

Yoga-Kshema and India's National Security: The Arthashastra Doctrine for Our Times

The global security landscape is experiencing major uncertainty. India, an essential actor in this larger security matrix, has neither been unaware nor unprepared. Soon after Operation Sindoor, Prime Minister Narendra Modi distilled the nation's security vision into three words: Jointness, Aatmanirbharta, and Innovation. The message was clear: India must not merely respond to threats but also shape the strategic environment around them. The Defence Minister exhorted the forces to prepare for "invisible challenges", including information warfare, ideological subversion, and ecological and biological threats, going well beyond traditional battlefield thinking. This resolve was articulated over two millennia ago through the Bharatiya Arthashastra Tradition.

The technicalities of Jointness and Aatmanirbharta are rooted fundamentally in an exercise in operationalising a civilisational DNA: the doctrine of Yoga-Kshema. The entire Arthashastra can be understood through this single framework. From internal governance to foreign policy, from intelligence operations to military strategy, every instrument of the state is subordinated to one master objective: Yoga-Kshema.



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acquiring a strategic position that did not previously exist. It has a direct bearing on India's territorial and strategic policies. Kautilya is explicit that a vijigishu who aspires to advance must focus on what he requires for national development: fortifications, waterworks, trade routes, settled lands, and resource-bearing territories.

India's assertive stand at Galwan in June 2020 was precisely a strong yoga conviction - refusing to cede ground. Similarly, the border infrastructure constructions since 2015, which provide all-weather connectivity to the forward areas, are a direct fulfilment of what Kautilya described as durga-samskara, or the strengthening of fortified positions. India's growing interest in maritime domain awareness, the construction of naval bases in Karwar (INS Kadamba), the installation of coastal radar chains, and new basing arrangements in the Indian Ocean similarly reflect the Yoga principle applied to sea power.

Kshema (protection and preservation) is the harder art. It demands sustained vigilance, proportional response, and the institutional discipline not to squander what has been won. Notably, the acquisition through Yoga is valuable because it serves Kshema-the protection and prosperity of the Janapada (the people and territory). Additionally, the shift toward Aatmanirbharta (self-reliance) seeks to build by reducing India's dependence on adversarial supply chains, particularly in critical minerals and defence manufacturing. This reflects the modern equivalent of securing the Kosha, ensuring that India's ability to defend itself is not held hostage by foreign supply chains. The most delicate balance between acquisition and protection is found in the application of military force. Kautilya was remarkably clinical: force (Danda) is the means of achieving Yoga-Kshema, but it must be calibrated.

This doctrine of Yathartha Danda, or proportional force, was visible in Operation Sindoor in May 2025. By executing precision strikes against terror infrastructure in response to the Pahalgam attack, India practised the art of Kshema. The objective was not total war, but the protection of the state's integrity through a calibrated signal of resolve.

Kautilya's six foreign policy instruments - sandhi (peace/treaty), vighraha (war), yana (marching),



asana (staying put), dvaidhibhava (double policy), and samshraya (seeking alliance) - collectively constitute the operational grammar of Yoga-Kshema in the international arena. The choice between them is governed by a clear principle:

शमव्यायामयोर्गोनिः षाड्गुण्यम् ।

क्षयः स्थानं वृद्धिरित्युदयास्तस्य ।

(Kautilya's Arthashastra: 6.2.4-5)

India's abstention during United Nations votes on the Russia-Ukraine war and diplomatic outreach with often opposing sides during an ongoing international conflict are, from a Kautilyan perspective, a textbook case of dvaidhibhava: maintaining a dual policy as a policy expression for Kshema, or the protection of India's interests.

India's deepening of Quad partnerships with the United States, Japan, and Australia, while maintaining its historically independent stance, is a similar reflection of a deliberate foreign policy choice being deployed to extend India's strategic outreach without triggering bloc politics.

However, Kautilya's framework warns that the greatest threat to Kshema often comes from within. His dedicated study of Yogavrittam (focused on internal security) remains startlingly relevant. The government has astutely responded to the "invisible challenges" - information warfare, radicalisation, and technological subversion, with great aplomb.

The Arthashastra concludes that statecraft is for the "acquisition and protection of the earth". For modern India, this "earth" is the aspiration of a Viksit Bharat-a developed, secure nation.

Yoga-Kshema offers a roadmap that is both ambitious and grounded. It demands that India continually strive for the capabilities (yoga) while maintaining the institutional discipline to safeguard what it has built (kshema). Two millennia later, Kautilya's message to the leaders of modern India remains the same: a serious nation does not merely react to the future; it acquires the tools to shape it and the wisdom to protect it. The reflection of this elaborate framework in governance policies testifies to the commitment and indomitable patriotism of our determined government, whose priority is the security of its nation and the safety and welfare of its citizens.

Fable with Moral

Clever rabbit and the lion

Panchatantra Book 1, Mitra bheda

In a dense forest lived a lion named Bhasuraka. He was a tyrant who killed animals indiscriminately, even when not hungry. To prevent their complete extinction, the forest animals made a plan that they would send one animal to his den every day if he promised to stop his mass slaughter. The lion agreed to the proposition.



One day, it was the turn of an old, wise rabbit. Though small, he possessed a sharp intellect. He deliberately lingered along the way, arriving at the lion's den long after the sun had peaked. Bhasuraka was famished and roared in a murderous rage, "Why are you late, you miserable creature? And why are you so small?"

The rabbit bowed low and said, "Lord, it is not my fault. Five other rabbits were sent with me, but we were stopped by another lion who claims to be the true king of this forest. He ate the others, but I escaped to warn you."

Bhasuraka's ego flared. He demanded to be shown this rival immediately. The rabbit led him to a deep, clear well. "He is hiding in his fortress there," the rabbit whispered.

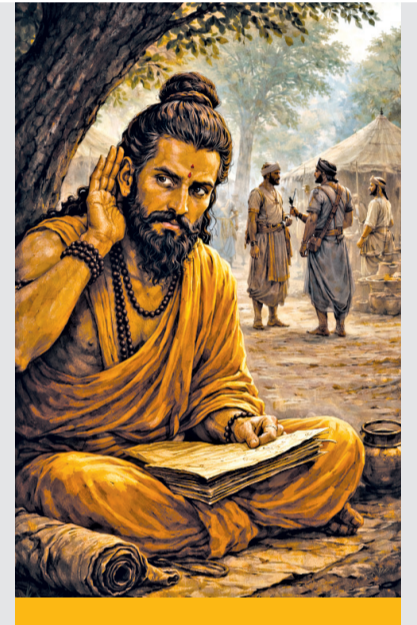
Bhasuraka peered over the edge. Seeing his own reflection in the still water, he mistook it for the rival king. When he roared, the well echoed back an even louder challenge. Blinded by fury, the lion leapt into the deep water to attack. Unable to climb the smooth stone walls, he drowned. The rabbit returned to the other animals, proving that wit is far more powerful than brute strength.

Moral of the Fable

Intellect is power. A small mind with a plan can defeat a giant akin to Kautilya's principle relating to strategy over strength. The story demonstrates how a smaller, physically weaker state can neutralise a superior aggressor through intelligence and psychological manipulation.

Did you know?

Did you know that espionage was a highly organised pillar of governance in the Mauryan Empire? The Arthashastra, attributed to Kautilya, recommends that spies in disguise - posing as ascetics, traders, or householders - be deployed across the kingdom to detect even the faintest signs of dissent. It's Kantakashodhana ("removal of thorns") section emphasises protecting society from internal threats such as criminals, corrupt traders, and disorder. This surveillance system was complemented by officials mentioned in Ashokan inscriptions, such as *pativedakas* (informants) and *pulisani* (higher-ranking intelligence officers), who kept the ruler informed about public opinion. The state also monitored frontier and forest regions - home to independent tribes like the *atavikas* - using spies disguised as hermits and by building fortified outposts. Together, these measures reveal that



intelligence-gathering in ancient India was not incidental but a carefully structured mechanism of state security.

Wisdom Word Search

S G U P T A C H A R A W
K D A N D A O J P S W I
A L Q T U I P M Q L N K
S P A A R S Y I I O K P
T K J V G A P T L H X V
R L C T A N A R P K O V
A W T A E D K A A O T Y
A Y M N T H A S S J L U
T O A Q P I Y H L M Y H
O R A K S H A L A I D A
I P G P R A N A I S U U
O I F S E N A H Q L R W

WORDS TO FIND

Astra, Danda, Durga, Guptachara, Mitra, Rajya, Raksha, Sandhi, Sena, Vyuha

ASTRA - Weapons used for defence, reflecting technological and strategic capability.

DANDA - Legitimate use of force to maintain order and protect sovereignty.

DURGA - Fortified spaces ensuring territorial defence and resilience.

GUPTACHARA - Intelligence networks gathering information for state security.

MITRA - Allies and strategic partnerships strengthening national security.

RAJYA - The state as a political entity requiring protection and stability.

RAKSHA - The act of safeguarding people, territory, and values.

SANDHI - Diplomatic agreements maintaining peace and strategic balance.

SENA - Organised military force defending the realm.

VYUHA - Strategic arrangement of forces in warfare and defence planning.

Marvels of India

BRAHMOS



A Marvel of Indian Strategic Ingenuity

The BrahMos supersonic cruise missile is one of Bharat's most impressive indigenous defence achievements, which was proven yet again during Operation Sindoor.

Technical Feat

It can be fired from land, sea, air and submarines. It reaches speeds of up to Mach 2.8-3.0 and a range that has grown from 290 to 450 km., and now 800 km. variants are under trial, after Bharat joined the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in 2016. Its two-stage engine, a solid-fuel booster followed by a ramjet, gives it exceptional speed.

Operational Capability

The missile uses advanced guidance systems and works on a "fire and forget" principle, the launcher can move away immediately after firing. It can fly as low as 10 m., making it hard to detect or intercept.

Embodying New Bharat: A Progressive and Resilient Bharat

Inducted across the Army, Navy and Air Force since the mid-2000s and recently used in combat operations, it signals Bharat's shift from importing weapons to building and even exporting world-class defence systems.

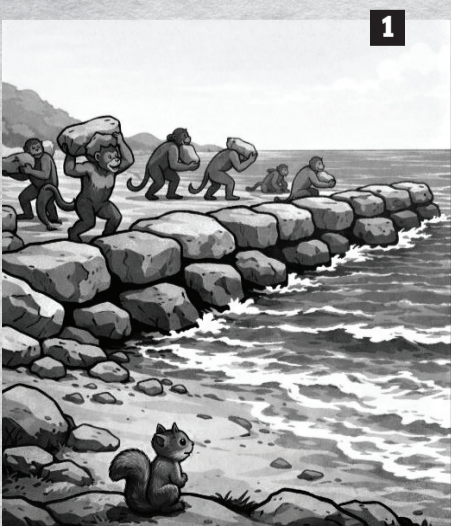
QUIZ National Security

Questions	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D
1 Who roamed around as Ascetics revered for their knowledge and favoured for their intelligence activity, forming one of the 5 types of spies in the Mauryan kingdom according to Chanakya?	Udasthita	Kapatikachhtra	Grihapaitika	Vaidehaka
2 Name the women bodyguards in the Imperial Chola kingdom who protected the king in times of war.	Anukkis	Padimagalir	Manayal	Adigaricci
3 Sam, Dam, Dand, Bhed are the 4 ancient strategies for conflict resolution and diplomacy applied sequentially, often ascribed to Chanakya. Which of them refers to winning over a rival through friendship, dialogue or rational persuasion?	Sam	Dam	Dand	Bhed
4 The North East India historically used several animals in warfare. Which one of them was the most frequently used?	Mules	Yaks	Horses	Elephants
5 Which of these traditional martial arts has been practiced widely by women, especially in South India?	Gatka	Sqay	Kalaripayattu	Sarit Sarak

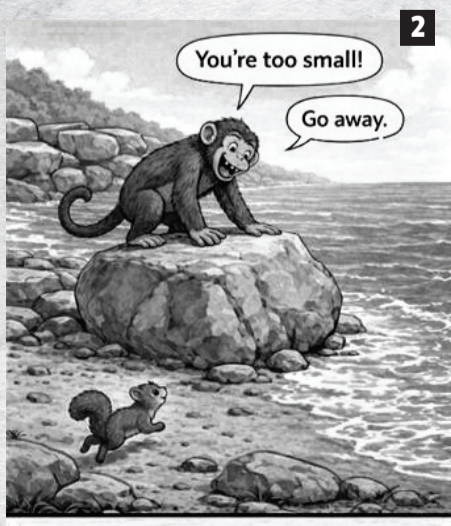
ANSWERS: 1 - A, 2 - B, 3 - A, 4 - D, 5 - C

Ramayan

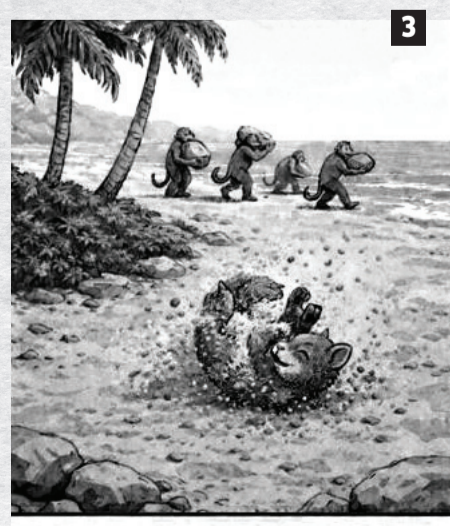
The Smallest Helper



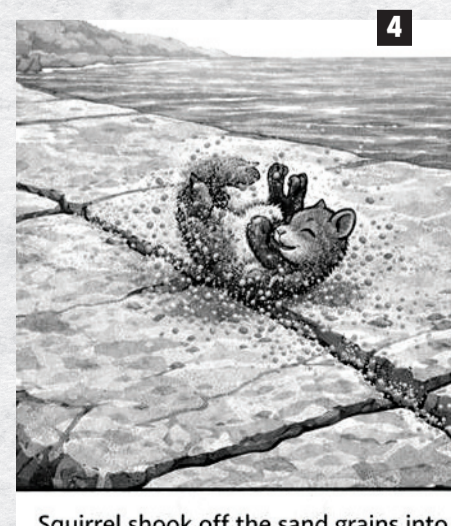
Vanara sena were building Ram Setu. A little squirrel wanted to help.



But the squirrel was determined to help build the bridge.



The squirrel rolled in the sand and covered his fur with sand.



Squirrel shook off the sand grains into the cracks. This made the stone bridge smooth and safe.



MORAL OF THE STORY: Even the smallest can make the biggest difference