

INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM (IKS) – AN ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW OF COURSES IN POLITY, ADMINISTRATION, AND GOVERNANCE IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION

Abstract

Indian Higher Education is mainly influenced by the Macaulian Minutes (1835), famously known as English Education Act. It thoroughly ignored the significance and role of ideas and concepts rooted in India's culture. Around 200 years after the English Education Act, the current NEP 2020 proposes that Higher Education Institutes teach the embedded knowledge of the land to understand its vivid and deep culture. The scope of IKS courses is comprehensive; it ranges from all disciplines to interdisciplinary. This paper focuses on the Possible courses and concepts worth to be discussed in the IKS to teach Polity, Administration, and Governance.

Keywords: Ancient India, NEP 2020, IKS, Statecraft, Good Governance.

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I. INTRODUCTION

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims for a complete transformation of the higher education landscape of India in all its structural, content-related, and pedagogical dimensions. NEP-2020 has been guided by the rich heritage of ancient and eternal Indian knowledge and thought. The NEP 2020 has stressed the promotion of Indian Languages, Arts, and Culture and has recommended the integration of IKS into curriculums at all levels of education. Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) (Bharatiya-Jñana Parampara) encompasses the treasure of knowledge in various disciplines that emerged systematically from ancient times in India over generations.

What Is An Iks?

Indian Knowledge System encompasses all of the systematized disciplines of Knowledge which were developed to a high degree of sophistication in India from ancient times and all of the traditions and practices that the various communities of India - including the tribal communities - have evolved, refined, and preserved over generations.

The formal Indian education system inherited from British policymakers, famously known as the Macaulian System, has kept the Ancient Indian Knowledge heritage out of the reach of the budding young students, citing reasons for lack of rigour, precision, and scientific value. This is arguably an incorrect perspective. However, the truth is otherwise. Indian Philosophy and Perspective stand to be one of the only continuing and surviving since the ancient civilization with a vast repository of knowledge created by the forefathers. It can provide great value for any society. It enables the current generation to understand the thought processes and frameworks, analyze the received wisdom in a contemporary context and provide new opportunities to assimilate the accrued wisdom and synthesize new knowledge.

The influence of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) can be witnessed broadly from Art to the Architecture of this nation. The concept from the Ancient Indian Texts in context with Polity, Administration, and Governance are discussed thoroughly.

II. THE CONCEPT OF 'RAJ-DHARMA':

How does society organize itself so that the earthly resources are properly administered to meet the needs of the community and the individuals? How should we establish methods for controlling the consumption of earthly resources? In order for this to be a sustainable process, what governance mechanisms should be in place? In answering the above questions, there is a need to define a structure to the institution ruling a state and the powers and duties of the King. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the citizens to contribute to the state treasury, which the King can use to provide security and welfare for the citizens, as well as protect the state from external aggression, a concept of taxation in modern terms.

Raja-dharma is the branch of knowledge that addresses these aspects and provides detailed guidelines and instructions for governance and public administration. In the context of Raja-dharma, the subjects viewed the king as the representative of God. However, it did

not mean the king had the ultimate authority and the power to act independently. He was required to be the custodian of Dharma and operate in accordance with the principles of Dharma. This alone will provide a sustainable mechanism and ensure that the subjects enjoy peace, security, and happiness. The Study of Polity, Administration, and Governance in the IKS revolves around the concept of Raj Dharma through different books and epics.

1. Kacchit Sarga (Sage Valmiki's Ramayana): Kacchit Sarga, book 2, chapter 100 of the Ramayana, talks about the do's and don'ts of the King. The context of the chapter in Ramayana is quite dramatic when Bharata pleads with elder brother Ram to return to the Kingdom. In return, Ram offers the lessons and ideas of ideal administration (Ram-Rajya).

The epic Ramayana emphasized on Monarchical Model of Public Administration and Governance. In a monarchy, everything revolves around the king. The prosperity of the kingdom, the safety and security of the citizens, and the vulnerability of the kingdom in the eyes of the neighbors are all wholesomely dependent on the King. The epic suggests 14 aspects related to administration to strictly avoid –

- Atheism
- Falsehood
- Anger
- Inattention
- Procrastination
- Evading the wise
- Indolence
- Gratification of all five senses
- Planning alone
- Consulting with the worthless
- Indecisiveness
- Inability to keep the counsel secret
- Omission of the auspicious practices and set out against all the enemies at a time.
- To avoid ineffective administration

A King should follow the above don'ts. Furthermore, the epic suggests not to engage in with following types of Monarchs – A king who is a Child, an Aged King, ailing for some time, hated by his kith and kin, Spineless or nervous, Surrounded by cowards and greedy, Extremely luxurious, Fickle minded, Ill-fates, Fatalist, Afflicted by famine, Afflicted by military reverses, Has numerous enemies, and dishonest with truth, righteousness, and piety.

Furthermore, the importance of Wise Counselling is explicitly highlighted. Although the king is the ultimate authority for all decision-making, he cannot discharge all the activities alone. A competent group of counsellors plays a significant role in the effectiveness of administration. Ram reminded Bharata that the well-guarded advice of the ministers learned in the scriptures and capable of proper counselling was fundamental for success in the pursuits of a king. Wise counsellors (Amatyas) are one of the seven elements of a state, next only to the king in importance. Ram posed a series of questions

pertaining to this to Bharata: He inquired his brother if he had appointed brave men, learned of noble birth, exhibited self-control, and had the skill to guess things from hints. The ministers are in very senior positions advising the king. Therefore, their value system is as essential as their competencies. Ram asked Bharata if he could appoint ministers who were unyielding to bribery and other such temptations and have integrity so that they could discharge superior tasks.

On the issue of Justice and Punishment, Ram has issued several pieces of advice. He cautioned Bharata that if those who ought to be punished are not given the punishment, the king may be slain by the subjects (out of growing dissatisfaction). In addition, he warned against punishing an honest, pure-hearted, and venerable person falsely accused of adultery without consulting experts in the scriptures. Similarly, he cautioned against setting free a thief caught red-handed with sufficient evidence and interrogated out of greed for money. Caring for the citizens, whether rich or poor, is the central duty of a King during periods of hardship. Ram asked Bharata if his ministers were well-informed of these aspects of governance and addressed these issues without any bias. According to Ram, the tears falling from the eyes of persons who are falsely accused and punished for the pleasure of the king will destroy the king's progeny and cattle as well. A related aspect is one of intelligence gathering on high-ranking officials, who, by virtue of their power and position, may engage in corrupt practices, coerce the citizens and extract money and other favours from them. Therefore, it is crucial to implement counter-balancing forces that can monitor these officials. In enemy territory, these officials are indeed the window to everything happening in the country. Ram asked Bharata if he was able to collect information (of their secret efforts) intelligently through unrecognizable spies, with three of them closely watching each of the eighteen officials (there are eighteen categories of officials in a kingdom) of the enemy's side and fifteen (officials) on his side.

Ram emphasized another critical aspect of public administration, i.e., maintaining the secrecy of information and decisions. In the absence of this, administrative decisions are hard to implement, and the threat from traitors and enemies will increase. It can also jeopardize several good initiatives and force the state administration to spend scarce resources addressing counterattacks. In modern parlance, as we know, an oath of secrecy is an essential aspect of the judiciary, legislature, and executive arms of the government. When Ram asked Bharata if he could ensure that other kings only heard about Ram's endeavours when they succeeded or were about to succeed, Bharata agreed. He also inquired if the efforts intended to be made in the future were not revealed to them beforehand. Secrecy applies not only to the king's intentions and initiatives but also to the other highest officials of the state administration. Therefore, Ram asked Bharata if he could also ensure that others cannot understand his determination or those of his ministers, either by conjecture by inference or through other means without being explicitly revealed either by him or by his ministers.

Based on a series of questions Ram asked Bharata, one gets a glimpse of the issues concerning urban development and citizen welfare issues. Ram wanted to know from Bharata if the kingdom was adorned with peaceful places, rich in temples, and resting places and sheds where water was stored in tanks for the passers-byes. He also wanted to know if the agricultural lands were well tilled, fed not just by rains (but also

had a supplementary water system to ensure availability of abundant water), studded with mines and cattle free from cruelties, and rid of fears from beasts. Since agriculture and cattle rearing were perhaps the significant economic activities at that time, ensuring citizens could carry these activities unhindered would ensure economic prosperity. He also wanted to know if men and women happily engaged in social festivities. These are good indicators of economic prosperity and citizen welfare.

These ideas are not limited to the King discussed in the Epic. If we replace the King with the Prime Minister of India, the President of the USA, or the CEO of the Multinational Company, most of the ideas quickly become relevant and applicable. The Ramayana stands to be one of the foundational books in Polity, Governance, and Administration.

2. **Shanti Parva and Anushasan Parva (Sage Vyasa's Mahabharata):** Shanti Parva and Anushasan Parva are chapters 12 and 13 of the Mahabharata. The context of Shanti Parva is theatrical. It presents an elaborate conversation between Yudhistira and Bhishma. Bhishma was on his deathbed, counting his last moments, sharing his knowledge and experience on statecraft. It has extensive dialogue and covers several aspects of Raja-dharma. Anushasan Parva also has details on Raja-dharma. Bhishma expounded several issues related to Raja-dharma, including the origin and purpose of the state, the rule of law, the institution of kingship, the duties and powers of the Raja, topics such as taxation and the way to collect taxes, strategies for battle and the method of selecting ministers and counsellors.

The epic specifically emphasizes the personal character and qualities a Raja, in whom vast political power is vested, must possess for the proper and effective discharge of his functions. We alluded to the term Raja-dharma in the opening section of this chapter and remarked that upholding dharma is the supreme goal of a king. We find repeated mention of this idea and extensive discussions around it in Shanti Parva. According to Bhishma, the king must be careful as he leads his subjects by example. If he follows righteousness, then righteousness is honoured everywhere. Whatever acts and things a king like, they are liked by his subjects. That king who considers righteousness as the most effective instrument for accomplishing his objectives and who follows the advice of the righteous indeed shines with righteousness.

On the other hand, that king who neglects righteousness and acts with brute force soon falls away from righteousness and loses virtue, wealth, and everything else. It is the king who establishes peace on the Earth through proper observance of his duties and by establishing the rule of law founded on the principles of dharma. According to Bhishma, a king of a pure soul devoted to protecting his subjects by acting righteous acquires merit and fame.

Furthermore, the treasury is essential for public administration as it enables the king to protect the country and the subjects and sustain the kingdom during periods of distress. Taxation is the primary source for filling the treasury. Bhishma cautions Yudhistira of the care a king must exercise on taxation matters. By levying excessive taxes not sanctioned in the scriptures, a king may invite the wrath of the subjects. Collecting taxes from the subjects is likened to milking a cow, and cutting off the udder

in one's anxiety in milking more is foolish. Bhisma pointed to several just sources of tax collection to augment the treasury. This includes one-sixth of revenue from the produce of the soil, fines and forfeitures from the offenders, and other taxes upon merchants and traders in exchange for safety granted to them. In Chapter 87 of Shanti Parva, Bhisma enumerates some details on the levying of taxes. He suggests that levying tax on traders must take into consideration the sales and purchases, the food and the dress, the stocks and the profits, and the state of the roads (perhaps the quality of infrastructure provided to the trade).

Moreover, he observes that no tax should be levied without determining the output and the labour necessary for production. Since nobody will work without sufficient causes, the king must tax in such a manner that both he and the producer partake in the profits from the output. The ideas mentioned in the Shanti Parva and Anushasan Parva are exemplary lessons of Ethical Administration and Geoeconomics.

- 3. Manusmriti (A Dharmashastra):** It is believed that Manusmriti or Manava Dharmashastra is the oldest and best-known smriti (written source). It is inspired by the trayi (Three Vedas). This document has been considered controversial for its explicit discussion of the Chaturvarnya Theory. Nevertheless, Manusmriti is also a rich source of information about the social, judicial, and political life of that era. A similar situation to that described by Hobbes in Leviathan can be found in Manusmriti. During this period of utter lawlessness and anarchy, it is stated in Manusmriti that people approached Lord Brahma, the creator, to obtain relief from the rigours and agonies of life. Thus, the creator gave them the king to maintain law and order and punish the wicked.

The belief of Manu was that God created the king in order to save a region's people. Because of his authority, the King held a divine position, and the people were inclined to obey him. Social harmony, peace, and welfare are the primary roles of a king. Rather than governing the state with force, a king was expected to control his anger, satisfy his subjects, and govern with their consent. In order to be effective, the king must exhibit those qualities that will make his subjects naturally submit to his authority, and he must function through the use of pleasing manners and intelligence. There is a strong emphasis on political authority throughout the book's writings. In practice, despite the king's authority being derived from God, he should be guided by the Brahmanas. Essentially, it was the assumption that Brahmanas possessed knowledge and should be allowed to rule. As prescribed by Manu, the structure of the state is divided into villages, districts, and provinces, a system that is similar to the structure of the present-day administration.

Furthermore, Manu regarded the Council of Ministers as an essential part of statecraft. It is like driving a chariot without wheels if the king doesn't have a council of ministers. The council of ministers served as the king's eyes, ears, and arms. There should be no more than seven to eight members on the council of ministers who assist and advise the king individually and collectively. There is a sense in which a minister acts as a trustworthy mediator between a king and his subjects.

Having focused on Political ideas, Manusmriti strictly maintained the role of castes in society. According to the Chaturvarna Theory, Shudras were only restricted to

serving the upper three castes. Ministerial positions were not available to Shudras under the King. Shudras are forbidden from learning anything social or sacred. Commentators and experts have heavily criticized the Manusmriti due to its segregated approach.

4. **Kautilya's Arthashastra (A Dandashastra):** Arthashastra, at the outset, mentions four branches of knowledge that a king must be fully conversant with so that he gains the right knowledge, perspectives, attitude, and strength to discharge his duties as the head of the state.

A regulatory and control framework for maintaining law and order (Dandaniti) is essential. By maintaining order, the king can preserve his existing possessions and acquire new possessions. Proper functioning of the government and addressing the regulatory and control requirements will ensure that the state makes material progress, the citizens are happy, and the weak in the society do not feel oppressed by the stronger forces. Arthashastra is not about discussing the relative advantages or disadvantages of alternative forms of governance or the origin of the state. Instead, it focuses on practical administration. The first and foremost duty of a king is to protect his subjects. There are several issues related to this aspect in book four, such as protecting the people from anti-social elements like fraudulent artisans and traders, robbers, dakoits, and assassins, and natural disasters like fires, floods, etc.

Similarly, in Book 2, Kautilya says that a king must care for children, old, ill, suffering people, barren and pregnant women, and those who don't have anybody to look after. In other words, the king must ensure the yoga and kshema of the subjects. The concept of yoga mentions the achievement of an object, whereas Kshema advances to the peaceful and undisturbed delight of that object. As a whole, Yoga-Kshema encompasses the concept of prosperity and happiness as well as welfare and well-being. The state is projected to occupy a variety of activities that benefit its citizens.

The text presents some specific ideas, including the following - A ruler's responsibilities include settling on new lands, constructing dams, tanks, and irrigation facilities, providing grasslands for cattle, opening trade routes, and ensuring security on them, and working of mines. Commodities should be allowed for sale in such a way as to benefit the subjects, whether they are indigenous or imported. Profits that are harmful to subjects should also be avoided. When natural calamities strike down the subjects, the ruler should care for them like a parent. On the other hand, Arthashastra also cautions that if the ruler does not address the welfare of the citizens, they may become dissatisfied and even take steps to get rid of the ruler. It enumerates several acts on the ruler's part likely to make the citizens dissatisfied with his rule. A good understanding of the public administration and governance laid out in the Arthashastra can be obtained using the framework in the text that covers all aspects of administration.

- The King (Svami, Vijigishu) rules the territory or protects the subjects.
- The Minister (Amatya) – by whose counsel the king takes for various decisions.
- The Territory (Janapada) – is the inhabited territory that the king rules.
- The Fortified Capital (Durga) – the place from where the king rules.
- The Funds or The Treasury (Kosa) – provide the money and stability for the regime.

- The Army (Danda) –provides security for the regime and establishes law and order in the state.
- The Ally (Mitra) – friendly rulers included in the state's foreign policy.

Seven elements are arranged in a particular order that deserves special mention. The earlier item on the list is deemed more important than the later ones. There's no doubt that the ruler is the most important. In addition, it is stated that if adversity in any of the elements is likely to ruin the others, the adversity must be regarded as the most serious, regardless of where it is listed. Analyzing each of these components will provide a rich understanding of the various aspects of administration in Arthashastra.

- 5. Kamandaki's Nitisara:** Kamandaki was contemporary to Guptas. Inspired mainly by Arthashastra, it consists of 20 chapters. Nitisara or Niti-satra means the elements of polity; it is a work of literature. Nitisara deals with general maxims of Niti - issues such as obligations of the ruler, governmental organization, principles and strategies of the government, interstate relationships, ethics of diplomats and spies, and varieties of combats, etc.

The book's central premise highlights the king's importance and the qualities a king must possess to run the state in prosperity. It accepts some of Arthashastra's theories, for instance, the seven elements of the state (Saptang Theory) etc. Both texts have some differences; for example, where Arthashastra emphasizes the performance of kingly duties, Nitisara emphasizes a ruler's courage and military qualities.

III. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING THE IKS IN POLITY, ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

The details and history of the events can be misplaced with the Western Gregorian Calendar System, which is widely used in India for official purposes. The chronology of the events and belief system in the Calendar itself can be questioned.

Furthermore, the Lack of active and practical faculty training is a big apprehension in implementing the IKS. Forced alliance with present academic disciplines can be disastrous and will result in the diverted implementation of the policy.

Sanskrit, which is the primary language of the significant Primary resources, is alien to Indians now. Less understanding of the Sanskrit Language results in a Lack of direct access to Primary Sources. This also highlights the role of quality mentors in the whole process of IKS implementation.

Lastly, in the fast-improving, technologically advanced society, the contemporary application of IKS sources and relevance can be questioned by faculties and students.

IV. EFFECTIVE WAYS IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IKS IN POLITY, ADMINISTRATION, AND GOVERNANCE

IKS is primarily based on oral tradition and written texts in Sanskrit. It would be helpful to conduct one practical session on the ancient memorisation technique, along with some examples from primary texts, to relate to the oral tradition of IKS. And to connect with the written traditions of IKS, a basic understanding of the Sanskrit Language with the script will benefit an inclusive experience. The content of the epics and old manuscripts should be highlighted in a few engaging, practical sessions by experts. To stay aware of our own rich intellectual heritage.

Higher education institutions may build a database of original books, papers, articles, and videos with help from the MoE-IKS cell and all scholars. To ensure that the quality of the submitted material is assessed, faculty members may be invited to contribute to the database. Under the Malviya Mission, a master trainer program could be implemented. In toto, following the guidelines, the implementation of IKS in the right spirit will be more cost-effective and efficient.

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