



## Study of Elements of Political Science in Ancient India

SAKET SHEORAN

saketsheoran@gmail.com

### Abstract

The Mahabharata and the Manusmriti are two of India's most revered political books. All aspects of social, moral, ethical, economic and political life in India are covered in great detail in these works of Indian intellectual heritage. There is a wealth of political science-related information can be found after reading these books. The reason for this is because they are widely regarded as foundational works in Indian politics. A wide range of topics in political science are covered, including the state and its citizens, statecraft, governance and the judicial system. All of these topics are still relevant today. An ancient Indian classic like the Mahabharata or Manusmriti, such as the objective of this article is to extract political science aspects.

**Key Words:** Mahabharata, Manusmriti , Political, Ancient, India etc.

### Introduction

Indian political thinking serves as a historical marker for the East in the history of political thought. When compared to other nations such as China and Japan and Russia and the South East, India's political philosophy may still be compared favourably to some of the most advanced political ideas in the world. Consequently, it is essential to grasp Indian political issues through studying the political concept. Researchers from both the East and West have frequently missed the true essence of Indian political principles when they viewed them via Western political ideology. To grasp Indian political philosophy, one cannot compare Machiavelli to Chanakya. There is no clear comparison between the present Western notions and Indian politics. For a better understanding of India's political system, Indian political theorists created their own notions and techniques. The Vedas, Upanishads, and the Bhagavad-Gita are all examples of ancient Indian political philosophy. More intricate and complete political ideas may be found in Indian epics such as the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Along with the rest of the Smritis, the Manusmriti addressed both the vertical and horizontal aspects of human existence in a comprehensive manner. Dharma is derived from both the vertical and horizontal perspectives on State. Philosophy and science both backed these ideas. Indian political intellectuals have consistently accepted Rajadharma as an excellent foundation for



democracy. The primary goal of this project is to demonstrate the presence of political science concepts in two of ancient India's most revered writings, the Mahabharata and the Manusmriti.

### **Elements of Political Science in Mahabharata:**

Vedas, Upanishads, Brahmanas, and Aranyakas are all examples of ancient Indian political literature, as are the major epics. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are two of the most popular Indian epics. In this section, the focus is on the Mahabharata. So Mahabharata must be taken into account. The Mahabharata has been referred to as an Itihasa in ancient texts. And there is a debate over this attribution, since it doesn't necessarily fit the current understanding of history.. The word ItihAsa is used in India and as such, it is acceptable there.

The Mahabharta, in reality, reveals the Vedic truths in a positive light. It retells, explains, and illustrates Vedic stories. DharmashAstra, ArthshAstra, and KAmashAstra are other names for it. What happens here concerning Dharma, Artha, KAma, and Moksha (the four goals of human existence) happens everywhere, and what doesn't happen here happens nowhere else, Vyasas challenges. An encyclopaedia of Indian intellectual tradition, it describes social, moral, ethical, and economic problems in the country. The Mahabharata is also useful from a political perspective, in addition to the above. It covers a wide range of topics in political science and has a wealth of information. Other political scientists and their contributions, such as those that shed light on today's pressing issues, are also covered in the book, including a sizable contingent of political science masters. A theory of punishment (Danda) is expounded in Mahabharata as a political philosophy or the science of government in Shanti Parva, the most significant political section. Punishment has always been seen by Indian intellectuals as a hallmark of the State, but they have always underlined that it is used only for the benefit of society. Punishment predates the state in terms of time. Punishment was universal, and the State was not established nor developed to make it work. This is a crucial discovery. This shows that punishment was in place long before the establishment of the state, and was used to preserve social order.

### **7 Sources of the Ancient Indian Political Thought**

The following is a succinct list of influential thinkers in political theory:

#### **1. The Vedas:**



The Vedas are regarded as the original source of knowledge since they are considered the legitimate works of Gods at the time of the creation of the universe. Concepts such as King, Kingship, Saints or Rishis and their obligations toward the subjects are mentioned in the Vedas even if they don't define the political order that existed. Vedic-era institutions like sabha and samithi are still in use today, and it's noteworthy to observe that.

## **2. The Mahabharata:**

As a work of political literature, the Mahabharata is widely regarded as a classic in India. Political philosophy, administrative systems, and the political system of the period may be learned through occurrences like Shanti Parva. Making reference to the Mahabharata is a great way to understand all aspects of statecraft, diplomacy and military ethics and methods.

## **3. The Arthashastra:**

Another Kautilya masterwork on the subject of policing. Prof Altekar claims that it is primarily concerned with the practical issues of administration and explains the mechanism and duties of government in both war and peacetime. Taxation, diplomacy, military techniques, and revolution are all addressed in this text by Kautilya. For the monarchs, this book serves as a guide to economics and administration.

## **4. Works of Thinkers:**

The Smrithis, Kamandakeya Neethisaara, Sukraneetisara, and the like are some of the most important writings of ancient Indian political thinking. It was not morally improper for Smrithis to execute a dictator, according to his views. He or she had to be moral, courteous, and helpful as a king. Ancient Indian political theory also drew on the writings of another great thinker, Kamandakeya Neethisaara. Arthashastra by Kautilya was summarised in this text.

The focus of the work is on the monarchy and the king and his family. Between 1200 and 1600 BC, Sukraneetisara was supposedly composed. In spite of the lack of such information, the book sheds light on high-ranking officials and their duties, the administrative system, monarchy, and the political life of the general populace.

## **5. Inscriptions:**



Inscriptions in stone and copper provide insight on people's political and administrative practises of the time.

#### **6. Accounts of Foreign Travellers:**

The accounts of early European visitors to India, such as Megesthanes, Fahien, and Huang Tsang, give a wealth of information about Indian society, government, commerce, and industry.

#### **7. Other Sources:**

Apart from the above sources on the ancient Indian political thought, the following books give an extensive knowledge:

- Brihapati Sutra
- Neeti Vakya Niritha of Somadeva
- Rajaneethi Ratnakara
- Veeramrityodaya
- Rajaneethi Mayukha
- Puranas
- Coins and seals found in the excavations
- The Jain and Buddhist literature

#### **Conclusion**

Artha, the study of governance and the exercise of political authority in ancient India, was a significant field of study. According to the Arthasastra by Kauihya, there are countless additional professionals in the field, although it's not clear how many of them wrote their own works. As a result of Kauihya's work, earlier studies in the area were unable to be transferred. Kauihya relied on prior works in artha, as well as other professional lineages of knowledge, in his recension of the work. It is because of this that the Arthasastra is able to give precise instruction in fields such as fort building and metalworking, jewellery production and brickwork, among others. A separate text on torture, the Kharapaa, is referred to by Kausilya. He had to be able to oversee and analyse a wide range of governmental actions, thus it's likely that he needed to be well-versed in all of them. To satisfy this royal need, the Arthasastra made the most significant literary effort in ancient India.

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