

# INDIA'S AVAPA THROUGH THE PRISM OF KAUTILYA'S FOREIGN POLICY

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## Abstract

The Arthashastra of Kautilya emphasizes the importance of diplomacy and the necessity of Sama, Dana, Bheda, and, if not avoidable, Danda Upaya in the neighborhood of the state. Analyzing the contemporary geopolitical take on by India, it is certainly reflecting the impact of these Upayas. The Rajamandala theory conceptualized and the six-fold policies recommended by Kautilya have relevance in today's contemporary world. India is the best example of how to visualize the Rajamandala concentration and the requirements of its various policy decisions to be in line with the various Upayas. India's Avapa shows not so much stability. Even after this, India has policies like the Look East Policy, Think West Policy, and so on. But there is a need to execute more effective diplomacy, increase the development of the economy, and improve the standard of living for Indians. Kautilya's writing represents his views on what should be the priority of a state and how a state has to avoid Vighraha and concentrate on improving the lives of Janapada. India's 75 years of independence show India has always adhered to this policy by having no first war, no first use of nuclear weapons, the Panchsheel agreement, and so on. However, India is the third largest defense spending country in the world, and it is the need of the time, because it is surrounded by the hostile friends.

**Keywords:** Kautilya, Arthashastra, Rajamandala, Avapa, Foreign Policy

## INTRODUCTION

Presently, the world sees the meaning and dimension of security in different ways. There is actually a requirement to study and adopt Kautilya's theory defining how to skillfully manage state affairs, diplomacy, and war in order to interpret the shades of security and power fitting to the countries, including India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brazil, China, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Pakistan, Thailand, etc. When western thinkers, or, say, realists, were considering war as the necessary evil, Kautilya, much before them, gave a holistic approach based on moral values to the national security concept. According to Kautilya, improving the welfare of the state subjects must be the priority of the governing king. This can be done by building a strong treasure to enhance the defence capabilities of the state.

Kautilya, in his Book VII, has given the Six-Fold Policy, the *upayas*, which are operating principles, to the state head to conduct his foreign relations during peace and war. Kautilya gives utmost importance to diplomacy to bring the desired result for a state. This article centers around the Kautilya's views on foreign policy and contemporary geo-political situations faced by India.

### Rajamandala Theory of Foreign Policy:

The Rajamandala theory propounded by Kautilya is a major breakthrough in defining the strategy of inter-state relations at the global level. This theory provides capsulated detailing of foreign affairs requirements that a state has to follow to remain a sovereign state or become a *Vijigishu*. According to Rajamandala theory, other sovereign states aspiring to conquer others are around the *Vijigishu*. Under such circumstances, a state has to work on the six forms of state policy:

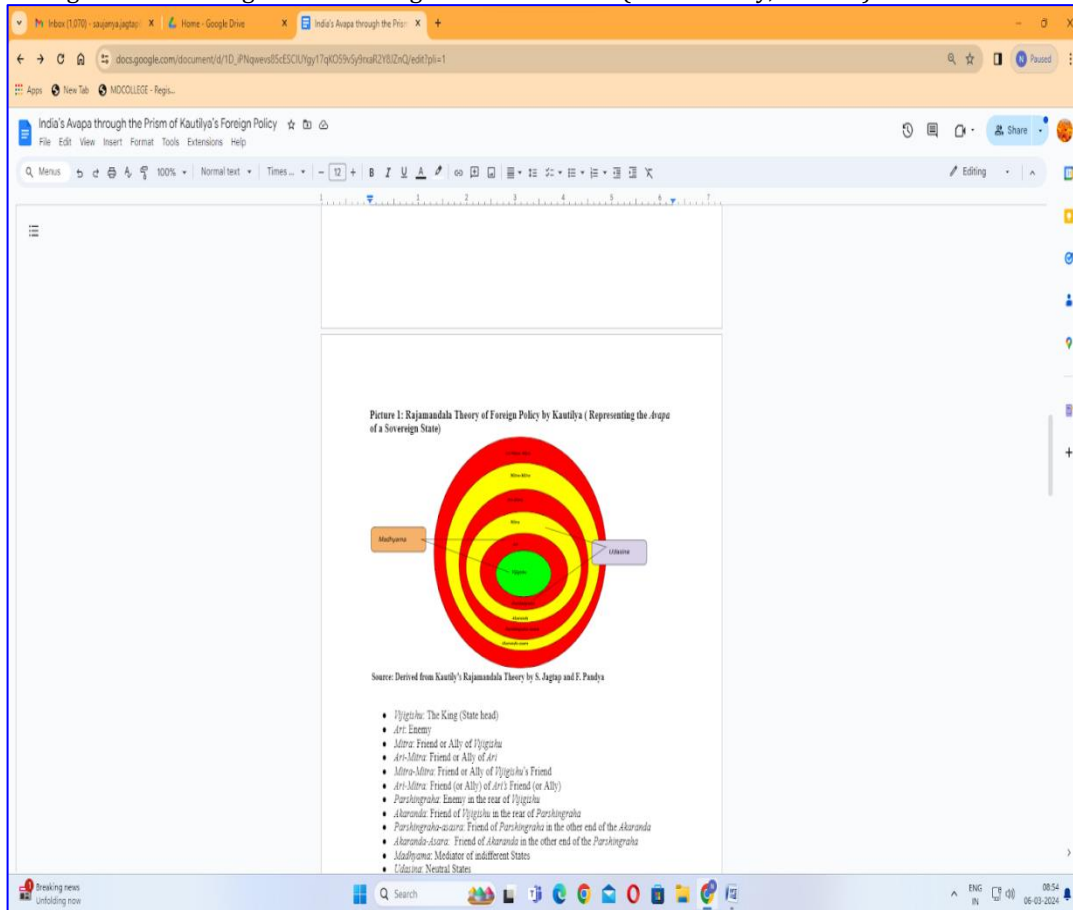
1. peace (*sandhi*), 2. war (*vighraha*), 3. observance of neutrality (*ásana*), 4. Marching, military expeditions (*yána*), 5. alliance (*Samsraya*), and 6. Making peace with one and waging war with another (*dvaiddbhava*).

The state has to accurately predict when the enemy of the state will select its state policy. There are seven important elements of the state. Those are:

1. The state head (*the king, or Vijigishu*), 2. The councilors, superintendents, diplomats, envoys, ministers, and spies, 3. The country, 4. The fort, 5. The treasury, 6. The army and, 7. The friend.

These seven elements Kautilya discussed in Arthashastra Book VI. These seven constituents, combined with the decisions taken by the state, define its foreign policy. The thinking of Ari-Mitra, his own Mitra, and other nearby sovereign states, Avapa, as well as the most likely foreign policy option of the challenging state, Ari, are factors that Kautilya claims will affect how accurately the state head makes a policy decision.

Visually, the relationship among states as per the Rajamandal theory of Kautilya can be represented as the concentrating circles around the state (the kingdom). However, this is just one of the many probabilities of the surroundings of the sovereign state that might be in existence. (Shamasastri, R. 1915)



*Vijigishu*: The King (State head), *Ari*: Enemy, *Mitra*: Friend or Ally of *Vijigishu*, *Ari-Mitra*: Friend or Ally of *Ari*, *Mitra-Mitra*: Friend or Ally of *Vijigishu's* Friend, *Ari-Mitra*: Friend (or Ally) of *Ari's* Friend (or Ally), *Parshingraha*: Enemy in the rear of *Vijigishu*, *Akaranda*: Friend of *Vijigishu* in the rear of *Parshingraha*, *Parshingraha-Asasra*: Friend of *Parshingraha* in the other end of the *Akaranda*, *Akaranda-Asara*: Friend of *Akaranda* in the other end of the *Parshingraha*, *Madhyama*: Mediator of indifferent States, *Udasina*: Neutral States, *Avapa*: Relationship with the neighboring states

**Source:** egnyankosh

Picture 1 show that the immediate neighbor of *Vijigishu* is *Ari*. The friend of the state is situated at a distance. Here, it can be summarized that the first, second, and third spheres are hostile to the King, whereas the second and fourth realms are friendly with *Vijigishu*. *Madhyama* and *Udasina* parties can be the reality in any sphere. It is the leadership that can define the allies and friends among them. To do so, *Vijigishu* can adopt *Sama* (conciliation, adulation, mutual interest, material gain, awarding), *Dana* (gift, bribe), *Bheda* (divide and rule), and *Danda* (war to protect or expand the state, not to plunder and damage other states).

### Resonates of Kautily's Foreign Policy in India's Neighbourhood First Policy:

Hostile neighborhood friends of India include countries such as China and Pakistan, which are geographically fixed. To deal with them, India adopted the policy of Kautilya by making *Mitrapurn* relations with nations like Russia. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka are other nations that play a strategic role in defining India's security. With these neighbors, India has adopted the *Sama Upaya* defined by Kautilya. Being a sovereign state, India has adopted the Look East Policy, Think West Policy, and Connect Central Asia policy and envisages a peaceful, free, inclusive, and prosperous Indian Ocean region with the SAGAR initiative.

**India Avapa and China's Ring of Fire:**

**China-Sri Lanka:** Sri Lanka is getting close to China. China has made huge investments in Sri Lanka's various infrastructural projects. Sri Lanka has given Hambantota port to China on lease. India has always raised its concerns through dialogue. Sri Lanka faced the ever-growing debt trap of China. Recently, Sri Lanka has been inclined towards India as India has helped it get rid of the economic crisis (*Sama and Dana*).

**China-Bangladesh:** China-Bangladesh has a very robust, comprehensive, but substantially riddled with controversies relationship. Similar to Sri Lanka, China has given a debt facility for infrastructural development to Bangladesh. Bangladesh used to be a part of India before partition. After partition, India helped Bangladesh gain independence from Pakistan by engaging in the (*Danda- War*) in 1971. But, recently, China is giving more material gain to it, and hence, its drift towards China has increased.

**China-Maldives:** China and the Maldives have a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership. China has claimed that they have historical relationships and are expanding further. Maldives has ended its India-first policy. In response to this initiative, India has adopted a silent *Bheda* policy (refraining from trade deals involving essential exports to Maldives).

**China-Myanmar:** Chinese influence in Myanmar is eroding, and India has benefited from this by enhancing mutual interest areas (*Sama*) such as cultural, historical, and religious pilgrimage and by extending help during natural calamities.

**China-Afghanistan:** China has increased its intervention in Afghanistan's economy by bringing Pakistan and Afghanistan to a table to tackle terrorism to safeguard its interests against India. Still, Afghanistan stands rock-like along with India, as India has always given it assistance on various fronts, like waging a war against Taliban.

**China-Nepal:** Nepal is gradually distancing itself from India and aligning with China. India used to be the largest investor in Nepa; now it is China. Still, India has a chance to revive its relationship with this *Mitra*.

Bhutan is a *Udasina rashtra*, so it is, for a time, not a threat to India. However, it should launch diplomatic schemes and dialogues to get a favorable response from Bhutan.

China is building a ring of fire around India to control the dominance India can exert over the Indian Subcontinent and Indian Ocean. India is always considered the main competitor to China in Asia. To maintain the balance of power, the USA in recent times and Russia during the Cold War period supported India.

When it comes to Pakistan, India has shown its metal by separating Bangladesh from Pakistan, the policy advocated by Kautilya- *Danda*. Even today, China is the biggest supporter and investor in Pakistan. Pakistan has witnessed an economic crisis, a soaring debt-to-GDP ratio, and political instability. So for a time, India need not take any decision to handle the moves of Pakistan. The only thing that India requires is to keep developing with optimum and equitable distribution of income. This will deter neighboring nations, including Pakistan, from becoming India's direct as well as indirect *Ari*. Since, India never considers China its biggest enemy, both nations have the Panchsheel Agreement, however, even after this, China is indeed a strong enemy. So, to get an advantage over China and obviously over Pakistan, India is using *samsraya upay*. Though India does not have any major military alliances with the rest of the world, it has strong strategic and military relationships with Russia, the UAE, the USA, Iran, Japan, Germany, Mauritius, and so on.

India is required to open up *Mitrapurn* dialogues to improve the outcomes of the *avapa*. If any of these neighboring states are failing, say due to natural reasons like sea level rise that may drown the Maldives in the coming century, ever-growing political instability along with the debt-to-GDP ratio and hence the rapidly falling welfare of an average Pakistani citizen, etc., will put undue pressure on the Indian economy. There might be a situation in which the United Nations and other organizations may insist that India absorb the refugees from such countries since India is the only large country, in terms of size and growth, near them.

Recently, India hosted the G-20 Summit, which has given strength to India's exports among most of the member nations with Trade Facilitating Agreements. It has given a signal to the world leaders about India's *वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्* attitude. Simultaneously, it has showcased to the world that India is not at all a weak nation. Kautilya stressed the idea of morality in the sovereign state by not waging unwanted wars. According to the Arthshastra, the eminent writings of Kautilya, understand the *Ari*, or rival, and try to outwit them. When everything fails, resort to various forms of fighting—direct as well as indirect war; otherwise, do not. Hence, war is always the last option considered in India's foreign policy.

However, if a state has strong diplomatic ties and alliances and has no first-war policy, it is still possible for other states' strategies and tactics to change under *Yana*. As a result, a state should always be prepared militarily to face inevitable challenges in order to safeguard Janapada and its own interests. But again, Kautily cautioned the state against using rash military action, saying that *Vigrah* should be the last *Upaya* to be used and that it benefits no one. His approach to warfare involved analyzing the enemy's strengths and weaknesses in depth, using intelligence, and planning strategically. Prior to going to war, a state ought to conduct a cost-benefit analysis. (Pandya F., and Jagtap S. 2023).

## CONCLUSION:

India's *avapa* is not so certain. The Indian neighborhood is nothing but ari or ari-mitras. *Yana* is needed along with developing the country. Hence, we see that India is the third-largest country in the world, with a big budget for defense. Since the second largest defense spender in India's neighborhood is China, India cannot directly sustain *Vigraha* with it, so India is entering into *samsraya* with other big and strong nations. If observed closely, worldwide, Kautilya's *niti* are being implemented. But, in the case of India's foreign outlook, it has a strong impact.

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