethical standards.

Commitment to Justice and Righteousness. Vidura was a staunch advocate for justice. He urged Dhritarashtra to ensure fairness for the Pandavas and frequently reminded him of his moral obligations. Leaders should be committed to justice, advocating for fair treatment and standing up against wrongdoing.

Role of a Counselor and Mentor. Vidura's role as a counselor to the king emphasizes the importance of mentorship. He provided wise advice, even though it was often disregarded, fulfilling his responsibility to guide others. Leaders should mentor and support their teams, helping them grow professionally and ethically.

Ethical Leadership Lessons: Shanti Parva

The *Shanti Parva*, where Bhishma lies on his bed of arrows, offering counsel to Yudhishtira, provides a timeless lesson on leadership and ethical conduct. Bhishma's words are not merely instructions but a heartfelt legacy, born of a lifetime of sacrifice, responsibility, and profound reflection on the nature of duty. His teachings hold lessons for all leaders, particularly for those who are navigating complex moral landscapes.

Commitment to Dharma (Righteousness). At the heart of Bhishma's advice is an unwavering commitment to *Dharma*. Bhishma impresses upon Yudhishtira that a leader's duty is to uphold righteousness, even when it is challenging. His own life serves as an example of this commitment. Bhishma's adherence to his vow of celibacy and loyalty to the throne of Hastinapur, despite personal loss, underscores the importance of putting duty above self-interest. This lesson is central to ethical leadership, the need to prioritize the greater good and moral integrity over personal gain.

Balancing Idealism with Practicality. Throughout his teachings, Bhishma emphasizes that while ethical ideals are crucial, a leader must also be pragmatic. In the *Rajadharma* section, he advises Yudhishtira that governance requires balancing moral principles with practical needs. This approach, a blend of idealism and realism, allows leaders to make decisions that are both just and effective, without being paralyzed by perfection.

Detachment from Power and Ego. Bhishma's own life is a lesson in renunciation, he relinquished his claim to the throne and took a vow of celibacy. His counsel to Yudhishtira includes the importance of practicing detachment, especially from power and ego. Bhishma warns that attachment to power can cloud judgment, making it difficult for leaders to act in the best interest of their people. True leadership, he suggests, is rooted in humility and selflessness.

Responsibility to Serve the People. Bhishma's guidance on *Rajadharma* centers on the idea that a ruler's primary duty is to serve the welfare of the people. He stresses that power is a means to protect and uplift, not a tool for personal glory. Ethical leadership, in Bhishma's view, is inherently service-oriented. Leaders are reminded to prioritize the needs of their people, promoting a sense of accountability and purpose.

Justice Tempered with Compassion. Bhishma advises Yudhishtira to be just but also merciful. While a leader must enforce laws and maintain order, Bhishma encourages a balanced approach that incorporates compassion. He speaks to the need for a ruler to understand the complexities of human behavior and to exercise forgiveness when appropriate. This lesson reinforces the idea that empathy is an essential quality of ethical leadership.

Strength in Moral Conviction. One of Bhishma's core messages is the importance of moral conviction. Despite the adversities he faced, Bhishma remained steadfast in his principles. He imparts this value to Yudhishtira, emphasizing that a leader must not waver in their ethical beliefs, even when faced with opposition. This resilience is crucial for maintaining integrity in leadership.

Discernment and Wisdom. In the *Shanti Parva*, Bhishma often emphasizes the need for discernment. He advises Yudhishtira to use wisdom to navigate complex situations, recognizing that not all decisions are black and white. For Bhishma, true leadership involves understanding the nuances of each situation and acting with insight, a lesson that encourages leaders to reflect deeply before making choices.

Establishing Ethical Systems for Governance. Bhishma speaks to Yudhishtira about the importance of creating systems that promote ethical governance. He suggests that a just society is built on strong ethical foundations, where laws and institutions uphold righteousness. Leaders are encouraged to establish frameworks that support integrity and accountability, setting a standard for those who follow.

Resilience and Patience in Adversity. Bhishma's very position, lying on a bed of arrows, embodies endurance. He teaches Yudhishtira that a leader must remain resilient, particularly during times of hardship. This patience, coupled with fortitude, enables a leader to face challenges without losing their moral compass. Bhishma's example illustrates that true strength is found in endurance and inner resolve.

Legacy and Mentorship. Bhishma's final act of passing down his wisdom to Yudhishtira reflects his understanding of legacy. He believes that one of a leader's highest duties is to guide and mentor the next generation. By sharing his knowledge, Bhishma ensures that his experiences and insights continue to benefit others, highlighting the importance of mentorship in sustaining ethical leadership.

Accountability and Acknowledgment of Mistakes. Bhishma's reflections include moments of self-critique, notably his silence during Draupadi's disrobing. He teaches Yudhishtira that a true leader acknowledges their mistakes, learning from them rather than denying them. This lesson speaks to the power of accountability, reminding leaders that accepting responsibility is a mark of strength, not weakness.

Conclusion

The Mahabharata, with its eternal characters and fascinating plots, offers as a treasure trove of lessons on leadership, governance, and ethics. Every character, from the resolute Bhishma to the astute Vidura, exemplifies principles and difficulties that provide deep insights into human behavior and decision-making. The Mahabharata also imparts that leadership encompasses not merely authority, but also responsibility, selflessness, and a dedication to virtue. Bhishma's steadfast commitment to duty, despite significant personal sacrifice, and Vidura's courageous promotion of justice and ethical leadership highlight the attributes of an exemplary leader. Their lives exemplify that authentic leadership entails steadfast adherence to one's convictions,

harmonizing compassion with discipline, and possessing the fortitude to articulate the truth, even when it is inconvenient. Examining the teachings of Bhishma and Vidura reveals their significant contributions to the epic, providing essential insights on ethical leadership and decision-making. The Mahabharata, far from being just an ancient epic, continues to inspire with its lessons on how leaders can act with wisdom, fairness, and integrity, creating harmony and progress in the societies they serve. This historical perspective provides insight into the epic's characters and serves as a guide for principled ethical leadership in contemporary society.

About the Author



Col KV Singh was commissioned into Army Ordnance Corps on 08 June 2002. He is an alumnus of National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla, Pune. The officer has also attended Defence services staff course at wellington. The officer has tenanted the appointment of AQMG at Corps HQ and has commanded three ordnance units in Eastern and Western sector. The officer is currently undergoing HDMC at CDM, Secunderabad.



LEADERSHIP AND NEGOTIATION LESSONS FROM ANCIENT INDIA & ITS RELEVANCE TO POST THEATERISATION “PURPLE” LEADERS

FISCT Group Article

Introduction

Leadership and negotiation are as old as human civilization itself, serving as cornerstones in building communities, managing conflicts, and achieving progress. From ancient societies to modern governance, these two principals have evolved through history, shaped by cultural, philosophical, and political paradigms. Ancient Indian Wisdom has a wealth of knowledge about these two aspects.

The military leaders of Indian Armed Forces are groomed to undertake strategic, operational and tactical leadership roles in their respective service. However, this will soon change as soon as Theaterisation becomes a reality. A new fusion of tri-service ethos, values and culture will take shape over a period of time. The initial expected entropy is natural. During this initial period, it will do good for all three services to fall back on Ancient Indian literature that gives insights through creative correlation. There was a section dedicated to leadership from ancient sources of *Arthshastra*, *Bhagawad Gita* and *Triguna Theory* in XXI Volume of *Dur Drishti* (September 2021). Additionally, the book “Pearls of Wisdom” covers Thirukural too in detail. Hence, this article attempts to explore other literary sources and ancient texts that can be a source of knowledge on negotiation and leadership.

The challenges they as a newly moulded “Purple” shall face are numerous and taking timely and correct decisions under conditions of uncertainty and risk adds a unique dimension to their role. Additionally, they may be required to negotiate in unfriendly and hostile conditions both internally and externally. This could include examples such as Joint staff border Flag meetings or HADR of Indian diaspora from foreign land. The crises pose a new situation every time which cannot be templated. Hence, it is imperative that we dig deep into the vast existing knowledge in our Ancient texts, literature and combined wisdom.

Leadership Lessons from Ramayana

The Ramayana is one of India's most revered epics which is a masterpiece not just of storytelling but also from the aspect of practical wisdom. Beyond its spiritual and moral teachings, the Ramayana also serves as a guidebook for many other facets viz leadership, ethics, negotiation strategies etc. Focusing on the aspect of leadership, it is essential to highlight that Rama exemplifies a leader who inspires through principles, resilience and inclusivity. His actions and decisions throughout the epic offer enduring insights for those in leadership positions or navigating the complexities of negotiation. Rama is a character of the Ramayana within lines of which he is portrayed as very fastened, value-based and a complete leader whose actions portray right from ethnic morals (Dharma), integrity, compassion and the resilience of an ideal leader.

Totality of Dharma.

Rama's willingness to bear the consequences of his father's promise, that led to him being exiled, shows that he follows his duty unconditionally. Such choice reflects the importance of tolerance in the society to uphold moral values irrespective of the burdens brought by it. Summit leadership is not securing interests for oneself but rather owning the responsibility of becoming a moral authority. This is in line with modern leadership where leaders are required to sacrifice their needs for the benefit of the followers.

Clarity of Vision

Leadership begins with a clear vision and Rama's leadership exemplifies this facet as he was very clear about his ultimate objective which was to rescue Sita from Ravana. Thus, Rama made every decision which was aligned with this mission. Shri Rama's meticulous planning and goal-oriented approach demonstrated as to how the leaders must first define their objectives and then create a roadmap to achieve them. He understood the importance of strategy, organising his resources and team in a structured manner to overcome obstacles. Present day leaders can draw inspiration from this clarity of purpose and meticulous preparation which are vital in today's fast-paced competitive environment.

Adaptability

Another key aspect of Rama's leadership was adaptability. Despite facing exile and losing his kingdom, he did not falter in his mission. He used his capabilities and acumen he built alliances with the Vanaras and used the resources at hand to assemble an army. This resourcefulness showcases the importance of being flexible and making the best use of available opportunities. Leaders today can emulate Rama's ability to adapt to changing circumstances while staying committed to their goals.

Empowerment

One of the sterling qualities of Shri Rama as a leader was his ability to inspire trust and empower his team. One of the best suited examples of this is his relationship with Hanuman. Rama trusted Hanuman to take critical decisions independently, such as crossing the ocean to find Sita. This trust not only empowered Hanuman but also fostered loyalty and confidence among his team. Present day leaders can learn from this by delegating responsibility and trusting their teams to deliver results, even in high-stakes situations.

Ethics

Ethical conduct was the cornerstone of Rama's leadership. Even when faced with adversity, he adhered to dharma (righteousness). For instance, when Ravana was unarmed during battle, Rama chose not to attack him, adhering to the code of conduct for warfare. Leaders today often face ethical dilemmas and Rama's unwavering commitment to principles demonstrates that integrity is non-negotiable in leadership.

Compassion and Empathy

Rama's interactions with his associates like Sugriva, Hanuman, and Vanara Army are testaments of Rama as a leader who has great deal of empathy. By regarding and venerating each person irrespective of their societal status, Rama embraces loyalty and unity. The need of emotional IQ in the leadership is further illustrated by his ability to understand and respond to both the practical and emotional needs of his partners. Trust and respect are the bases in the relationship between Rama and

Sugriva. Rama helps Sugriva while himself in the distress of recovering Sita, therefore, Sugriva has a strong and loyal friend in this idea.

Respect for Counsel and Inclusion

Rama's notion of inclusivity is illustrated by his welcoming of a variety of supporters including Sugriva's Vanara army as well as Vibhishana, who was the brother of Ravana. While carrying out his vision, Rama as a leader practices respect and appreciation for his subordinates' opinions and advice. This inclusiveness is particularly important for today's leaders who operate in a multi-ethnic society.

The Sangam Period

In South India, during the Sangam Period (circa 3rd century B.C. to 3rd century A.D.), leadership and negotiation were deeply embedded in the societal fabric. This epoch was marked by rich literary output, political dynamics, and socio-cultural evolution, leaving behind enduring lessons for contemporary leaders. By delving into Sangam literature (other than Thirukural) and its philosophical underpinnings, this article explores the art of leadership and negotiation through historical, literary and contextual lenses.

The Sangam Period, named after the academies or "Sangam" where scholars, poets, and thinkers convened, was a golden era of Dravidian culture and literature. These gatherings took place in Tamil Nadu, with three Sangams believed to have been held in different locations over several centuries. The Sangam literature, compiled in anthologies like **Ettutogai** (Eight Anthologies) and **Pattuppattu** (Ten Idylls), reflects a society driven by principles of governance, diplomacy, and valour.

Themes of Leadership in Sangam Literature

The socio-political structure of the time revolved around monarchies, with kings often portrayed as ideal leaders embodying wisdom, justice, and magnanimity. Their ability to negotiate whether in war, trade, or alliances, was a testament to their leadership. Sangam literature vividly portrays the nuanced interplay of power, duty, and morality, offering timeless lessons in statecraft and interpersonal relations. Leadership during this period was characterised by the values of justice, responsibility, and moral accountability. As stated in Purananuru (Verse 192): -

"குடிக்கண் கண்ணது ஊர்க்கண் கண்ணது

நாட்டிக்கண் கண்ணது கண்ணும் கடிக்கண் கண்ணது."

"A ruler is the eye of the people, the protector of the land, and the visionary of the nation. Without their guidance, all is dark." This highlights the central role of leaders as guardians of society and stewards of justice.

Sangam works like the **Tolkappiyam**, an early treatise on Tamil grammar and poetics and **Purananuru** (a collection of external or public themes), provide profound insights into leadership. Kings and chieftains were expected to uphold **Aram** (Ethical Conduct), ensure the welfare of their subjects, and maintain the balance between aggression and compassion. The concept of leadership was deeply intertwined with moral rectitude and accountability, as seen in the verses eulogizing or critiquing rulers.

For instance, **Purananuru** speaks of a king's duty to protect his people and nurture his kingdom, likening an ideal ruler to a raincloud that nourishes the earth. In Elango Adigal's *Silappathikaram*, the pursuit of justice is vividly portrayed. The protagonist, Kannagi, negotiates her way through injustice with unwavering conviction, symbolizing the power of moral authority in leadership. The metaphor in *Purananuru* (Verse 186) beautifully complements this: -

"நீரின் நல்லாற்றி யொழிய நெடுவின் நல்லாற்றி யொழிய."

"Just as a river remains pure by its flow, a leader remains noble through their unceasing commitment to duty." This underscores the importance of persistence and ethical conduct in leadership.

Leadership Lessons from Play *Mudrarakshasa* by Vishakhadatta

Vishakhadatta's "*Mudrarakshasa*" is a masterpiece of Sanskrit literature that explores the themes of astute leadership and complex negotiation through the story of the cunning strategist Chanakya and his efforts to establish Chandragupta Maurya on the throne of the Magadha empire. The play captures the political intrigue and strategic manoeuvres necessary to navigate a tumultuous period in Indian history, presenting a rich tapestry of characters and events that highlight the nuances of leadership and negotiation. The character of Chanakya serves as the embodiment of

strategic leadership. Known for his intellect and dedication, Chanakya's leadership is defined by his unwavering commitment to his vision of a unified and strong state under Chandragupta's rule. His leadership is multifaceted, involving foresight, adaptability, and a nuanced understanding of human nature.

Visionary Leadership. Chanakya's overarching vision is to see Chandragupta ascend to the throne, marking the end of the Nanda dynasty's rule. All his actions, including his alliances and strategies, are geared towards this goal. Chanakya exemplifies the quality of a visionary leader, seeing beyond the immediate conflicts to the long-term stability and prosperity of the kingdom.

Strategic Planning and Execution. Chanakya's leadership is marked by meticulous planning and the strategic execution of complex plans. Throughout the play, Chanakya devises intricate plots to outmanoeuvre his opponents, showcasing his ability to think several steps ahead. One notable aspect is his use of Rakshasa's (the chief minister of the Nandas) fears and suspicions to sow discord among the enemy ranks, demonstrating his strategic acumen.

Psychological Insight and Manipulation. Understanding human motivations deeply, Chanakya is able to manipulate situations and individuals to his advantage. He leverages the biases and weaknesses of his enemies, turning potential adversaries into allies through persuasion and cunning. This aspect reflects the leader's profound psychological insight, allowing him to control the narrative and turn the tide in his favour.

Resilience and Determination. Despite numerous challenges and setbacks, Chanakya's determination remains unshaken. His resilience in the face of adversity underscores his leadership qualities, as he consistently adapts his strategies to overcome obstacles. This tenacity ensures that he remains a step ahead of his opponents, rallying his supporters with his unwavering resolve.

Revisiting Panchatantra: The Story of Hunter and Pigeons

There was a flock of pigeons living on a grand banyan tree. While looking for food one day, they noticed a field with grains abundantly scattered around. Excited, they descended to eat, only to discover that it was a trap laid by a hunter. They found themselves trapped in a sturdy net.

This timeless tale serves as reminder that the idea that true leadership lies in inspiring others, encouraging teamwork, and leveraging collective strength to overcome challenges. Garudraj and Mushak Raj serve as enduring symbols of wisdom and unity. Some lessons that can be revisited are as follows: -

Unity in Adversity. The pigeons were filled with despair, fearing for their lives. Their leader, a wise and courageous pigeon named Garudraj, urged them to stay calm and think collectively. He reminded the flock of the power of unity and proposed that they work together to lift the net. Trusting their leader, the pigeons flapped their wings in unison. Their combined strength enabled them to lift the net and fly away, leaving the hunter helpless and frustrated.

Seeking Help. After flying for a considerable distance, the pigeons arrived at the dwelling of Garudraj's trusted ally, the clever and resourceful king of rats, Mushak Raj. Hearing Garudraj's call, Mushak Raj emerged from his burrow. Upon understanding their plight, Mushak Raj gathered his fellow rats. Together, they worked tirelessly, gnawing through the net until the pigeons were finally freed. The flock expressed their heartfelt gratitude to Mushak Raj and his team before flying back to their banyan tree, safe and free.

Innovative Out of the Box Thinking. Garudraj's ability to assess the situation and propose a practical solution exemplifies the importance of strategic foresight. He turned a hopeless scenario into a coordinated escape plan.

Inspiring Collective Action. By rallying his flock and emphasising the power of unity, Garudraj inspired the pigeons to act together to take on a seemingly impossible task. His leadership turned individual fears into a collective strength.

Leveraging Partnership & Resources. Seeking Mushak Raj's assistance demonstrates Garudraj's resourcefulness. Effective leaders recognize the value of partnerships and know how to mobilise external support when needed.

Empathy and Trust-Building. The mutual respect and trust between Garudraj and Mushak Raj illustrate the importance of strong relationships. Mushak Raj's immediate willingness to help reflects the depth of their bond.

Delegation and Teamwork. Mushak Raj's ability to organize his team of rats to achieve the task efficiently highlights a leader's role in delegation and empowering their team to succeed.

Resilience & Optimism. Garudraj's optimism kept the flock motivated and Mushak Raj's determination ensured the plan's success. Both leaders demonstrated perseverance in the face of adversity.

Lessons for Future Purple Leaders

The leadership lessons from this literature makes absolute sense when viewed from a personal growth and development perspective. However, if we try to view these lessons from perspective of newly formed Purple Leaders of Theaterised Commands, they reveal simple yet relevant insights that will go a long way in cementing the new fused ethos, values and culture.

A Purple Leader would do good to seek counsel by inclusivity of every team member no matter how diverse his opinions are. He or She cannot allow the mind to be fragmented by perception. The process will have to be based on clarity of vision which is driven by service objectives or *Dharma*. The need to adapt to changing circumstances while staying committed to their goals with the right attitude will be key. The Sangam text emphasize on the moral aspects of leadership with justice as the cornerstone. This will require the shedding of old colours to don the new Purple in mind and body. These ideas align with contemporary theories too that emphasise emotional intelligence, empathy, cultural sensitivity and collaborative problem-solving.

While Mudrarakshasa points out the aspects of integrated meticulous planning. Success will depend on the implementation of above factors. However, the highlight is the simplistic story from Panchtantra that exemplifies the inter-service cooperation through trust, respect and building resilience. This leveraging of each other's resources and strengths to synergise disproportionate results can happen if the egos are put aside and one asks for help when faced with adversity. One can be assured of Out of the Box innovative solutions that shall become a habit and culture of excellence.

Negotiation

Negotiation too has been a key ingredient of many ancient texts. Ancient Indian texts and scriptures, such as the Vedas, Upanishads, and epics like the Mahabharata and Ramayana, and also Arthashastra and Manusmriti provided guidance on mediation and showcased instances where mediation was employed to settle disputes.

Negotiations Lessons from Ramayana

Diplomacy and Strategic Communication

The Ramayana also offers profound lessons in negotiation, emphasising the importance of diplomacy and strategic communication. Before declaring war on Ravana, Rama sent Hanuman as an envoy to convey his message peacefully. This act reflects the importance of attempting dialogue before resorting to conflict. Negotiation often requires understanding the other party's perspective and seeking common ground, which Rama prioritised through his peaceful overtures. It is evident that effective communication was central to Rama's negotiation strategy. Whether interacting with allies like Sugriva or adversaries like Ravana, he ensured his messages were clear and respectful.

Transparent communication

It helps in building trust and minimising misunderstandings, a principle that remains crucial in modern negotiations. Rama's ability to articulate his intentions and maintain composure even in adversarial situations is a valuable lesson for negotiators.

Balancing Firmness with Flexibility

While Rama sought peaceful solutions, he remained firm on his principles. When Ravana refused to release Sita, Rama did not hesitate to proceed with war, but even then, he extended opportunities for Ravana to surrender. This balance of firmness and flexibility is a critical negotiation skill. Leaders and negotiators must identify their non-negotiables (Red Lines and Best Alternatives to Negotiated Agreement - BATNA) while remaining open to dialogue and compromise on less critical aspects.

Negotiation: An Art in Sangam Era

Sangam literature underscores the importance of negotiation, portraying it as a skill rooted in intelligence, empathy, and strategy. The **Akananuru** (a collection of love poems) and **Purananuru** both reflect on the art of persuasion, highlighting how leaders used negotiation to forge alliances, resolve disputes, and achieve peace. Negotiation was viewed as a sophisticated skill, as illustrated in Sangam literature.

"கற்றுக் கடிகண்டார் நூலார் தமராய்

பெற்றார்கள் பெண்டிரும் ஊர்."

"A skilled negotiator who comprehends both sides of an argument are like a treasure for the community, harmonizing disputes even within families and society." This verse highlights the critical role of negotiation in fostering unity and harmony, principles equally relevant in personal and political spheres.

Elango Adigal's **Silappathikaram** and Sittalai Sattanar's **Manimegalai**, though primarily epic narratives, also explore the dynamics of negotiation in personal and political contexts. For instance, the exchange between rulers and emissaries often demonstrates the use of dialogue as a tool to avert conflict and foster understanding.

Negotiation in Mudrarakshasa

Negotiation in "Mudrarakshasa" is a complex and dynamic process, reflecting the intricate web of alliances and conflicts characteristic of the play. Chanakya's success relies heavily on his negotiation skills, which are both tactical and diplomatic.

Building Alliances. A critical aspect of Chanakya's negotiation strategy is his ability to form alliances with those who can further his goals. He recognizes the importance of securing allies among former enemies, turning them into valuable partners. For example, Chanakya uses strategic marriages and promises of power sharing to bring potential adversaries to his side, understanding that cooperation can be more beneficial than confrontation.

Leveraging Information and Misinformation. Information is a powerful tool in negotiation, and Chanakya skilfully uses both accurate intelligence and misinformation to influence outcomes. By spreading rumours and planting false information, he is able

to manipulate the perceptions and actions of his adversaries, causing internal strife and weakening their position.

Understanding Opponents. Successful negotiation requires a deep understanding of one's opponents, and Chanakya excels in this regard. He studies the motivations, strengths, and vulnerabilities of key figures in the opposing camp, tailoring his negotiations to exploit these factors. This targeted approach allows him to dismantle coalitions and neutralize threats effectively.

Diplomacy and Persuasion. Chanakya's use of diplomacy is evident in his interactions with Rakshasa, the Chief Minister of the Nandas. Despite being adversaries, Chanakya respects Rakshasa's abilities and attempts to win him over through reason and persuasion. He highlights the futility of resisting the inevitable rise of Chandragupta, presenting cooperation as a more favourable alternative.

Moral and Ethical Dimensions. While Chanakya is often portrayed as ruthless, the play also touches on the ethical dimensions of leadership and negotiation. The character is depicted as balancing means and ends, understanding that the path to power can be fraught with moral ambiguities. This aspect of negotiation reflects the complexity of leadership in a politically charged environment.

Pragmatism over Ideology. Chanakya's decisions often reflect a pragmatic approach rather than adherence to a rigid ideology. He prioritizes outcomes over principles, adjusting his strategies based on the shifting political landscape. This flexibility in negotiation is essential for achieving political objectives in a volatile environment.

Role of Trickery in Chanakya's Negotiation Strategies

In *Mudrarakshasa*, trickery is a central element of Chanakya's negotiation strategies, reflecting his cunning and strategic mindset. Here are key aspects of how trickery plays a role in his approach.

Manipulation of Perceptions. Chanakya employs deception to manipulate the perceptions of others. For instance, he uses misinformation to create confusion among his adversaries, making them underestimate his plans and intentions. This tactic allows him to maneuver more freely without facing immediate opposition.

Coercion and Inducement. Chanakya recognizes that straightforward methods like bribery or force may not yield desired results. Instead, he resorts to trickery and manipulation to persuade Rakshasa to switch allegiances. By exploiting Rakshasa's ambitions and grievances against the Nanda dynasty, Chanakya effectively coaxes him into becoming an ally, demonstrating how psychological manipulation can be a powerful negotiation tool.

Strategic Alliances through Deception. Chanakya's ability to identify and recruit talent from enemy ranks exemplifies his use of trickery in forming strategic alliances. By presenting himself as a trustworthy figure while concealing his true intentions, he successfully brings Rakshasa into his fold, highlighting the effectiveness of using deception to achieve long-term goals.

Creating Opportunities. Chanakya often sets traps for his opponents, using trickery to create opportunities for negotiation that would otherwise not exist. For example, he orchestrates situations that force adversaries into compromising positions, thereby gaining leverage in negotiations.

Methods Used in the Play Mudrarakshas

Through these techniques, Chanakya illustrates that trickery can be an essential component of negotiation strategies, enabling leaders to navigate complex political landscapes and achieve their objectives without direct confrontation.

Forged Letters. Chanakya forges a letter that sows seeds of suspicion between Rakshasa and Malayaketu, leading Malayaketu to doubt Rakshasa's loyalty. This manipulation creates a rift that Chanakya exploits to weaken Rakshasa's position and turn him against his own allies.

Spying and Misinformation. Chanakya utilizes a network of spies to gather intelligence on Rakshasa and his plans. He feeds false information to Rakshasa, making him believe he has the upper hand while secretly orchestrating events that undermine him. This tactic allows Chanakya to stay several steps ahead in the political game.

Intimidation Tactics. Chanakya intimidates Chandanadasa, who is hiding Rakshasa's family, in an attempt to extract information about their whereabouts.

Although initially unsuccessful, this tactic reflects Chanakya's willingness to use fear as a tool in negotiations and to manipulate others into compliance.

Creating Vulnerability. By feigning discord with Chandragupta, Chanakya creates an illusion of vulnerability, prompting Rakshasa to act rashly. This tactic leads Rakshasa to make strategic errors, ultimately facilitating Chanakya's plans to bring him over to Chandragupta's side.

Lessons for Future Purple Leaders

The need for clear and respectful communication while dealing in negotiations is key. However, one must never lose sight of the objectives. The Red Lines (Walk Away Point) must be clearly defined. If the negotiations fail, then the BATNA which will include a variety of military options will be resorted to.

The Mudrarakshasa shows negotiation is a complex and dynamic process. It also includes what is to be done when negotiations fail and is seen as a holistic process of plans till the end state is achieved. The emphasis on use of Information as power. The Integrated Gray Zone operations have their roots in these texts. And when the conflict breaks out, it shall gravitate towards the Hybrid operations. The need to create vulnerabilities and opportunities for the military is a need that shall be required even during negotiations of Conflict Termination. The Purple Leaders can get strategic and far-reaching results by employing innovatively these ancient themes. However, the risk vs reward must be carefully examined.

Conclusion

Leadership and negotiation lessons from the ancient Indian texts are as relevant today as they were centuries ago. They will be of even greater importance when Theaterisation fructifies. Rama's ability to balance strategy, empathy, and ethics serves as a timeless model for effective leadership. His negotiation strategies, rooted in patience, diplomacy and clarity provide a framework for resolving conflicts and fostering collaboration. The Sangam Period of South India, with its rich literary heritage, offers enduring lessons in leadership and negotiation. By studying the principles espoused in works like **Thirukkural**, **Purananuru**, and **Silappathikaram**, contemporary leaders can draw inspiration to navigate the complexities of modern

governance and diplomacy. These ancient texts emphasise the timeless values of ethical conduct, empathy and strategic foresight, underscoring their relevance in building a just and harmonious society.

As we reflect on the wisdom of the past, it becomes evident that the essence of leadership lies not in power but in the ability to inspire and the art of negotiation lies not in conquest but in understanding. By integrating these teachings, one can foster collaboration, inspire trust and achieve lasting success, both professionally and personally. The future Purple Leaders and negotiators have at their disposal the wealth of strategies that offer timeless lessons for modern leaders striving to balance their goals with principles in a newly formed Theatre.

About the Authors

The Forum for Indian Strategic Culture and Thought is a platform dedicated to exploring and promoting India's strategic thought, drawing from its rich cultural and historical heritage. A group of authors associated with this forum has made significant contributions by drawing Military centric Tri services lessons from ancient Indian knowledge systems and turning it into modern strategic discourse. These authors have endeavored to reframe traditional wisdom from texts and translating them into relevant lessons for Leadership and Negotiation in contemporary warfare in a Theaterised setup.

Contributions By: Gp Capt Dipendra Bhadoria, Gp Capt Rajneesh, Col Harshvardhan, Col Piyush Pant Col Saurabh Ahuja, Col Rahul Kanwar, Col Arjun Tomar



The Vajra, a weapon forged from the Sage Dadhichi's bones, symbolizes how personal sacrifice can lead to the creation of a powerful force for good and justice. Sage Dadhichi's willingness to give up his life for the greater good highlights the importance of self-sacrifice for the welfare of society. His sacrifice symbolizes supreme altruism, where personal loss is accepted for the benefit of others. The sage's act reflects the concept of dharma (righteous duty). He fulfilled his moral obligation to help restore cosmic balance and justice, emphasizing the importance of standing for the greater good. Dadhichi's bones were powerful because of his tapasya (spiritual austerity). This teaches that true strength arises from inner purity, wisdom, and a life of virtue. The story also reflects how divine forces (Devas) sought help from a wise sage, emphasizing that challenges can be overcome through collective effort and seeking guidance from the wise. This story beautifully conveys the values of selflessness, courage, righteousness, and the power of inner strength in the face of adversity.

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