

## **RELEVANCE OF KAUTILYAN THOUGHT ON DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

India is the country which always becomes the victim to all kind of Disasters. The concept of Disaster management is as old as the history of Disasters in India. There are many ancient literatures like Vedas, Puranas, Bhagavad Geeta and Mahabharata which gives an idea about how to deal with natural and manmade disasters. Arthashastra is also one of these ancient books which gave idea of systematic Disaster Management. Though the word Disaster Management is quite new, but these efforts have been existing in India since a long time. Kautilya had already touched upon many environmental issues which modern human society came to know only in the mid-twentieth century. The present article focuses on Disaster Management measures suggested by Kautilya and try to validate its relevance in the contemporary era.

**Keywords:** Disaster, Types of Disasters, Disaster Management, Preventive measures

### **Introduction**

“A calamity constituent, of a divine or human origin, springs from ill luck or wrong policy”

Kautilya

Kautilya was a great Indian political scholar with a realist approach who wrote a marvelous manuscript namely “Arthashastra” in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. This treatise was disappeared till 12<sup>th</sup> century and then translated by R. Shamasastery in first decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century into 15 books, 150 chapters and 180 topics. Though meaning of Arthashastra is “science of politics”, but this book covers broader area of economic policy, military strategy, laws and ethics etc. Apart from this, the manuscript also deals with effective management of both natural and manmade disasters. India due to its geographical location always victimize to natural as well as manmade disasters. Natural disasters like earthquakes, droughts, cloudbursts and floods are very common. If we see the history, in India from Vedic time to present, there are many wars fought between

kings/rulers. During the Kautilyan era manmade disasters were only limited to war and agitation. With the passage of time manmade disasters are widen to chemical and biological weapons, terrorism, riots, urban structure, fires, transport accidents, nuclear power accidents etc. Kautilya have given various preventive measures and instructions for the king to deal with all type of disasters occurring at that time.

### **Research Gap**

The focus of the existing literature is more on new disaster management policies and mitigation measures. There is lack of consciousness about Kautilya's efforts of Disaster Management. Kautilya's strategy to deal with natural and manmade disasters is very less noticed as compare to his efforts of statecraft. No one has tried to find out the importance of the old text in the modern disaster management.

### **Need of the Study**

Arthashastra is a very old treatise that deals with statecraft and has good approach to management. Though the modern concept of management was not in practice at that time, however without management nothing is possible. Kautilya's concept of disaster definitely goes with the modern 'management' ideas. Disaster management is a continuous and integrated process of planning, organizing, coordinating and implementing measures which are necessary for prevention, mitigation, capacity building, preparedness, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Kautilya was a great thinker who gave various ideas about preventive measures to deal with disasters by providing moral and financial support to disaster victims. There is need to analyse and relate the thoughts of Kautilya with present disaster management scenario.

### **Objective**

The key objective of the study is to examine the importance of the Kautilyan thought on disaster management and proving its current relevance.

### **Hypothesis**

Kautilya's Arthashastra is an effective guide for management of natural and manmade disasters and still holds a relevant space.

### **Research Methodology**

The present study is based on both descriptive and analytical research methods. The sources used for this paper are secondary sources. The data is collected from books (text and reference), journals, articles, and internet (web sources).

## **Disasters according to Kautilya**

### **Disaster (Vyasna)**

The word Disaster means “bad star” originates from Greek word in 16<sup>th</sup> century. Kautilya calls disasters as vyasana in his manuscript. Vyasana is a Sanskrit word which is known as apatti/vipatti in hindi. We can say that vyasana means something which is caused by in poor destiny.

### **Types of Disasters according to Kautilya**

Kautilya in his fourth book; classified the vyasana, into two categories namely Daivam vyasna (Natural Disasters) and Manusam vyasana (Manmade Disasters).

- 1. Natural Disasters (Daivam Vyasana):** Daivam means divine and in present context known as Natural Disaster. Daivam is an act of God occurs due to astrological forces or bad position of stars. There are eight types of daivam or natural disasters namely Agni (Fire), Udaka (Flood), Vyadhi (Epidemics/Diseases), Durbhiksha (Famine), Musaka (Rats), Vyala (Beasts/Wild animals), Sarpa (Snakes) and Raksamsi (demons/evil spirits). Raksamsi has no realistic connotation but in those days, and even today considering the beliefs of common people, it has much significance. Kautilya himself had little faith in these superstitious practices, but to respect the faiths and beliefs the masses in those days he had mentioned these in the text. Damage to environment may be caused also by natural disasters. There is no control over natural disasters, but casualties may be preventing by our knowledge of science and with coherent efforts.
- 2. Manmade Disasters (Manusam Vyasna)** means when misfortune occurs due to human involvement or wrong policies. For manusam vyasna, human beings are responsible for all causalities. Kautilya explains manmade disasters into two categories namely war and agitation. Other manmade disasters like terrorism, riots and nuclear disasters etc were not exist at that time and came with the passage of time. According to Kautilya there are two types of agitation namely internal agitation and external agitation, which results into four types threats to any nation are; Internal threat supported externally, Internal threat supported internally, External threat supported internally and External threat supported externally. There are three types of Manusam Disasters namely Suddhapatti (threat from treasonable and enemy), Amisra (threat by allies of treasonable and non-treasonable), Paramisra (threat when allies and enemies come together).

## **Disaster Management according to Kautilya**

According to Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, "Disaster Management can be defined as the organization and management of resources and responsibilities for dealing with all humanitarian aspects of emergencies, in particular preparedness, response and recovery in order to lessen the impact of disasters". Kautilya also gave some views regarding the management of the two types of disasters as following:

- I) Daivam Vyasna( Natural Disasters)
- II) Manusam Vyasna (Manmade Disasters)

### **I) Disaster Management of Daivam Vyasna (Natural Disasters)**

Kautilya describe in detail that how to manage 8 types of natural disaster as mentioned earlier. The management of these natural disasters according to Kautilya as given below (Category wise):

#### **a) Agni (Fire Hazards)**

Fire is considered as hazard which is caused by meteorological, geological, biological or celestial condition. Kautilya always believes that prevention is better than cure. Hence he gave various thus preventive methods and rules to deal with these type of Disasters. The responsibility, of controlling hazards from fire and devising rules for the citizens so as to minimize hazards from fire, lies with the City Superintendent/ King. Remedies against fire in residential areas and punitive measures against violators of fire- prevention rules are prescribed in different slokas. In summer all citizens should take steps against the outbreak of fire. Fire cannot be kindled inside the houses (most probably built with hay and other inflammable materials) during the midday when the possibility of spreading of fire is very high. In case it is extremely urgent, citizens should cook outside the house so that catching fire of the house is minimized. Various indigenous devices to extinguish fire should be kept in every house. Violation of these rules would be punished with fines, the amount depending on the gravity of the offence. The City Superintendents are to take preventive measures against fire by compelling people to remove inflammable matters from their houses and he should also take initiative in setting up fire extinguishing devices in various public places. Houses and other dwelling places, roads, cremation grounds etc. should be properly constructed preserving environment. Every house should have proper arrangements form controlling fire. Every house should be constructed strictly on the basis of the rules (preserving environment) prescribed by the authorities. There should be proper arrangements in each house for sewage and proper disposal of wastes.

**b) Udaka (Flood Hazards)**

According to Kautilya water is the worst because fire may destroys half or one village, while flood affects many villages. Therefore he prescribes various measures for prevention from flood situations. In the rainy season, villages situated near water should move away at highlands above the level of the floods and they should keep a collection of wooden planks, bamboos and boats. This indicates that keeping a constant watch on the water level as an important point in management was taken care of during the period of Kautilya and this is also followed in modern early warning system. Kautilya also emphasizes on mass-participation in rescue works for the flood affected citizens. This is to be done both by moral suasion and legal sanctions. Those who do not go to the rescue, he/she should have to pay the fine.

**c) Vyadhi (Epidemics/Diseases)**

Kautilya said that diseases are also a form of disaster which really affects the life of victims. These human diseases can be cure by two means i.e. Secret means (Magicians) and Medicines (Physicians). While the preventive measures for animal diseases is "Nirajana". Nirajana is also called as "Arti" that means the waving of light around the God/Goddess. The word nirajana is combination of two words i.e. Nira means 'water' and Ajana means 'touch'. Which means is a method of been the actual purification or cleansing of the place, person or object etc by the waving of lamp (religious faith). The loss of king/ city Superintendent is the centre point of cure as compare to the common people. A common man always depends on him due to his high degree of spirit and intelligence.

**d) Durbhiksha (Famine)**

The role of the state in famine management, as prescribed by Kautilya, is very significant. There is a difference between disease and famine. Famine (e.g. drought) result into more loss in large area and remedies are very difficult to find as compare to the disease. The ruler should have prior preparation for expected famines so that he is not caught napping. When the disaster actually occurs, he should take prompt measures so as to minimize the harmful effects on the masses. Even the ruler should relinquish if he fails to handle the famine situation. If it is not possible to manage disaster by the efforts of the government of the affected country, then the help of friendly foreign governments may also be sought. This strategy is also applied in modern disaster management efforts. Ecological and environmental awareness for preservation of Ecology is very important. He forms various rules and also the punitive measures for violation of such rules. In this regard Kautilya's approach was holistic as he considered preservation of environment and ecology as an integral part of human living. Kautilya attaches utmost importance to the preservation of forests and other natural resources. He prescribes that appropriate plants should

be grown to protect dry lands and pasturelands should be properly protected. Kautilya entrusts that the king should protect different types of forests, water reservoirs and mines by enacting appropriate laws and enforcing them with the assistance of honest and efficient officials. He also emphasizes that it is a duty of king that there should be preparation in case of drought like situation like storage of food, water storage (dam), hunting etc.

**e) Musaka (Rats)**

From the ancient time Indian have the productive agricultural land and it is very well known that rats are enemy of crops.. Mice are really very serious problem faced by many countries even today. The other threat of rats is that when they destroy the food, results into disease like plague. Even when disasters like floods occurs then all these rats' results into water caused diseases. When natural disaster like drought strikes country people eat rats which also results into disease in consumer. This is the reason that's why Kautilya added rats in natural disasters. There are many preventive measures to control the strength of rats are given by Kautilya i.e. use of cats, dogs etc to kill the mouse.

**f) Vyala (Beasts/Wild animals)**

Wild animals are a natural calamity which may harm the human beings. Kautilya gave various preventive measures to deal with these animals. They can be stop to come in human inhabitant villages by digging pits, poisons, weapons and even with the help of miraculous medicine namely "madankodrava". Kautilya also sets some rules of reward and punishment to the people who kill the wild animal.

**g) Sarpa (Snakes)**

There are two remedies given by Kautilya to deal with snakes i.e. by group of persons together, or by the help of sedative/anesthetic medicines.

**h) Raksamsi (demons/evil spirits)**

Kautilya believe that only experts in practices of magic (Atharvaveda) should deal with the evil spirits.

Hence from all eight natural calamities, Kautilya considers flood as the worst hazard even than the fire hazard. Drought causes more destruction as compare to the epidemics. Though rats, snakes, wild animals and evil spirits are the natural calamities which results into less destruction as compare to other four calamities.

## **II) Disaster Management of Manusam Vyasna (Manmade disasters)**

Kautilya discussed only two type of disasters namely war and agitation. The war always occurs when there is any threat from external or internal factors. Kautilya gave various preventive measures to deal with the three types of manusamapatti (i.e. war). During Suddhapatti, king should not use force against the citizens, because it may cause another disaster (i.e. war or agitation like situation). But at the same time force may use against the leaders of these people by two methods namely punishment and secret means. Even punishment is also given to close relatives, such as real son, brother, wife of the ruler if do anything against the king. Secret agents are send by king to know the weakness of enemy or even efforts are carried out to weak the enemy by destroying the resources hub of enemy whether it may be forest, town, agricultural land or military base. For example “Vishkanyas” was formed during that time in order to harm the enemy. The second type of war namely Amisrapatti can be control by support of the non-treasonable. Without these support it is very difficult to stop this creation of this situation. During Paramisrapatti so establish peace with allies as compare to enemy. Kautilya strictly believes that leader should have effective leadership qualities so that people obey and follow the order of leader. He further gave some effective measures to deal with agitations. To cope up with internal agitation, proper training should be provided to the king. To gather information within and outside the country, spies should be appointment. In case of external agitation, spies are also appointed in enemy camps in order to get information about strength and weakness of enemy. It is very important to make good relations with friendly nations/kings and also to strengthen army by providing training.

Kautilya also prescribes that everyone should be careful about preserving common property and bio-diversity. Otherwise he would be fined. No one should do anything to have harmful external effects on cultivation, irrigation system and properties of other persons. Violators of this rule would be punished with fines. In case of setting fire to properties of others or common property, or bursting a dam containing water the punishment is death-sentence. Even throwing dead bodies at public places in the city are to be punishable with fines. The dead bodies are to be cremated at cremation grounds only. Otherwise the offender will have to pay fines.

### **Findings:**

The concept of disaster management is not new, but this concept is going on throughout the history. Kautilyan writing proves that in ancient time there were effective preventive measures to deal with both natural and manmade disasters. The natural disasters in India are same but manmade disasters are now changing due to incorporation of new technological advancement. But Kautilya also wrote in his book about manmade disasters namely war and agitation. The



paper analyze that the Kautilayan work for disaster management is very much effective and is still relevant.

### **Suggestions:**

- The collaboration of modern and ancient techniques of disaster management has a potential of generating better results.
- There is a urgent need to properly understand the thoughts of Kautilya and amalgamate those thoughts in the modern disaster management.
- Kautilyan ideas of disaster management should be use in the current Indian Disaster Management Policy.

### **Conclusion**

Kautilya's Arthashastra deals in great detail with all processes of Disaster management namely preparedness, mitigation, resilience and rehabilitation. In modern times, govt. plays a vital role to deal with disasters similarly as advised by Kautilya to the king/ruler to manage the disasters. Kautilya gave various preventive measures to deal with both natural and manmade disasters. He also gave importance to preparedness e.g. construction of secret grain dams in palace, so that these reserves may be used during famine situation. Relocation of people could be thought of when there was a disaster such as a flood or a famine. He also gave importance to provide moral as well as money support to both individuals and to the nation as a whole during the disasters. Therefore, we can say that Kautilya wrote Arthashastra very wisely and he attempted to understand the menace of disasters and also suggested to manage it effectively.

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