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# Management Principles in Sanskrit Texts - Ethical Governance

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## Abstract

Ancient Indian scriptures (Veda Vangmaya) serve as an encyclopedia for almost all branches of sciences, arts and hence management principles. Ethical governance, duties and responsibilities of a king etc., are no exception. This article is an attempt to bring out various duties and responsibilities of a king as described in some of the Sanskrit texts, which are relevant today and for the leaders of the present age. If these instructions or directions are practiced by our leaders, it would be helpful in bringing prosperity and happiness in the country and the world. Such extension of the rich contents in Sanskrit language is encouraged by many for their modern day use, even with the existing limitations in the knowledge and use of Sanskrit as a common language.

**Keywords:** Ancient Indian scriptures, Manusmṛti, Srimad Bhagavad Gita, Arthashastra, Duties of a King, Justice.

## Introduction

‘YATHA RAJA TATHA PRAJAH’ – As the King is so are his subjects. This very sentence from our scriptures shows how important is the responsibility of a king. If the king is good it reflects on all the hundreds and thousands people who are under his administration and in the same manner if the king is not righteous then the same is reflected in his people. The beauty of our ancient Indian scriptures is that in the process of narrating a historical story they teach us all the required principles for life. Just as milk has in itself different co-products like ghee, butter, curd, yoghurt, cheese cream etc., and our scriptures have in themselves many valuable concepts. As the milk is processed in different manners to receive various by-products, we need to According to our scriptures it is

believed that there was total anarchy in the world. There was complete disorder in moral, economic and physical aspects. To save the world, God created the king from the parts of Devaraja Indra, Agni, Surya, Varuna, Chandrama, Kubera, Vayu and Yama. Thus, produced from eight deities, a king had enough brilliance to control all the creatures. For this purpose, a king uses the following methods of people management:

1. *Sama* – Convincing (gentle exhortation)
2. *Dama* – Temptations (providing incentives)
3. *Danda* – Punishments (penalizing, levying fines)
4. *Bheda* - Differentiation / Division (discriminating and imposing sanctions)

These four are still important political means even in this modern age. Afraid of the brilliance of a king, his subjects keep to the religious path. Acharya Manu also cautioned the king to be always alert while ruling his subjects.

Kautilya also mentioned four steps of diplomacy (*Upayas*) - Sama, Dana or Dama, Danda and Bheda as ways to reach a solution in state politics to avoid conflicts and war situations (Arthashastra 2-10-47). This phrase is also commonly used when you need to find a solution to a problem anyhow. Sama, the first step, means conciliation or alliances.

### Manusmṛti

According to Manusmṛti (chapter 7 – verse 32) – A king should be just for his subjects. He should punish his enemies ruthlessly. He should behave honestly with his peers and be forgiving for the Brahmins.

स्वराष्ट्रे न्यायवृत्तः स्याद् भृशदण्डश्च शत्रुषु ।  
सुहृत्स्वजिह्वः स्निग्धेषु ब्राह्मणेषु क्षमान्वितः ॥  
३२ ॥

The above śloka means, “in his own kingdom he shall be of just behaviour, and on his enemies he shall inflict rigorous chastisement; with loved friends he shall be straightforward and towards Brāhmins tolerant”.

A king should also be vigilant regarding his army and justice. Crimes always increase in the absence of punishment. In the absence of justice, respect for the king diminishes in the eyes of the subjects. Extreme strictness however causes pain among the public while rulings, given mildly are bound to be violated. Hence, a king should have proper balance of strictness and softness and behave according to the situation. The public is the real strength of a king and hence he should

guard the strength more than his life. This is the main duty of the king. A king must always strive to save himself from the anger of the public. He should see his well-being in the protection of the kingdom and progress of the public.

### Ramayana

The epic of Ramayana which narrates the story of Lord Rama serves as an inspiration for each and every person. The duties and principles followed by Rama in each and every aspect of his life have made him an ideal king and role model for many of us. In the epic of Ramayana, sage Valmiki says that “*Raja naama muhoortamapi na upekshitavyam*” that means a king cannot move away from his responsibility even for a fraction of second. This makes us understand that being in the position of a leader or a king is not just for enjoying the power and position; it is more than that it is a great responsibility vested on the shoulder of a king and so he or she needs to be vigilant at every fraction of second. Similarly the life of such a king who is dynamic and who is respected by all becomes a motivation to all his subjects and so even his personal life makes an impact on the people which were the reason for Rama to abandon Sita after knowing the words of one of the citizens of his kingdom. Giving more importance to the country and his people than his or her own comforts is the primary duty of a king or a leader as described in our scriptures, which stands true in every generation.

### Srimad Bhagavad Gita

Srimad Bhagavad Gita is an important part of Indian culture for the development of life and also for several management

processes. The discourse given by Lord Krishna to Arjuna in the middle of the battle field can be considered to be the first workshop of seminar in the world. The teachings of Lord Krishna serve as a guide not only to Arjuna but also to all of us. Even after a period of five thousand years the message of Gita is quiet relevant even in the present world. Arjuna, who is the best warrior among Pandavas, lost his ability to think clearly as soon as he notices and feels that he is going to fight a war against his own kith and kin. Lord Krishna, with his motivating and rousing speech, changes the perception about the war and also his role as a king. What made a difference before and after the discourse of Lord Krishna is- the thought process. Everything is in the mind and therefore, one needs to control the mind first. A good mindset is to be developed to make your work productive and effective. With a calm state of mind one can achieve the required results. Thus, a great leader is the one who is able to work with calm and clear mind.

Lord Krishna describes the duties of a King, a Kshatriya, in the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita. The Chapter 2, Śloka 33 reads as follows:

अथ चेत्त्वमिमं धर्म्य संग्रामं न करिष्यसि।  
ततः स्वधर्मं कीर्तिं च हित्वा पापमवाप्स्यसि  
॥2-33॥

Lord Krishna says to Arjuna, “if, however, you refuse to fight this righteous war, abandoning your social duty and reputation, you will certainly incur sin”.

Lord Krishna also enlightens Arjuna, that the duty of a Kshatriya is to protect the citizens from all kinds of difficulties and for that reason he has to apply violence sometimes in suitable cases for law and order. Therefore,

he has to conquer the soldiers of inimical kings and thus with righteous principles he should rule the kingdom.

### Madhuropadesh

According to Madhuropadesh of Ganga Devi – People do not like the king though he provides all benefits to them but speaks harshly due to anger without any cause, just like the people happily welcome rainfall but the sound of thunder causes fear and is not welcomed. A king also loses the good will of the people if the king is harsh and imposes harsh punishments. A king should never punish his subordinates harshly. If a king behaves harshly towards his subjects then they will take over the properties of the kingdom and dethrone the king. Such kind of behaviour of a king will only destroy the king. Hence a wise king will never act like cutting the branch of the tree on which he is sitting.

अयैभिरेश्वर्यशरीरयक्ष्मभिर्हिताखिलाग्दैर्व्यसनैरुपद्रु  
ताः ।

तमः पराभूतनिजोजसो नृपाः प्रयान्ति कालाद्  
व्दिषतामुपेक्ष्यताम् ॥ (3-15)

A king must also be vigilant and self-disciplined. If a king falls prey to ‘saptavyasanas’ (seven bad habits), such as –

#### I. Kamajadoshah –

1. Streelolutvam (Lust)
2. Devanam (Gambling)
3. Mrugaya (Hunting) and
4. Madhyapanam (Consuming alcohol)

#### II. Krodhadoshah –

5. Vaakparusham (using abusive words)
6. Dandaparusham (Improper punishment) and
7. Apatraadaanam (Donations to undeserving)

A king having the above characters, will undoubtedly lose both health and wealth. All limbs get disturbed by diseases and finally having been insulted by the enemies he leaves the world in due course of time.

### **Arthshastra**

Chanakya Arthshastra is one another important ancient Sanskrit text which gives us all the required information about proper administration, economic policies, trade and commerce. Arthshastra of Chanakya like many other great scriptures like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Srimad Bhagawad Gita, Manusmṛiti etc. is not time bound because it has dealt in with finer details of each and every aspect to that extent that all these sutras serve as an encyclopaedia even in the present modern society.

Kautilya's insights into governance, justice, and the role of the king are indeed profound and continue to be studied and respected today. His emphasis on maintaining order and justice through the rule of law reflects a deep understanding of the complexities of governance and societal harmony. By asserting that the ultimate source of all law is dharma, Kautilya underscores the importance of moral and ethical principles in the administration of justice. This aligns with the broader Indian philosophical tradition, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of individual morality and social order.

Furthermore, Kautilya's delineation of the sources of law - dharma, evidence, custom, and royal edicts - provides a comprehensive framework for legal decision-making. By drawing from multiple sources, Kautilya ensures that the law remains adaptable to changing circumstances. Furthermore,

Kautilya's delineation of the sources of law - dharma, evidence, custom, and royal edicts - provides a comprehensive framework for legal decision-making. By drawing from multiple sources, Kautilya ensures that the law remains adaptable to changing circumstances while also upholding foundational principles of justice.

Overall, teachings of Kautilya in Arthshastra offer timeless wisdom on governance and justice, reminding us of the enduring relevance of ethical leadership and the rule of law in fostering a just and prosperous society.

In the given six thousand sutras of Arthshastra, Chanakya describes how to model a king, selection of ministers, appointment of priests, administration, framework of the law, creation of revenue, setting up of industries, deciding salaries, international policies, war strategies etc.,

According to Chanakya a great leader is the one who believes and work with the opinion that no one is permanent in the system, including the leader himself. But the organization which is headed by the leader should be able to withstand the test of time. Chanakya also describes about the importance of communication skills as a requirement of a King or a leader. A King is the one who does not confuse the people but gives them direction and clarity. To give clear instructions to someone, one has to learn to communicate well. Both verbal and written communication has to be defined and expressed properly. When there is a well-defined system, people work with direction and will reach their goals faster.

The knowledge from Arthshastra helps a small kingdom to protect itself from

larger kingdoms and also for a mighty kingdom to remain strong. Hence, the size of the kingdom does not matter much. What is more important is the leadership quality which helps them to maintain and remain strong.

### Outcome of the Study

From the above Sanskrit texts study, the findings are the following:

1. A dynamic and dutiful leader is essential for the growth and prosperity of a kingdom/country.
2. A king or a leader needs to be self-disciplined.
3. A king or a leader should have a clear and calm state of mind which would enable him or her to make right decisions.
4. For good governance a king who serves as a role model for his subjects must be free from all the vices.
5. A king or a leader should be intelligent and should have the efficiency to have control over the senses.

### Conclusion

According to our ancient scriptures there are many Dharmas described. They are: Sanatana Dharma, Raja Dharma, Samajika Dharma, Stree Dharma, Purusha Dharma, Putra Dharma, Guru Dharma, Shishya Dharma and others. All the Dharmas are derived from the Vedic texts. The duties and responsibilities that are to be followed by a person in the leadership position are well described in these Dharma shastras. Not only the King but all the people in the society are entrusted with their duties and responsibilities to be followed in their day to day activities. When all the people living in the society follow their duties properly then the society becomes a better place to live. Some of the Dharmas are subject

to change depending upon the socio, political, economic and climatic changes occurring from time to time in their country or area. But few of the policies or dharmas remain the same, just like the Sanatana Dharma. Just like the movement of the earth cannot be changed, the rotation and revolution, causing of day and nights cannot be changed, some duties or dharmas remain constant. Such duties which bestow prosperity to the country and happiness to the people need to be identified and to be followed for maintaining a better society. Hence, there is a need for the Indian Knowledge systems to be made as a part of the curriculum for the students so that they realise the importance of the ancient Indian Scriptures and their relevance in the present day society.

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# Veda Samskruti Samiti

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The Chaturvedas said to have 1131 shaakhaas right up to the time of Aadi Shankaraachaarya and thereafter during last more than ten centuries, many shaakhaas are out of practice due to various reasons and presently only seven shaakaas are in the practice of Guru shiShya parampara.

There is a need to continuously preserve these available shaakhaas which may likely to disappear in future due to various external forces acting in the country vigorously with the power of money and global politics. It is time for the intellectuals of Bharata dEsham to wake-up and work collectively to protect and preserve Veda Samskruti of Bharata dEsham, by empowering the Youth of Bharat dEsham, the future care takers of this great Indian Heritage , with suitable education of our correct history and culture.

The above background lead to formation of this Veda Samskruti Samiti which is registered under Societies acts of Government of Telangana, with Regd. No. 961/2016 by Sri A.H. Prabhakara Rao, who is the Founder and President of the Samiti.

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