

Arthashastra as a Pedagogical Resource: Cultivating Peace Values through Ancient Statecraft

Smaranika Samal^{1*}, Dipanshu Sharma², Ishita Mishra³

Abstract

One of the earliest Indian texts on statecraft, including the governance of a state, its economics, diplomacy, military strategy and ethics, is the Arthashastra attributed to Kautilya (Chanakya), which was written around the 4th century BCE. Although commonly viewed through the prism of realism and the power and pragmatism, peace (shanti) is a strategic and ethical value of the text that ensures stability, prosperity (artha) and welfare (yogakshema) to the society. Kautilya advocates for diplomacy, alliances, and negotiation over war in most cases, as a perpetual struggle would be detrimental to the state's foundation. This paper explores the Arthashastra as a pedagogical guide to instil peace values in contemporary learning. It determines the implicit concepts of peace, including the preference of sandhi (peace/treaty-making) in the context of sadgunya, ethical governance based on dharma, welfare policies in times of crisis, and a culturally contextualised concept of harmony, in opposition to Western concepts. These aspects provide a realistic approach of pragmatism that instructs on critical thought, ethical choice, and non-violent strategy. The paper suggests the curriculum integration in international relations, ethics, and conflict resolution through excerpts, role-playing diplomatic situations, learning cases, and comparisons with Machiavelli. It highlights the benefits of promoting duty, justice, compassion, global citizenship, and cultural awareness, as well as addressing issues such as the misperception of power-centred elements, anachronistic threats, and ethical dilemmas in navigating the realism-idealism spectrum.

Keywords: Arthashastra, Kautilya, peace education, statecraft, strategic diplomacy, ethical governance, ancient Indian wisdom, indigenous pedagogy.

INTRODUCTION

The Arthashastra is an Indian Sanskrit text on statecraft, credited to Kautilya (or Chanakya or Vishnugupta), which was one of the most extensive texts on statecraft of ancient times.[1–12] Written sometime in the 4th century BCE, at least, during the Mauryan period, but likely subject to scholarly

revisions as late as the early centuries CE, the text is a comprehensive guide to government, economics, military tactics, diplomacy, law, and morals (Kangle,[13] 1960-1965/2010; Rangarajan, [14–21]1992). The Arthashastra is traditionally associated with the work of Kautilya as advisor to Chandragupta Maurya (r. ca. 321-297 BCE), and includes 15 books on such subjects as the royal training and administration, spycraft, and welfare policies. It is pragmatic in its realism in politics, but incorporates moral issues, which is summed up in a famous phrase, that the welfare of his subjects is the happiness of the king (Kautilya, trans. [14]1915/1956).

*Author for Correspondence

Smaranika Samal¹
E-mail: kukumuku97@gmail.com

¹Student, Department of Education, Regional Institute of Education, NCERT, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

²Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Regional Institute of Education, NCERT, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

³M.Ed Scholar, Department of Education, Regional Institute of Education, NCERT, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

Received Date: March 12, 2026

Accepted Date: April 08, 2026

Published Date: April 09, 2026

Citation: Ishita Mishra, Dipanshu Sharma, Smaranika Samal. Arthashastra as a Pedagogical Resource: Cultivating Peace Values through Ancient Statecraft. Recent Trends in Social Studies. 2026; 3(1): 32–43p.

Most scholars consider the text to be an influential source of Indian political thought, with certain aspects of dharma (duty/righteousness), artha (material prosperity) and the practical administration of the state. Although there is no agreement on the exact authorship and date of composition, with some suggesting a composite nature with the writing of various eras, the consensus among most historians is that the main composition dates back to the late 4th to 3rd century BCE, and that this coincides with the period of the establishment of the Mauryan empire (Boesche, [2]2002; Trautmann, as cited in various sources). The rediscovery of the Arthashastra in the early 20th century, including (but not limited to) the classic English edition by R. Shamasastri [14](1915), led to a new interest in the book's knowledge of ancient politics.

Ancient sources such as the Arthashastra can be seen as a source of a transitory bridge between ancient wisdom and the modern requirements of pedagogy in the context of modern peace education. The current expectation of peace education is in instilling non-violence, conflict management skills, empathy, justice and global citizenship in the face of increased geopolitical and inequality-based tension, as well as human ethical dilemmas in international relations (Harris and Morrison,[8] 2012). When it comes to Arthashastra, the so-called realist or Machiavellian aspects (e.g. the methods of conquest, spying, etc.) are often viewed as the central theme, whereas in reality, peace is one of the main strategic themes that Arthashastra values when it is possible. Kautilya endorses diplomacy, alliances, and negotiation as opposed to war and sees a long war as a disadvantage to prosperity and stability. His six measures of foreign policy (sadgunya), such as sandhi (peace/treaty-making), are preferable in most cases, and emphasise that the ultimate aim of the state is yogakshema- the protection and welfare of people (Rangarajan, [21]1992; Boesche,[2] 2002). This practical conception of peace, which was reached by moral government, economic power and strategic moderation, fits into the current peacebuilding models, which place great importance on preventive diplomacy, human security, and economic development, as opposed to the absence of war.

The research problem is the lack of use of non-Western ancient statecraft texts on peace pedagogy. Although the Western classics of international relations and peace studies, such as *The Prince* by Machiavelli or the perpetual peace theories by Kant, dominate the international relations curriculum, indigenous traditions remain little known, misunderstood as simple power-centric ideas. Such a gap constrains varying views on how to develop peace values, especially in postcolonial or Global South, where cultural heritage can be more relevant and interesting (Jindal, [10]2019). This was discussed in the paper by discussing the peace-oriented aspects of the text.

The objectives has two-fold, i.e. (1) to examine the major peace-oriented ideas in the Arthashastra, e.g. the strategy of diplomacy, moral governance, welfare policy and why non-violent resolution should be employed where feasible; and (2) to suggest some practical educational projects, e.g. incorporating text excerpts into the curricula to teach critical thinking, ethical judgment and comparative studies on conflict resolution.

Thesis statement: The Arthashastra is a useful pedagogical instrument to instil values of peace through the blending of strategic diplomacy, ethics and welfare concepts in the contemporary educational structures to provide a non-Western realist perspective to understand the principle of peace as the welfare of the society and practical peace as opposed to endless warfare.

The importance of the paper goes beyond the academic discussion. In the contemporary global issues such as hybrid warfare, competition over resources, and ethical crises in leadership, a resurgence of the wisdom of the past encourages pluralism in cultural education and adds indigenous knowledge to peace studies. It challenges Eurocentric biases, empowers students in other contexts (e.g. Indian or South Asian curricula) and shows how historical texts can be used to inform modern-day attempts at sustainable peace and just governance (Kamal,[11] 2025). The focus on people-

centred statecraft, as highlighted by the study, can be used to contribute to the wider discourses on decolonising knowledge and contributing to holistic security paradigms.

It does not provide any primary empirical research, but instead is restricted to textual analysis of the Arthashastra (mainly based on existing translations) and its interpretive implications to peace pedagogy. The methodology entails the use of qualitative text analysis, literature review on interpretations of scholars and use of deductive logic to obtain pedagogic implications. The interpretive basis (Kangle, [13]1960-1965/2010; Rangararajan, [21]1992; Boesche, [2]2002) is given by secondary sources such as critical editions and commentaries.

HISTORY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE ARTHASHASTRA.

The Arthashastra is a text which exemplifies one of the foundations of ancient Indian political and administrative wisdom, and it is a methodical work on the science of statecraft (arthaśāstra). The text was credited to Kautilya (also called Chanakya or Vishnugupta), although the authorship and date of its compilation are the subject of debate among scholars. The traditional school of thought identifies Kautilya with the historical individual, the chief advisor to Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of the Mauryan Empire (ca. 321-297 BCE) and dates the writing of the text to the late 4th or early 3rd century BCE (Boesche, [2]2002; Rangararajan, [21] 1992). This recognition is based on the colophons of the text, in which the author identifies himself as both Kautilya and Vishnugupta, and the traditions that recognise him as the despoiser of the Nanda dynasty and founder of the Mauryan dynasty.

But contemporary scholarship has come to perceive the Arthashastra as a collaborative text, developed over the centuries by means of compilation, redaction and interpolation. Patrick Olivelle and Mark McClish maintain that a previous composite text, perhaps called Dandaniti (the science of punishment or government), had taken shape in the 1st century BCE out of unrelated materials on the science of government (McClish, [16]2019; Olivelle, [18]2013). This proto-text was subsequently elaborated (possibly during the 1st to 3rd centuries CE) by a redactor who called himself Kautilya, who added other books, dialogical material, and a more ideological structure of Brahmanism that was much closer to dharma literature. This multi-layered, shifting development is supported by stylistic inconsistencies, anachronistic citations, and the lack of corroboration by Mauryan sources, which may have led to the adaptation of the end product to conditions of the post-Mauryan periods, perhaps due to Gupta-era modifications (Olivelle, [18] 2013). And despite these controversies, the internal allusions to earlier teachers in the text and the pragmatic style in which it is written highlight the importance of the Arthashastra in terms of being the compilation or editorial work of a single person, Kautilya, who has synthesised and re-named it the Arthashastra.

The main themes of governance, dharma (duty/righteousness) and artha (prosperity/wealth/power) of the Arthashastra are connected with a strategic inclination to peace (shanti) instead of war. Kautilya introduces governance as the most important responsibility of the king, whose aim is to provide welfare (yogakshema) to subjects by means of good governance, economy and security (Rangararajan, [21]1992). It is based on artha, which is material gain, or political economy, which is the first: the text says that the root of happiness is dharma, the root of dharma is artha, and that right governance assures artha (Kautilya, trans. [14]1915/1956). However, artha is checked by dharma; ethical behaviour, justice and moral discipline keep off the misuse of power. The king needs to balance the purusharthas (goals of life) of dharma, artha and kama (pleasure) and put the society at the forefront.

Peace (shanti) is a better option than war to settle and achieve stability and prosperity in society. Kautilya considers prolonged war to be ruinous to the accumulation of wealth and well-being of the population, and recommends diplomacy to be the main weapon. The six measures (sadgunya) used in foreign policy focus on sandhi (peace or treaty) in areas that are favorable and the last resort is war with victory guaranteed and benefits exceeding costs (Boesche, [2]2002). Just rule, welfare policies

during crisis (e.g. famine relief, tax breaks), and moral policies that are designed to encourage harmony and loyalty are elements of internal peace. This practical realism, peace by power, by negotiation, by welfare, is the opposite of eternal aggression, which needs to bring to the forefront a larger artha in the long run through dharma-bound government than through mere conquests (Gautam, [7]2016).

The cultural and philosophical context of the Arthashastra connects it to wider Vedic cultures and focuses more on such values as satyam (truth), sivam (goodness/benevolence), and universal welfare. The text is based on Vedic concepts of cosmic order (rita) and virtuous life, yet it is realistic, and it incorporates Brahmanical ethics. Dharma is based on Vedic ideas of duty and moral order, which were further elaborated on the state's need to offer protection and justice. Essentially the same idea, the quest of universal welfare (lokasangraha or collective well-being) reverberates in Vedic hymns, encouraging human harmony and goodwill, as well as the ideas of satyam sivam sundaram (truth, goodness, beauty) as ideals of human perfection (although more directly in later Upanishadic and Puranic thought). The ethical viewpoints of non-injury (ahimsa in ordinary duties), compassion, truthfulness, and forbearance of Kautilya are based on ethical precepts of the Vedas, but are adjusted to the demands of the realist state (Kangle, [13]1960-1965/2010). In comparison to all-idealistic Vedic literature, the Arthashastra extends these philosophically to actual governance, in which the role of the king would be to promote dharma as a means of universal good, and to maintain stability in the society by ethical force.

Overall, the historical development of the Arthashastra out of the earlier traditions of dandaniti, the thematic inclination of the text to combine dharma and artha in the philosophy of statecraft, and its Vedic philosophical foundations, all combine to make the text a subtle instruction in statecraft, where ethical prosperity and shanti are the primary goals of sustainable social well-being.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review presents available scholarly work on the Arthashastra, including the prevailing approaches, the investigation of the idea of peace in the context of ancient Indian cultures, the integration of indigenous wisdom in pedagogical practices, and gaps in applying the Arthashastra teachings on peace to education.

The current body of Arthashastra literature largely positions the text as the landmark of political realism and pragmatic state-building. Roger Boesche [2](2002) calls Kautilya the first great political realist, due to the anarchist approach to power, national interest, and strategic calculation in the text, and frequently compares him to Machiavelli. This perception highlights the realist assumptions of the Arthashastra: the seeking of artha (prosperity/power) by means of reason, by ways of espionage, alliances and war where it is needed (Boesche, [2] 2002). Both Rangarajan [21](1992) and Kangle [13](2010) present introductory translations and commentaries, depicting the text as a complete guide to governance, in which the main responsibility of the king is to guarantee the survival of the state, prosperity, and growth through practical policies. The recent works support it, indicating that the approach of Kautilya is realpolitik based on a balance of power, diplomacy, and strength of the state (Gautam, [7]2016; Dar, [4]2021). Its composite nature and ideological developments are studied by such scholars as McClish [16](2019) and Olivelle [18](2013), but the prevailing school of thought is power-centric, focusing on military policy, intelligence, and conquest as the means of consolidating the state.

However, peace studies in ancient Indian literature situate peace (shanti) in a context of native knowledge systems as a culturally grounded and practical concept instead of an idealistic concept. The Arthashastra is more concerned with peace, where it is beneficial in that there is sadgunya (six measures of foreign policy), where sandhi (peace/treaty) is favoured over vighraha (war) to maintain the prosperity and not to cause a destructive conflict (Rangarajan, [21]1992; Boesche, [2] 2002). The

latter is why Kautilya considers long warfare as the opposite of *yogakshema* (welfare and security), and recommends diplomacy, conciliation (*sama*), inducements (*dana*), division (*bheda*), and force (*danda*) in that order (Gautam,[7] 2016). The broader indigenous traditions embed the concept of peace in the form of *dharma* (righteous duty), *ahimsa* (non-violence) and restorative justice through *panchayats* or *samvada* (dialogue) and are based on the Vedic *rita* (cosmic order) and by such texts as the *Mahabharata* or *Dharmashastras* (Avanish Kumar and Naveenkumar,[1] 2025). These are more focused on harmony, community involvement, and more prevention-based than retaliation, and provide culturally-grounded conflict management, which deviates from Western adversarial frameworks.

Ancient wisdom, such as the *Arthashastra*, is now being used in pedagogical aspects of international relations (IR), education and peacebuilding curricula. Projects such as the Indian Project Udbhav have combined ancient texts and modern military instruction, and apply the knowledge of the *Arthashastra* about strategy, intelligence, and hybrid warfare to train soldiers (as explained in other studies of strategy; ISDP, 2024). Researchers suggest the inclusion of IKS (Indian Knowledge Systems) in higher education as a means of holistic development, ethical leadership, and decolonisation of the curriculum, using the principles of *Arthashastra* in the diplomacy, governance, and dispute resolution processes (Chandratreya et al., 2024; a variety of NEP 2020-based works). The ancient constructs in peacebuilding are used to inform non-violent traditions (including Gandhian extensions or restorative justice) to meet SDG 16 goals (Avanish Kumar and Naveenkumar,[1] 2025). It is suggested that the relevance of the *Arthashastra* in the context of teaching pragmatic peace and ethical statecraft in IR programs is revealed through comparative studies with Western realism (Dar, [4]2021).

Nevertheless, there are still major gaps in the literature, especially the lack of discussion of the elements of peace that the *Arthashastra* offers in the educational fields as opposed to its war and power policies. Although the former is dominated by realism, interpretations of *shanti* as a strategic imperative, namely welfare policies, diplomatic preference, and ethical governance, are secondary (Boesche, [2]2002; Gautam,[7] 2016). The field of pedagogical scholarship is more interested in the military/strategic application or general IKS application, and less empirical or curriculum-specific research on the application of excerpts of *Arthashastra* in the classroom teaching of peace values, critical thinking, or non-violent diplomacy (few sources such as Project Udbhav or NEP discussions). This Eurocentricism of IR education omits the aspects of peace in non-Western texts, which can offer culturally appropriate peace education in the Global South or postcolonial environments (Dar,[4] 2021; Avanish Kumar and Naveenkumar, [1]2025). Such gaps might be filled by providing a deeper insight into the ways of sustainable harmony of indigenous pragmatism and enriching peace education.

THE PEACE VALUES EMBEDDED IN THE ARTHASHASTRA

The *Arthashastra* incorporates some of the peace values that reveal that Kautilya was a pragmatic but principled ruler with the goal of stability, prosperity, and moral order of the society in the forefront, rather than unwarranted warfare. These are values of strategic calculation and *dharma*, which place peace (*shanti*) as a central ingredient of the long-term success of the state.

The definition and prioritisation of peace in the *Arthashastra* depict peace as a lack of disturbance (to industry and enjoyment of results), and as the prerequisite of economic activity, accumulation of wealth, and security. According to Kautilya, productive labour (industry) that is brought about by peace brings prosperity through wealth, whereas the population and prosperity are destroyed by war agitations. He clearly prefers peace to war in most cases, claiming that when it is possible, progress should be based on peace since war has the possibility of exhausting resources and making the state poor (Rangarajan, [21]1992; Boesche, [2]2002). The text stresses that the ultimate goal of the king is *yogakshema* - the security and well-being of the subjects, which is more likely to be attained under

peace, where the economic activities are not distracted by conflicts. Peace is not the idea of pacifism but a calculated value: the presence of equal or even more powerful rivals means peace (sandhi) is more or less beneficial with minimal losses, and the presence of weaker rivals means that war is more beneficial than losses (Gautam, [7]2016). This realist priority considers peace to be much more strategic in sustaining artha (prosperity/power) and not perennial warfare, which destroys the basis of the state.

Diplomatic strategies create an essential conflict avoidance mechanism, where such ideas as making peace with (sandhi) via negotiations, alliances, and negotiating policies are used. Kautilya describes the sadgunya (six-fold policy): sandhi (peace/treaty), vighraha (war), asana (neutrality), yana (marching/preparation), samsraya (seeking alliance/protection), as well as dvaidhibhava (dual policy, a policy of peace with one, hostility with another). Sandhi is given priority in case the king is weaker or time is required to regroup, gather strength or alliances (Rangarajan, [21]1992; McClish, [16] 2019). Treaties are practical devices, usually conditional, to prevent war and pursue interests - to buy time to consolidate economies, or to indirectly weaken enemies.[22] Four means (upayas): sama/conciliation, dana/inducement, bheda/division, and danda/force, are the methods of diplomacy by which the opposition is pacified, first by non-violent means. According to this structure, negotiation and alliances are viewed as active instruments of shanti, which allows the state to prevent the emergence of expensive wars and create a balance in the system of the mandala (circle of states) (Olivelle, [18]2013).

Moral administration and well-being highlight the responsibilities of the king in ensuring social harmony, fairness and dharma to bring in inner peace. Happiness and welfare of the subjects are the main concern of the king because it is in the happiness of his subjects that the king will be happy; in their welfare that the king will be contented (Kautilya, trans. [14]1956/1915). Ethical rule would entail equitable governance, safeguard against internal/external dangers, and crisis, like famine, epidemic, or war, mitigation, namely, state-building (irrigation, forts), tax breaks, and relief (distribution), and fair law enforcement (Olivelle, [18]2013; Wikipedia contributors, [23] 2025). Dharma restrains force: the ruler is righteous, does no harm (ahimsa in his duty), he exercises mercy, speaks truth, and feels restraint, so that social order and loyalty are achieved (Gautam, [7]2016). In enriching people, it is clear that the governance avoids exploitation, upholds law/order, and this enhances internal shanti that avoids unrest, which may destabilise the state. It is a humaniocentric type of ethic that regards welfare as co-dependent on prosperity and security, in which unfair governance fuels revolt and undermines the artha.

The concept of cultural contextualization is based on local community ethos and past experiences as opposed to the Western concept that is usually based on individual rights, liberal peace, or balance-of-power realism. In the Arthashastra, shanti is entrenched in Vedic traditions of rita, dharma, and lokasangraha (universal welfare), which underlines collective harmony, preventive diplomacy and restorative justice as opposed to confrontation (Avanish Kumar and Naveenkumar, [1]2025). Culturally informed activities such as community talk, ethical leadership, and pragmatic restraint bring peace, which is contrary to Western perspectives (e.g., Hobbesian anarchy or Kantian perpetual peace via institutions), focusing on individual autonomy or ideological universalism (Boesche, [2] 2002; Dar, [4] 2021). The strategy of peace proposed by Kautilya is contextual, i.e., peace as a culturally adaptive strategy in the context of the mandala, which offers indigenous alternatives to Eurocentric models, enhancing peace by the common dharma, as opposed to the norms forced by it.

These principles of peace show the subtle realism of the Arthashastra: peace as a strategic necessity, as an ethically-based value, and as a culturally-based value, which promotes long-term stability and prosperity.

ARTHASHASTRA AS A PEDAGOGICAL SOURCE

The Arthashastra, as a teaching tool, provides an invaluable non-Western model of peace teaching, which is built on its practical realism to build the necessary skills and values in the modern classroom. Through introducing students to the Kautilyan strategic but welfare-oriented statecraft, teachers can nurture sensitive perceptions of war, morals and long-term peace.

The theoretical premise of peace education is based on the pragmatic realism contained in the text, balancing power seeking and restraint and aversion to violence. The stress put on sadgunya (six measures of foreign policy) by Kautilya, in which sandhi (peace) is given more importance when it leads to advantage, is an instruction in critical thinking: it required students to judge situations in relation to relative strength, cost, and long-term benefits, instead of an absolute of certainty based on ideology (Rangarajan,[21] 1992; Gautam, [7]2016). This realism promotes ethical decision-making: the king owes to the society yogakshema (welfare and protection) that combines the dharma (righteousness) and artha (prosperity), which makes the king ponder on the role of power in benefiting the society without turning into tyranny (Boesche, [2]2002). This trains non-violence in classrooms, not the immediate goal of pacifism, but a strategic non-violence of diplomacy, alliances, preventive measures, which is consistent with the objectives of contemporary peace education of transforming conflicts and human security (Harris and Morrison, [8]2012). In contrast to more idealistic methods, the grounded realism of the Arthashastra makes the student ready to face the ambiguities of the world and enhances the analytical skills of the learner in evaluating the possibility of peace and pragmatically creating it.

The process of curriculum integration is the need to integrate excerpts in subjects like international relations (IR), ethics, and conflict resolution. Books 6 (the mandala theory) and 7 (sadgunya) might be used in IR courses to show the ancient multipolar diplomacy in contrast to modern theories such as realism or liberal theory (Dar, [4]2021). Passages about the welfare responsibilities of the king (e.g. crisis relief during famine or war) could be analysed and discussed in ethics modules to involve the ethics of justice, compassion, and governance (Olivelle, [18]2013). To solve conflict, passages on upayas (four means: conciliation, inducement, division, force) show the escalation of conflict, which is not violent, but through role-playing diplomatic situations, students can role-play negotiations within a mandala system or treaty-making to prevent war. The example of welfare policies, like tax relief or government works, is analysed as an example of preventative peacebuilding about social stability, which can be applied to modern problems, including inequality or a scarcity of resources (Gautam, [7]2016). Such integrations can be related to the focus of the National Education Policy 2020 of India on Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), which should encourage decolonised curricula with blends of ancient wisdom and worldviews (different sources on IKS, e.g., discussions on NEP).

Pedagogical aids involve case-based learning, in which students break down historical applications (e.g. Mauryan diplomacy) or hypothetical crises, and use the Kautilyan principles to suggest solutions. The textual analysis promotes the close reading of important verses on peace preference, which would promote interpretive skills and argument on the dichotomy between realism and idealism. Comparative analysis is especially useful: a comparison of the Arthashastra and Machiavelli's *The Prince* illustrates the divergence between them: whereas the former was more concerned with the concept of dharma and upholding welfare, the latter depends on fear and brutality (comparisons in literature, such as Liebig or Dar). These differences demonstrate the moderate pragmatism of the Arthashastra, where peace is a source of prosperity to enrich the IR pedagogy by confronting Eurocentric hegemony (World History Encyclopedia, [24]2020).

Students' benefits are multidimensional. Reading the text instils such virtues as duty (raja-dharma), justice (fair administration), and compassion (subject welfare), which are based on practical statecraft and not abstract morality. This will create global citizenship by introducing learners to indigenous views of security and harmony, overcoming Western prejudices and encouraging cultural pluralism (Avanish Kumar & Naveenkumar, [1]2025). Vedic linkages (e.g., rita and lokasangraha) help students

to develop cultural awareness, which promotes understanding of different worldviews and makes students think holistically. In the end, the Arthashastra produces knowledgeable, moral leaders who can be both strategic in non-violence and critical of people in their governance, fundamental in the quest to resolve modern peace issues with the growing interconnectedness of the world.

CASE STUDIES AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

The principles of the Arthashastra have been used both historically and in current times, showing that it remains relevant in terms of ensuring peace by means of practical statecraft, diplomacy, and well-being. This part of the paper will discuss historical applications of this theory in ancient Indian empires, modern applications in diplomacy and peacebuilding, hypothetical applications in educational settings, and international analogues of other realist traditions.

The examples of the Arthashastra principles in ancient Indian empires, especially the Mauryan Empire, can be used to explain how they can be used to maintain the peace. During the reign of Chandragupta Maurya (r. ca. 321-297 BCE) under the advice of Kautilya, the empire grew by a combination of conquests and alliances, as well as centralisation of its administration based on the text. To consolidate power, Chandragupta used realistic diplomacy, such as treaties and espionage, while focusing on domestic security and prosperity (Khan Academy, n.d.; DTIC, [5]2016). Depiction of *yogakshema* (welfare and protection) in the Arthashastra was used in governance with effective collection of taxes, management of trade and a spy system that ensured security without the need to go to war every minute. This policy promoted a relative peace in a large area by averting internal agitations and foreign assaults by force and compromise (Rangarajan, [21]1992).

Ashoka A grandson of Chandragupta, first expanded aggressively, but, following the catastrophic Kalinga War, abandoned all warfare in favour of *dhammavijaya* (conquest by dharma/ethical governance). Though the change made by Ashoka included Buddhist values, the elements that corresponded to the concept of Arthashastra remained: he had a standing army to defend and keep order, he supported the welfare by creating infrastructure (irrigation, roads, hospitals), he reduced taxes during crisis periods, and he administered justice to secure inner peace (Khan Academy, n.d.; Next IAS, [15]2025). The non-violence, tolerance, and social welfare that Ashoka spread in his edicts followed Kautilya in favouring peace where beneficial and the king in the happiness of his subjects, and assisted in maintaining peace throughout the empire after Kalinga (Olivelle, [18] 2013). These applications demonstrate that the text realism enabled the stability of the empire with ethical and preventive measures all over the empire.

Ancient wisdom is reflected in modern adaptations of ancient Indian wisdom, such as the Arthashastra, that still influences contemporary peacebuilding in the context of diplomacy and community programs. In initiatives and alliances, such as the mandala theory (circle of states), *sadgunya* (six measures of foreign policy), in Foreign Policy: Neighbourhood First, India practices Kautilyan pragmatism, with treaties and partnerships as a means to balance regional powers (e.g. countering China) as opposed to confrontation (Polsci Institute, [19 & 20]2025; VIF India, 2025). The *upayas* (*sama*/ conciliation, *dana*/ inducement, *bheda*/ division, *danda*/ force) are seen in negotiations between nations by diplomats and relief, facilitating the creation of goodwill and stability (Polsci Institute, [19 & 20] 2025). Kautilyan welfare issue influences the community intervention programmes in the purpose of peacebuilding, focusing on community-based conflict management, social peace, and preventive diplomacy according to SDG 16 (Avanish Kumar & Naveenkumar, [1]2025). These are integrated with initiatives with a basis in IKS to become non-violent actors and ethical leaders in local politics and the international arena (Kamal, [11]2022).

The situation of hypothetical learning is the one that shows the practical application of the Arthashastra to the classroom to inculcate the values of peace. A workshop on “Strategic peace: Lessons of Kautilya” might include 4–6 sessions in a school or university, students analyse passages

on sadgunya, and simulate the workings of a hypothetical mandala system (e.g. india being vijigishu negotiating with neighbours), and discuss the preferences between peace and war. The lesson plans may contain case studies of the Mauryan diplomacy, group discussions on ethical governance in times of crisis and reflective essays on how to use yogakshema in the present-day conflicts. Comparative modules in IR or peace studies courses draw parallels between Kautilyan realism and modern theories based on textual analysis to determine the approach of non-violent strategies (Harris and Morrison,[8] 2012; Gautam, [7]2016). These designs promote critical thinking on the pragmatics of peace, which is adaptable to secondary education or higher education, as emphasised within the Indian Knowledge system of NEP 2020.

The parallels of the global context draw out the position of the Arthashastra within realist traditions. Similar to Machiavelli's *The Prince*, it puts security and practical power of a state first, but balances the ideologies of realism and dharma and welfare, unlike Machiavelli, who is amoral (Boesche, [2]2002). The *Art of War* by Sun Tzu has common points as far as strategy, trickery, and victory without a fight are concerned, yet Kautilya elaborates statecraft in terms of government and diplomacy (DTIC, [5]2016). Such similarities highlight the universal realist thoughts about anarchy and power, whereas the ethical layer of the Arthashastra makes its own contributions to the peace-oriented realism.

On the whole, these instances justify how the text is versatile in fostering peace through the use of calculated restraint, welfare, and diplomacy at different times and circumstances.

CHALLENGES AND CRITICISMS

Regardless of the insight that the Arthashastra provides on the issue of peace pedagogy, due to its practical view of diplomacy, welfare and good governance, its inclusion in modern education has not come without several challenges and criticism. These are due to interpretive biases, cultural incompatibilities and ethical issues proceeding out of the text on the realist framework.

The main problem with possible misinterpretations of the text is that power, espionage, deception and unconventional warfare (e.g. tactic of spies, division and force) are the focus of the text to such a degree that it may be unrelated to peace areas in the text. Kautilya, critics have frequently discussed the Arthashastra as a sort of manual of nasty realpolitik which justifies amoral acts in the best interests of the state (Boesche,[2] 2002; Weber, as cited in Boesche, [2]2002). It has been described by Max Weber as a form of truly radical Machiavellianism when compared to the softer form of Machiavelli, as he emphasised such aspects as assassination, torture and manipulation which seem extreme (Boesche, [2]2002). This impression, which has been supported both in the popular discourse and certain academic comparisons, threatens to dilute the text to a defense of authoritarianism or immoral acts of gaining power, overshadowing Kautilya's preference of sandhi (peace) where it benefits, his conditioning of yogakshema (subject welfare) and the restraining influence of dharma (Gautam, [7]2016; Dar, [4]2021). In a school where certain passages on military teachings are read, and others are not, they can support the stereotype of ancient Indian thought, cynical in nature, overcoming a desire to explore its non-violent strategic approach to war and its humanistic approach to government.

The barriers to cultural and contextual changes make the adaptation of old concepts to various educational settings of the modern world more complex, which poses a threat of anachronism. Arthashastra is a symptom of a hierarchical, monarchical society based on the Vedic traditions, varna (social classes), and the Brahmanical ideology, which might not harmonise with the modern democratic, egalitarian, or multicultural values (McClish, [16]2019; Olivelle,[18] 2013). The translation of theories such as the mandala theory or sadgunya into the contemporary globalised, multilateral world, typified by international institutions, human rights charters, and democratic accountability, will result in obsolete or inappropriate interpretations. To give an example, the surveillance and espionage tips in the text may be incompatible with the privacy concerns in liberal

democracies, and its patriarchal assumptions restrict its application in gender-inclusive curricula (Polisci Institute, [19&20]2025). Overemphasis on indigenous wisdom is associated with cultural essentialism or tokenism in non-Indian, postcolonial settings, in particular, when attempting to adapt to changing realities. The contextualization of indigenous wisdom as a source of wisdom must be observed with caution so as not to impose ancient hierarchies on new realities of pluralism (various IKS discussions; Kamal,[11] 2022). The teachers should also overcome these obstacles to avoid using them in a misuse that will distort the meaning of the text or disenfranchise the varied learners.

The ethical issue revolves around the realism-idealism basis of the text in pedagogy, specifically responding to criticism that it is Machiavellian in nature. The pragmatism of Kautilya, that the end justifies the means in the survival of the state, presents some problems: how to educate strategic calculation without in any way supporting the doctrine of moral relativism or authoritarianism? Critics believe that the splitting of public morality and individual ethics (which occurs in certain realist interpretations) renders null such universal principles as non-violence or justice, which may encourage the use of deception in leadership training (ForumIAS, n.d.; Avanish Kumar and Naveenkumar,[1] 2025). In peace education that is focused on empathy, dialogue and human rights, the addition of a text that condones harsh actions (e.g. in times of crisis) needs to be framed with caution to emphasise the moral limits, such as dharma and welfare priorities (Harris and Morrison, [8]2012). In its absence, pedagogy will be prone to supporting cynicism against compassion. These criticisms can be countered by comparing it to other approaches to non-violence (e.g. Gandhian) to demonstrate the moderate realism of the text, pragmatic but constrained by righteousness to encourage critical ethical thinking, not uncritical following.

These issues highlight the importance of sensitive, contextual pedagogy that will take into consideration the complexities of the Arthashastra but reduce the dangers by means of moderate interpretation and intercultural conversation.

CONCLUSION

The paper has examined the Arthashastra as a pedagogical tool in developing a peace ethos using its ancient but amazingly topical model of statecraft. Quite on the contrary, the text is not a manual of power and conquest, but represents a highly advanced example of strategic realism and moral imperatives, which can teach a lot to peace education.

The most important discoveries restate the idea that peace (shanti) is encouraged by the Arthashastra as a strategic need and a moral value. When possible, Kautilya is always after peace, and a lengthy war is considered to be harmful to prosperity (artha) and societal welfare (yogakshema) as well as the stability of the state (Boesche, 2002). Diplomacy and treaty-making (sandhi) is put forward by the six measures of foreign policy (sadgunya) and will be backed by graduated means (upayas) that prefer conciliation to force and inducement to conciliation. On the inside, the supreme responsibility of the king is to promote justice, compassion, and well-being, and in order to guarantee the harmony in governance, crisis management, and the happiness of the subjects (Olivelle, 2013; Gautam, 2016). These aspects are based on Vedic traditions of dharma, satyam and universal well-being, indicating that the approach to peace has cultural roots which are pragmatic but not ideal and balancing power with moral restraint with the aim of realising sustainable security and prosperity. This subtle realism in which strength, ethical leadership and calculated restraint lead to peace makes the Arthashastra a better alternative to the purely militaristic or amoral models of statecraft in the West and makes the Arthashastra a valuable point of departure.

Educational implications are profound. The inclusion of the Arthashastra in the curriculum of world peace makes the world peace studies more diverse in pedagogy, opposes Eurocentrism in international relations and peace studies, and is consistent with the decolonisation of knowledge production (Dar, 2021; Avanish Kumar and Naveenkumar, 2025). With the help of textual excerpts, role-playing

diplomatic games, case-based analysis, and comparative studies (e.g. Machiavelli or Sun Tzu), educators can develop critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and strategic non-violence in students. This type of integration promotes the values of responsibility, fairness, empathy and world citizenship and increases the cultural insight into native traditions. Suggestions would be to integrate Arthashastra modules into IR, ethics and conflict resolution and peace education classes; to write interdisciplinary lesson plans based on the frameworks of such programs as the NEP 2020 in India or IKS; and to create a simulated mandala diplomacy or welfare policy response-to-crisis workshops. These methods render ancient wisdom down to earth and useful so that learners, especially in the Global South, can utilise their traditions in solving modern issues like geopolitical tensions, inequality and sustainable development.

This should be the basis of future research that focuses on more stringent empirical studies. The effects on the attitude of students towards peace, conflict resolution skills, ethical reasoning, and intercultural competence would be measurable by quantitative and qualitative assessment of classroom interventions based on the Arthashastra-based pedagogy. Longitudinal research could be conducted to measure long-term behavioural results of the learners exposed to such curricula. Cross-cultural convergences and divergences of peace-oriented realism would be clarified by comparative studies with other ancient writings on the topic: Art of War by Sun Tzu, the statecraft of Confucianism, or the Republic by Plato. More textual and historical research can develop the understanding of the peace components in the composite redactions of the Arthashastra, and interdisciplinary research teams may investigate how it can be used in contemporary peacebuilding, in training diplomacy, or in policy-making.

To sum up, the Arthashastra is a classical witness to the fact that there is always a chance to have ethical and people-centred statecraft with peace as the foundation of prosperity. By introducing this ancient Indian knowledge to the modern classroom, teachers are able to raise a generation of students who possess a wide range of practical instruments to create a more tolerant and peaceful world.

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