

State-Centered Care Ethics in Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra*

Reinterpreting Rājadharma as an Ethical
Framework of Governance

By

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1. Introduction

Ethics has traditionally been dominated by theories emphasizing justice, rights, duties, and impartiality. From Aristotle's virtue ethics to Kant's deontological ethics and Rawls's theory of justice, moral philosophy has generally focused on universal principles governing individual conduct and the equitable distribution of rights and obligations. During the late twentieth century, however, this dominant paradigm was challenged by the emergence of **care ethics**, a perspective that emphasized relational responsibility, empathy, responsiveness, and the moral significance of attending to the needs of others. Beginning with Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (1982) and subsequently developed by scholars such as Nel Noddings, Virginia Held, Joan Tronto, Eva Feder Kittay, and Michael Slote, care ethics argued that ethical life cannot be adequately understood solely through abstract principles of justice. Instead, it emphasized that care, dependency, and mutual responsibility are fundamental dimensions of human existence and should occupy a central place in moral and political philosophy.

Although care ethics originated as a critique of moral psychology and later expanded into discussions of education, healthcare, social work, and public policy, its application to political philosophy has remained comparatively limited. Most contemporary formulations continue to locate care primarily within interpersonal relationships, families, educational settings, and local communities. Even when care ethicists address political institutions, the state is generally regarded as a facilitator of caring relationships rather than as the primary bearer of moral responsibility. Consequently, the possibility that classical traditions of political thought may have developed institutional or state-centered conceptions of care has received relatively little scholarly attention.

Within the history of political philosophy, Chanakya (Kauṭilya), the celebrated author of the *Arthaśāstra*, occupies a distinctive position. Composed between approximately the fourth and third centuries BCE, the *Arthaśāstra* is widely recognized as one of the world's earliest and most systematic treatises on governance, public administration, political economy, diplomacy, law, military strategy, and statecraft. It presents an elaborate theory of kingship supported by detailed prescriptions concerning taxation, justice, intelligence, foreign relations, agriculture, commerce, disaster management, and administrative organization. Because of its pragmatic and often uncompromising discussion of political power, the text has frequently been compared with Machiavelli's *The Prince*, leading many modern scholars to characterize Chanakya primarily as a political realist or an advocate of *raison d'état*. While such interpretations acknowledge the *Arthaśāstra*'s remarkable administrative sophistication, they often overlook its equally consistent insistence that political authority derives its legitimacy from safeguarding the welfare and prosperity of the people.

A closer examination of the *Arthaśāstra* reveals that governance is not conceived merely as an exercise in acquiring and preserving power. Rather, the ruler is entrusted with an extensive set of moral responsibilities that include protecting citizens from internal and external threats, ensuring economic prosperity, administering justice impartially, preventing exploitation, responding to famines and natural disasters, regulating markets, constructing public infrastructure, and promoting conditions conducive to collective flourishing. These responsibilities are not presented as optional acts of benevolence but as essential obligations of kingship. The famous maxim, *prajāśukhe sukhaṃ rājñāḥ prajānāṃ ca hite hitam* ("The happiness of the king lies in the happiness of his subjects, and his welfare lies in their welfare"), encapsulates a political philosophy in which the

interests of the ruler are inseparable from those of the governed. Such passages suggest an ethical orientation centered not merely on authority or justice but on sustained responsibility for the well-being of society.

Despite the extensive scholarship devoted to the *Arthaśāstra*, relatively little attention has been paid to its implications for care ethics. Existing studies have examined the text from perspectives including political realism, administrative science, economics, diplomacy, legal theory, strategic studies, and public management. While these approaches illuminate important dimensions of Chanakya's thought, they seldom explore whether the *Arthaśāstra* embodies an indigenous conception of care as a foundational principle of governance. Consequently, a significant gap exists in the literature concerning the ethical architecture underlying Chanakya's theory of the state.

This book argues that the *Arthaśāstra* articulates a distinctive model of **State-Centered Care Ethics**, in which care is institutionalized through the duties of governance rather than confined to interpersonal relationships. Unlike contemporary care ethics, which generally emphasizes personal relationships, dependency, and emotional responsiveness, Chanakya locates care within the ethical obligations of public institutions. In his political philosophy, the state assumes responsibility for the protection, welfare, security, prosperity, and flourishing of the people through an organized framework of administration, justice, economic regulation, and public policy. Care, therefore, is neither a private virtue nor merely an expression of compassion; it constitutes an essential principle of **Rājadharmā**—the ethical duties inherent in political authority.

This interpretation requires an important conceptual distinction between **Dharma** and **Rājadharmā**. In the

Vedic intellectual tradition, *Dharma* denotes the universal moral order governing individual, social, and cosmic life. *Rājadharmā*, by contrast, refers to the specific ethical obligations attached to governance and political leadership. The ethic of care articulated in the *Arthaśāstra* belongs primarily to this domain of *Rājadharmā*. It is through the discharge of these political responsibilities that the ruler participates in the broader realization of *Dharma*. Accordingly, this study does not claim that Chanakya anticipated modern care ethics in its entirety. Rather, it contends that he developed an original and institutionally grounded conception of care directed toward the welfare of the polity as a whole.

The objectives of this study are fourfold. First, it examines whether the *Arthaśāstra* contains ethical principles that may legitimately be interpreted within the conceptual framework of care ethics. Second, it investigates how Chanakya's conception of care differs from the relational models proposed by contemporary care ethicists. Third, it demonstrates that the ethical foundation of Chanakya's political philosophy is best understood through the concept of *Rājadharmā*, which institutionalizes care as a duty of governance. Finally, it proposes the theoretical model of **State-Centered Care Ethics** as a new contribution to comparative political philosophy and global ethics.

Methodologically, this study employs qualitative textual analysis of the *Arthaśāstra* as its primary source, supported by comparative philosophical analysis of contemporary literature on care ethics. Relevant passages concerning kingship, administration, justice, public welfare, economic policy, disaster relief, and social protection are examined to identify recurring normative principles. These principles are then compared with the central concepts of modern care ethics in order to identify both convergences and fundamental differences. Rather

than imposing a contemporary framework upon an ancient text, the analysis seeks to reconstruct Chanakya's own ethical vision and to evaluate its significance within present-day discussions of political ethics.

The book proceeds as follows. The next section reviews the principal developments in modern care ethics alongside major interpretations of the *Arthaśāstra*, thereby identifying the existing research gap. The subsequent section establishes the theoretical framework by examining the relationship between care ethics, political ethics, *Dharma*, and *Rājadharmā*. The paper then undertakes a detailed analysis of the *Arthaśāstra* to demonstrate how Chanakya institutionalizes care through governance, public administration, justice, economic policy, and social welfare. This is followed by a comparative discussion of modern care ethics and the proposed concept of State-Centered Care Ethics. Finally, the paper considers the contemporary relevance of Chanakya's political philosophy for ethical governance and concludes by arguing that the *Arthaśāstra* offers a distinctive and previously underappreciated contribution to the global discourse on care ethics.

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2. Ethical and Intellectual Foundations

2.1. Introduction

The idea of care occupies an important place in contemporary moral and political philosophy. Although ethical thought has traditionally given considerable attention to justice, rights, duties, rules, and individual autonomy, the development of care ethics has drawn attention to another fundamental dimension of moral life: **human relationships, vulnerability, responsibility, interdependence, and responsiveness to the needs of others.**

At the same time, the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya—widely associated with Chanakya—stands as one of the most important works of ancient Indian political thought. Its extensive treatment of kingship, administration, justice, economic regulation, public order, security, diplomacy, agriculture, and social welfare reveals a highly developed conception of governance. The text is often studied primarily in relation to political realism, statecraft, economics, administration, and strategic thought. Yet beneath these practical concerns lies an important ethical question: **What responsibilities does political authority have toward the people it governs?**

This question provides the intellectual meeting point between care ethics and Kauṭilya's political philosophy.

Modern care ethics asks how human beings and institutions should respond to conditions of vulnerability and dependency. The *Arthaśāstra*, from a very different historical and philosophical context, asks how a ruler and the institutions of the state should protect society, maintain order, promote prosperity, and respond to situations that threaten collective well-being.

The present book brings these two traditions into

dialogue. It does not claim that Kauṭilya consciously formulated "care ethics" in the modern philosophical sense. Rather, it proposes that several principles embedded in his conception of **Rājadharmā** can be fruitfully understood through the contemporary conceptual lens of care. This approach makes it possible to examine whether political responsibility can itself constitute a form of institutional care.

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to establish the ethical and intellectual foundations necessary for that inquiry. It first traces the emergence and development of modern care ethics, then examines major approaches within the field. It subsequently turns to scholarship on the *Arthaśāstra*, particularly its treatment of kingship, welfare, administration, and Rājadharmā. Finally, it identifies the conceptual space in which the present study develops its theory of **State-Centered Care Ethics**.

2.2. The Emergence of Care Ethics

Care ethics emerged primarily as a response to perceived limitations in dominant approaches to moral philosophy and moral psychology. Much modern ethical theory had emphasized universal principles, impartiality, individual autonomy, rights, and justice. Care ethicists questioned whether these approaches adequately captured the moral significance of relationships, dependency, emotional responsiveness, and the concrete circumstances in which moral decisions arise.

A major turning point came with Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (1982). In response to Lawrence Kohlberg's influential theory of moral development, Gilligan argued that conventional models of moral reasoning could overlook forms of ethical reasoning grounded in relationships and responsibility. She identified an "ethic of care" that gives particular importance to attentiveness to the needs of others and to the preservation of relationships (Gilligan, 1982).

Gilligan did not simply replace justice with care. Her work opened a broader discussion about whether moral reasoning should be understood exclusively through abstract principles of justice or whether it must also recognize the relational realities of human life. This distinction became foundational for subsequent developments in care ethics.

Nel Noddings developed one of the earliest systematic philosophical accounts of care ethics in *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984). Noddings emphasized the concrete relationship between the "one-caring" and the "cared-for." For her, ethical responsiveness begins with attentiveness and receptivity to another person's needs rather than with the mechanical application of universal rules (Noddings, 1984).

This relational understanding is particularly important for the present study because it introduces a central question: **Can a relationship of responsibility exist not only between individuals but also between institutions and the people whose lives they affect?**

Later developments in care ethics expanded the concept considerably. Virginia Held argued that care should not be confined to private relationships but should also inform political institutions and public life. She challenged the sharp division traditionally made between private morality and public political ethics and argued that care, cooperation, and interdependence are important dimensions of social and political organization (Held, 2006).

Joan Tronto extended this development further by explicitly connecting care with political life. In *Moral Boundaries* (1993), Tronto argued that care should be understood as a social and political practice rather than as an activity confined to the private sphere. She emphasized dimensions such as attentiveness, responsibility,

competence, and responsiveness and later developed the idea of a "caring democracy" in which caring responsibilities become matters of public concern (Tronto, 1993, 2013).

Other scholars, including Eva Feder Kittay, Michael Slote, and Maurice Hamington, further expanded the field by examining dependency, disability, empathy, embodiment, and relational responsibility. Collectively, these developments transformed care ethics from a theory primarily concerned with interpersonal morality into a broader ethical perspective with implications for education, healthcare, social policy, public administration, and political institutions.

This development is particularly relevant to the present study. Once care is understood as a matter of institutional responsibility, it becomes possible to ask whether political institutions themselves can be evaluated according to how effectively they respond to vulnerability, protect human well-being, and create conditions in which people can flourish.

2.3. From Interpersonal Care to Institutional Care

The expansion of care ethics from interpersonal relationships to social and political institutions represents a significant development in contemporary ethical thought.

Interpersonal care generally involves a direct relationship between persons. One individual recognizes the needs of another and responds appropriately. Institutional care operates on a different scale. Governments and public institutions cannot establish personal relationships with every citizen. Instead, they express care through **laws, policies, administrative structures, public services, protection systems, and mechanisms of social support.**

This distinction is crucial for understanding the argument of this book.

If care is defined only as an interpersonal relationship, it becomes difficult to describe taxation, public health, disaster relief, judicial protection, environmental regulation, or economic policy as forms of care. But if care is understood more broadly as an organized social responsibility to recognize and respond to human needs and vulnerability, then institutions can legitimately become subjects of care ethics.

Joan Tronto's political conception of care is particularly significant in this respect. Her work demonstrates that care involves not merely personal affection or compassion but the organization of social responsibilities and the distribution of resources required to meet human needs (Tronto, 1993, 2013).

This broader understanding provides the conceptual bridge to Kauṭilya.

The *Arthaśāstra* does not describe the state using the terminology of modern care ethics. Nevertheless, it assigns the ruler and administrative institutions extensive responsibilities concerning protection, justice, economic stability, disaster management, and public welfare. The question explored in this book is whether these responsibilities can be understood as an ancient form of **institutionalized care**.

2.4. Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*: An Intellectual Foundation of Indian Political Thought

The *Arthaśāstra* occupies a distinctive position in the history of Indian political thought. Its comprehensive treatment of governance encompasses kingship, administration, taxation, agriculture, commerce, law, justice, military organization, diplomacy, intelligence, public order, and economic management.

The text has generated extensive scholarship across several disciplines, including political science, history, economics, public administration, strategic studies, jurisprudence, and international relations. The critical work of R. P. Kangle has been particularly influential in establishing the textual and intellectual importance of the *Arthaśāstra* (Kangle, 1965–1969).

Modern scholarship has approached Kauṭilya from different perspectives. Some scholars have emphasized the realist dimension of his political thought, drawing attention to strategic calculation, intelligence, diplomacy, military power, and the preservation of the state. Roger Boesche, for example, has highlighted the sophisticated realist dimensions of Kauṭilya's approach to political power and statecraft (Boesche, 2003).

Thomas Trautmann has examined the *Arthaśāstra* within the broader context of Indian intellectual history and state formation, drawing attention to its relationship with political institutions and the development of ideas concerning centralized authority and governance (Trautmann, 1971).

L. N. Rangarajan's widely used English translation has made the text accessible to a broad international readership and has highlighted its extensive treatment of taxation, public finance, agriculture, commerce, administration, military organization, and diplomacy (Rangarajan, 1992).

Patrick Olivelle's textual and historical scholarship has further contributed to understanding the *Arthaśāstra* within its broader intellectual and manuscript context. His work has emphasized the complexity of the text and the importance of situating it carefully within the history of Indian political and legal thought (Olivelle, 2013).

Indian scholars, including U. N. Ghoshal and B. K. Sarkar, have also examined the *Arthaśāstra* as a major source for understanding ancient Indian political

institutions, kingship, administration, law, economics, diplomacy, and political philosophy.

Although these approaches differ considerably, they collectively demonstrate that the *Arthaśāstra* cannot be reduced to a simple manual of political strategy. It contains a complex conception of governance in which political authority is connected with administrative responsibility and the welfare of the realm.

2.5. Kingship, Welfare, and the Ethical Purpose of Governance

One of the most significant dimensions of Kauṭilya's political philosophy concerns the relationship between the ruler and the people.

The *Arthaśāstra* famously states:

*prajāśukhe sukhaṃ rājñāḥ prajānāṃ ca hite hitam
nātmapriyaṃ hitaṃ rājñāḥ prajānāṃ tu priyaṃ hitam*

"The happiness of the king lies in the happiness of his subjects, and his welfare lies in their welfare. What is beneficial to himself is not what the king considers beneficial; rather, what is beneficial to his subjects is beneficial to him." (*Arthaśāstra* 1.19.34)

This passage is particularly significant for the argument developed in this book because it establishes an ethical relationship between the well-being of the ruler and that of the governed. The ruler's welfare is not presented as independent of the welfare of the people. Rather, political authority is tied to the interests of those over whom authority is exercised.

The *Arthaśāstra* also describes a state that actively intervenes in matters affecting economic and social well-being. Agriculture, irrigation, markets, taxation, trade, infrastructure, security, and relief during difficult circumstances all fall within the sphere of governmental responsibility (Kangle, 1965; Rangarajan, 1992).

This conception differs significantly from a purely minimalist understanding of government. The state is not simply expected to prevent external aggression and internal disorder. It is also expected to create and maintain conditions that support prosperity and stability.

This feature of Kauṭilya's political thought becomes particularly important when viewed alongside modern theories of care. If care involves recognizing needs, accepting responsibility, and developing institutions capable of responding to vulnerability, then an active state committed to public welfare provides an important historical example of institutional responsibility.

2.6. Rājadharmā and Ethical Political Authority

The concept of **Rājadharmā** provides a broader philosophical context for understanding the ethical responsibilities of kingship in Indian thought. Although the precise formulation of Rājadharmā varies across classical sources, the concept generally concerns the duties and responsibilities of the ruler toward society.

Kingship is therefore not simply a position of privilege. It carries obligations to:

- protect society,
- administer justice,
- maintain order,
- uphold legitimate norms,
- promote prosperity,
- respond to threats and crises.

This conception of political authority is important because it introduces a normative dimension into the exercise of power. The ruler is not merely powerful; the ruler is **responsible for the consequences of that power**.

The relationship between Rājadharmā and care ethics

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can therefore be explored at the level of responsibility. Modern care ethics emphasizes attentiveness and responsiveness to human needs. Rājadharmā emphasizes the ruler's obligation to protect and sustain the social order upon which collective well-being depends.

The two traditions are historically and philosophically distinct, but they share a potentially important structural insight: **authority carries responsibility toward those whose lives are affected by its exercise.**

This does not mean that Rājadharmā and modern care ethics are identical. Nor should ancient Indian political thought be retroactively described as a modern theory of care. Rather, the comparison provides a new interpretive possibility through which the ethical dimensions of political responsibility in the *Arthasāstra* can be examined.

2.7. Welfare as an Ethical Principle

The concept of welfare occupies a central place in the political philosophy of Kauṭilya. The *Arthasāstra* treats economic prosperity and political stability as closely interconnected, while also recognizing the state's responsibility in areas such as agriculture, irrigation, trade, taxation, infrastructure, law, and security.

This broad conception of welfare is significant because it suggests that political governance cannot be evaluated solely by its ability to maintain power. The effectiveness of the state is also connected with the material and social conditions experienced by the population.

Here a connection can be made with contemporary theories of human flourishing. Amartya Sen, for example, argues that development should be understood in terms of the substantive freedoms and capabilities available to people rather than merely in terms of economic growth (Sen, 1999, 2009). Martha Nussbaum similarly emphasizes the conditions required for human beings to develop and exercise essential human capabilities (Nussbaum, 2000,

The present study does not claim that Kauṭilya anticipated the modern capability approach. Rather, the comparison illustrates a broader philosophical question shared across different traditions: **What should count as the success of political governance?**

For Kauṭilya, the answer includes the security, prosperity, and welfare of the people. For contemporary theories of human development, it includes the expansion of human capabilities and opportunities. These perspectives provide useful conceptual resources for understanding the relationship between governance and human flourishing.

2.8. The Intellectual Gap: From Welfare to Care

The scholarship reviewed above reveals a significant conceptual opportunity.

Modern scholarship on care ethics has increasingly moved from interpersonal relationships toward social and political institutions. At the same time, scholarship on the *Arthaśāstra* has extensively examined its theories of statecraft, administration, economics, security, justice, and public welfare.

Yet these two fields have rarely been brought into sustained dialogue.

The welfare orientation of the *Arthaśāstra* is generally discussed in terms such as:

- good governance,
- administrative efficiency,
- political stability,
- economic prosperity,
- state capacity.

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These are important interpretations, but they do not fully address the ethical relationship between the state and the vulnerability of the people.

The concept of care introduces another dimension.

Instead of asking only:

How effectively does the state govern?

care ethics allows us to ask:

How responsibly does the state respond to the needs and vulnerabilities of the people?

This shift is central to the argument of the present book.

2.9. Toward a New Understanding of State Responsibility

The preceding discussion provides the intellectual foundation for a broader conception of political care.

If the state is understood as an institution that possesses extraordinary power over the conditions of human life, then that power necessarily creates corresponding responsibilities. The state has the capacity to protect people from violence, provide public infrastructure, regulate economic activity, respond to disasters, administer justice, and preserve natural resources.

These functions can therefore be examined not merely as administrative tasks but as forms of **institutional responsibility toward human well-being**.

This perspective provides the basis for the concept developed later in this book: **State-Centered Care Ethics**.

State-Centered Care Ethics does not suggest that the state should replace families, communities, or interpersonal relationships. Nor does it imply that every government action is automatically an act of care. Rather, it proposes a criterion for evaluating political authority:

The exercise of state power is ethically justified to the extent that it responsibly protects human vulnerability, promotes collective welfare, maintains justice, and creates conditions for human flourishing.

This formulation also introduces an important qualification. Care must be distinguished from paternalism. A state cannot claim ethical legitimacy simply by asserting that its actions are undertaken "for the people's welfare." Institutional care must be accompanied by accountability, competence, justice, and appropriate limitations on power. This issue becomes particularly important when the realist and coercive dimensions of the *Arthaśāstra* are considered.

2.10. Conclusion

The ethical and intellectual foundations established in this chapter bring together two traditions that have generally developed along separate paths.

Modern care ethics has demonstrated the importance of relationships, vulnerability, dependency, responsibility, attentiveness, and responsiveness. Its later development has expanded these concerns from interpersonal relationships into political and institutional life (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984; Held, 2006; Tronto, 1993, 2013).

The *Arthaśāstra*, meanwhile, presents an extensive theory of governance in which political authority is connected with protection, administration, economic management, justice, stability, and public welfare. Its conception of the ruler's responsibility toward the people, particularly the principle expressed through *prajāśukha*, provides an important foundation for examining governance as an ethical responsibility (Kauṭilya, *Arthaśāstra* 1.19.34).

The intellectual gap lies in the absence of a sustained examination of these two traditions together.

The present book therefore proposes to move beyond

the simple observation that Kauṭilya was concerned with public welfare. It asks a deeper question: **Can the welfare-oriented responsibilities of Rājadharmā be understood as a form of institutional care?**

Answering this question requires both historical sensitivity and theoretical caution. It would be inappropriate to project the terminology of modern care ethics directly onto an ancient text. At the same time, refusing to examine the *Arthaśāstra* through new philosophical frameworks would unnecessarily restrict the possibilities of comparative political thought.

The chapters that follow therefore develop the argument that **Rājadharmā can be fruitfully reinterpreted as an institutional ethic of care**, while recognizing the distinctive historical context, realist orientation, hierarchical political structure, and coercive dimensions of Kauṭilya's political philosophy.

This provides the foundation for the theoretical framework developed in the next chapter and ultimately for the proposed concept of **State-Centered Care Ethics**.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Introduction

Every philosophical inquiry requires a conceptual framework through which its primary sources may be interpreted. Since the present study examines the *Arthaśāstra* through the perspective of care ethics, it is essential to clarify the theoretical assumptions that guide the analysis. This paper does not seek to impose a contemporary ethical theory upon an ancient Indian text. Rather, it employs care ethics as a comparative philosophical lens to examine whether Chanakya developed an indigenous conception of institutional care within his theory of governance. The objective is therefore interpretive rather than assimilative: to reconstruct the ethical architecture of the *Arthaśāstra* on its own terms while situating it within contemporary discussions of political ethics.

The theoretical framework of this study integrates three interconnected traditions of ethical thought. The first is the modern theory of care ethics, which emphasizes relationships, responsibility, and responsiveness to human needs. The second is the classical Vedic conception of **Dharma**, which provides the normative foundation of moral and social order. The third is **Rājadharmā**, the branch of Dharma that specifies the ethical responsibilities of political authority. The interaction of these three traditions provides the conceptual basis for proposing **State-Centered Care Ethics** as a distinctive framework for understanding Chanakya's political philosophy.

3.2. Ethics: Justice and Care

Classical ethical theories have generally been organized around questions of justice, rights, duties, and virtue. Aristotelian ethics emphasizes the cultivation of moral character through virtuous habits, while Kantian ethics grounds morality in universal duties derived from reason.

Utilitarianism evaluates actions according to their consequences for overall happiness, whereas Rawlsian political philosophy seeks fairness through impartial principles of justice. Despite their differences, these traditions share a common characteristic: they tend to formulate morality through abstract and universal principles applicable equally to all rational individuals.

Care ethics emerged partly in response to the limitations of these approaches. Rather than beginning with autonomous individuals and universal rules, care ethics begins with the recognition that human beings are inherently relational, vulnerable, and interdependent. Moral responsibility therefore arises not only from abstract obligations but also from concrete relationships of care, trust, and mutual dependence.

Unlike justice-based ethics, which often emphasizes impartiality and equality, care ethics recognizes that ethical responsibilities may legitimately vary according to context, relationships, and specific needs. Moral agents are expected to respond attentively and compassionately to those entrusted to their care. Consequently, care ethics broadens the scope of ethical inquiry by recognizing empathy, responsiveness, protection, and nurturing as fundamental moral values.

Although justice and care are frequently presented as contrasting ethical paradigms, many contemporary philosophers argue that they are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Just institutions require care, while caring relationships must also respect justice. This complementary understanding is particularly relevant for interpreting the *Arthaśāstra*, where protection, welfare, justice, and political authority operate as interdependent dimensions of governance.

3.3. Care Ethics as Political Ethics

The development of care ethics beyond interpersonal relationships represents one of the most significant

advances in contemporary moral philosophy. Virginia Held and Joan Tronto, among others, have argued that caring responsibilities should not remain confined to families or private life but must also inform political institutions, public administration, and democratic governance.

Held contends that governments possess ethical obligations extending beyond the protection of legal rights. Political institutions should actively cultivate social conditions that enable individuals to flourish, particularly those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged. Similarly, Tronto conceptualizes care as a political practice involving attentiveness, responsibility, competence, responsiveness, and solidarity. From this perspective, public institutions themselves become moral agents capable of either fulfilling or neglecting responsibilities of care.

These developments provide an important point of comparison for the *Arthaśāstra*. Nevertheless, modern political care ethics generally arises within the context of liberal democratic societies and welfare-state institutions. Chanakya's political philosophy emerges from a very different civilizational and historical setting. Accordingly, the objective of this study is not to identify direct parallels but to examine whether the *Arthaśāstra* articulates an alternative model in which care is institutionalized through the ethical obligations of kingship.

3.4. Dharma as the Foundation of Ethical Order

Within the Vedic intellectual tradition, the ethical responsibilities of governance cannot be understood independently of the broader concept of **Dharma**. Dharma is among the most comprehensive concepts in Indian philosophy and cannot be adequately translated by any single English term such as "law," "religion," or "duty." Rather, Dharma denotes the normative principle that sustains moral, social, and cosmic order.

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The Vedic worldview understands the universe as governed by **Rta**, the universal principle of cosmic order, harmony, and regularity. Dharma represents the practical and moral expression of this cosmic order within human life. It regulates individual conduct, family relationships, social institutions, economic activities, legal systems, and political authority. Thus, Dharma functions as the normative foundation upon which all ethical obligations rest.

Unlike many modern ethical theories that distinguish sharply between private morality and public institutions, the Vedic conception of Dharma integrates individual ethics and political ethics within a unified moral order. The responsibilities of rulers, judges, ministers, merchants, householders, and citizens are all understood as different expressions of the same overarching ethical principle.

Accordingly, political authority derives its legitimacy not merely from coercive power or social contract but from its conformity to Dharma. Governance is therefore fundamentally an ethical enterprise rather than simply an administrative or strategic activity.

3.5. Rājadharmā: Ethics of Governance

Although Dharma provides the universal ethical foundation, its practical application varies according to social roles and institutional responsibilities. Among these specialized expressions, **Rājadharmā** occupies a central position within Indian political philosophy.

Rājadharmā refers to the ethical duties and obligations associated with political authority. It defines the moral responsibilities of the ruler toward the state and its citizens. These responsibilities include the protection of life and property, the administration of justice, the maintenance of public order, the promotion of economic prosperity, the prevention of exploitation, and the preservation of social stability. Political power is therefore conceived not as a personal privilege but as a public trust.

The *Arthaśāstra* consistently presents kingship in these terms. The ruler is expected to subordinate personal interests to the welfare of the people, recognizing that the prosperity of the kingdom ultimately determines the security and legitimacy of the throne. The celebrated declaration that the king's happiness lies in the happiness of his subjects illustrates this ethical orientation. Welfare is not merely a political objective but an obligation arising from the office of kingship itself.

Importantly, Rājadharmā differs from interpersonal ethics. While individuals may express care through family relationships, friendship, or voluntary acts of compassion, the ruler expresses care through institutions, policies, laws, public administration, and social protection. Care thus becomes institutionalized within the structures of governance.

3.6. Institutional Care as an Ethical Principle

The central premise of this study is that the *Arthaśāstra* conceptualizes care primarily as an institutional rather than interpersonal responsibility. Chanakya repeatedly assigns the state responsibility for maintaining internal security, defending the kingdom from external threats, regulating economic activity, constructing irrigation systems, responding to natural disasters, protecting vulnerable populations, administering justice, preventing corruption, and promoting public prosperity. These functions collectively demonstrate that governance is conceived as an organized system of care directed toward the common good.

Institutional care differs significantly from paternalism. Paternalism generally refers to governmental intervention that restricts individual autonomy for an individual's perceived benefit. Institutional care, as understood in this study, does not derive its legitimacy from overriding personal choice but from fulfilling the state's ethical obligations to protect conditions necessary for collective

flourishing. Its emphasis is therefore not on control but on responsibility.

Similarly, institutional care extends beyond the modern concept of the welfare state. Welfare states primarily provide social security, healthcare, education, and economic assistance. Chanakya's conception encompasses these concerns but also integrates justice, security, diplomacy, environmental stewardship, economic regulation, disaster management, and administrative accountability within a single ethical framework. Care is therefore comprehensive rather than sector-specific.

3.7. Conceptualizing State-Centered Care Ethics

Based upon the foregoing discussion, this paper proposes **State-Centered Care Ethics** as a new theoretical framework for interpreting the *Arthaśāstra*. State-Centered Care Ethics may be defined as:

A normative framework of political ethics in which the state, acting through the ruler and public institutions, assumes the moral responsibility to protect, nurture, and promote the flourishing of all members of society through justice, security, economic well-being, compassionate administration, and sustainable governance.

This framework rests upon six interrelated principles:

- **Protective Responsibility** — safeguarding citizens from internal and external threats.
- **Justice as Care** — administering impartial justice while protecting the vulnerable from exploitation.
- **Economic Care** — promoting prosperity through agriculture, commerce, infrastructure, and equitable taxation.
- **Administrative Responsibility** — ensuring ethical governance through competent, accountable, and

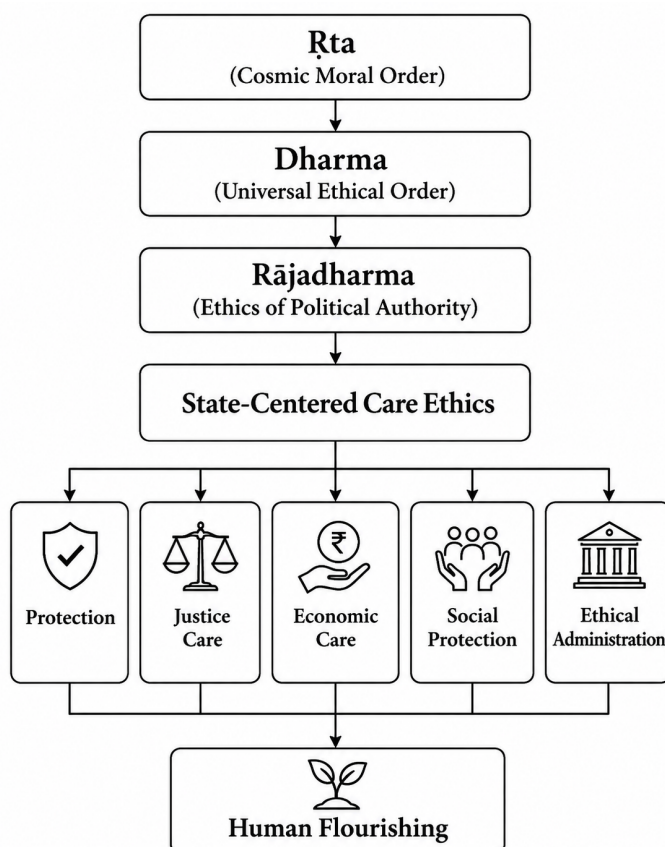
corruption-free public administration.

- **Social Protection** — providing assistance during famine, epidemics, natural disasters, and other public emergencies.
- **Human Flourishing** — creating conditions in which individuals and society may develop peacefully, securely, and prosperously.

Collectively, these principles demonstrate that care is not an isolated virtue but an organizing principle of governance.

3.8. Conceptual Model

The theoretical relationships developed in this study may be represented as follows:



This model illustrates that care is not independent of Dharma but represents one of the principal ethical expressions of **Rājadharmā**. The state becomes the institutional mechanism through which political authority fulfills its moral obligation to protect and promote the well-being of society.

3.9. Summary

The theoretical framework developed in this chapter establishes the analytical foundation for the remainder of the paper. By integrating modern care ethics with the Vedic concepts of Dharma and Rājadharmā, it provides a conceptual lens through which the *Arthaśāstra* may be interpreted without reducing it either to modern welfare theory or to political realism. The following chapters apply this framework to demonstrate that Chanakya consistently institutionalizes care through governance, thereby articulating a distinctive model of **State-Centered Care Ethics** whose relevance extends beyond ancient Indian political thought to contemporary debates concerning ethical governance and public responsibility.

4. Institutionalizing Care through Rājadharmā

4.1. Introduction

The central thesis of this paper is that Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra* articulates a distinctive form of care ethics by locating care within the institutional responsibilities of governance. This interpretation rests upon the concept of **Rājadharmā**, which defines the ethical obligations of political authority. Whereas contemporary care ethics has generally focused on interpersonal relationships and the moral responsibilities arising from dependency and proximity, Chanakya extends the idea of care to the organization and functioning of the state itself. The ruler's responsibility is not merely to govern efficiently but to establish and maintain political institutions that protect, nurture, and promote the flourishing of society.

This chapter argues that **Rājadharmā serves as the normative mechanism through which care is institutionalized**. Care is not presented as an optional expression of personal compassion, nor is it dependent upon the emotional disposition of the ruler. Instead, it becomes an ethical obligation inseparable from political office. Through administration, justice, economic regulation, public security, and social welfare, the state assumes responsibility for safeguarding the well-being of its citizens. In this sense, the *Arthaśāstra* transforms care from a private virtue into a public institution.

4.2. The Concept of Rājadharmā

The Sanskrit term **Rājadharmā** combines two concepts: *rājā* (king or ruler) and *dharma* (ethical duty, moral order, or righteous conduct). Literally, it denotes "the ethical duties of the ruler." However, within classical Indian political philosophy, its meaning extends beyond personal morality. Rājadharmā defines the normative

principles governing the exercise of political authority and establishes the ethical standards by which rulers are judged.

Unlike modern political theories that frequently separate ethics from governance, the Vedic tradition regards political authority as intrinsically moral. The legitimacy of a ruler does not arise merely from military strength, hereditary succession, or political consent. Rather, it depends upon the ruler's ability to preserve justice, protect society, promote prosperity, and uphold the moral order. Political power therefore carries corresponding ethical obligations.

The *Arthaśāstra* reflects this understanding throughout its treatment of kingship. Although Chanakya adopts a practical and realistic approach to governance, political realism is consistently subordinated to the larger objective of preserving the kingdom and promoting public welfare. Administrative efficiency, economic regulation, diplomacy, and military organization are not ends in themselves but instruments through which the ruler fulfills the ethical obligations of Rājadharmā.

4.3. From Personal Virtue to Institutional Responsibility

One of the defining features of modern care ethics is its emphasis on interpersonal relationships. Gilligan's ethic of care emerged from moral psychology, Noddings grounded care in educational and familial relationships, and subsequent scholars examined care within healthcare, disability studies, and democratic citizenship. Although these contributions significantly expanded ethical theory, care generally remained rooted in direct human relationships characterized by emotional responsiveness and personal engagement.

Chanakya adopts a fundamentally different perspective. The primary moral relationship in the *Arthaśāstra* is not between individuals but between the ruler and the political community. Care is expressed less through emotion than through institutional responsibility. The ethical quality of governance is therefore evaluated according to the effectiveness with which political institutions secure the welfare of society.

This distinction is crucial. The *Arthaśāstra* does not require the ruler to love every subject personally, nor does it expect political decisions to arise from sentiment. Instead, it requires the ruler to establish administrative systems capable of protecting citizens, delivering justice, preventing exploitation, responding to disasters, encouraging economic prosperity, and maintaining public order. Care thus becomes objective, organized, and institutional rather than merely personal.

In this respect, Chanakya shifts ethical attention from individual dispositions to public responsibilities. Institutions become the primary instruments through which care is expressed. The effectiveness of governance therefore becomes the measure of ethical responsibility.

4.4. The King as Trustee of Public Welfare

A recurring principle throughout the *Arthaśāstra* is that the ruler exists for the welfare of the people rather than the people existing for the benefit of the ruler. This ethical orientation finds its most celebrated expression in the following passage:

प्रजासुखे सुखं राज्ञः प्रजानां च हिते हितम् ।

नात्मप्रियं हितं राज्ञः प्रजानां तु प्रियं हितम् ॥

Prajāsukhe sukhaṃ rājñāḥ prajānām ca hite hitam;

Nātmapiyaṃ hitaṃ rājñāḥ prajānāṃ tu priyaṃ hitaṃ.

"The happiness of the king lies in the happiness of his subjects; his welfare lies in their welfare. What is pleasing to the king is not necessarily beneficial; what benefits the subjects is truly beneficial."

This statement establishes a normative principle rather than merely offering political advice. The king's personal interests are subordinated to the welfare of the people. Political authority is therefore fiduciary in nature; the ruler governs as a trustee of public well-being rather than as the owner of the kingdom.

This conception differs fundamentally from autocratic theories that identify the interests of the state with the interests of the sovereign. In the *Arthaśāstra*, the ethical legitimacy of governance depends upon its capacity to advance the welfare of the people. The prosperity of the kingdom is not simply an economic objective but an ethical responsibility.

4.5. Care through Political Institutions

The institutional character of care becomes evident when examining the responsibilities assigned to the state throughout the *Arthaśāstra*. Chanakya repeatedly directs the ruler to establish administrative structures capable of protecting and supporting society in multiple dimensions of life.

The state is responsible for maintaining internal security through effective policing and law enforcement. It must defend the kingdom against external aggression through military preparedness and strategic diplomacy. Judicial institutions are expected to administer justice impartially and protect citizens from exploitation and corruption. Economic departments supervise agriculture,

commerce, taxation, mining, forests, irrigation, and public works to ensure sustained prosperity. During famines, epidemics, floods, or other disasters, the ruler must organize relief measures, provide food, regulate prices, and protect vulnerable populations.

These responsibilities are not isolated administrative functions but interconnected expressions of a unified ethical commitment to public welfare. Governance itself becomes an organized system of care.

4.6. Justice as an Expression of Care

Modern political theory frequently treats justice and care as distinct ethical paradigms. Justice emphasizes equality, rights, and impartiality, whereas care emphasizes responsiveness and relationships. The *Arthaśāstra*, however, integrates these dimensions within Rājadharmā.

Justice is caring because it protects individuals from arbitrary violence, exploitation, and injustice. Courts, legal procedures, evidence, and proportionate punishment are not merely instruments of state authority but mechanisms for safeguarding social well-being. By punishing corruption, fraud, theft, and abuse of power, the state protects those who are most vulnerable to exploitation.

Conversely, care without justice would be unstable and ineffective. Compassion unsupported by legal institutions cannot guarantee security or fairness. Chanakya therefore institutionalizes care through a legal system that preserves both order and human welfare.

4.7. Economic Governance as Care

Economic administration occupies a substantial portion of the *Arthaśāstra*, reflecting Chanakya's

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conviction that prosperity is inseparable from ethical governance. Agriculture, irrigation, commerce, taxation, mining, forests, and trade are discussed not merely as sources of royal revenue but as essential conditions for the well-being of society.

The ruler is expected to encourage agricultural production, construct irrigation systems, regulate markets, prevent monopolistic practices, maintain transportation networks, and collect taxes fairly. During periods of economic distress, the state should provide assistance rather than intensify the burdens upon the population.

From the perspective developed in this study, these policies represent forms of institutional care. Economic governance protects citizens from poverty, scarcity, and instability while creating conditions in which individuals and communities may flourish. Prosperity thus becomes an ethical objective rather than merely a fiscal achievement.

4.8. Security as Care

One of Chanakya's most distinctive contributions is his treatment of security as an ethical responsibility. The *Arthaśāstra* devotes considerable attention to intelligence gathering, military organization, border protection, espionage, and diplomacy. These discussions are often interpreted exclusively through the lens of political realism.

However, within the framework of Rājadharmā, security functions as an indispensable form of care. Citizens cannot pursue education, economic activity, family life, or spiritual development in conditions of violence and insecurity. Protection against external invasion and internal disorder therefore constitutes a prerequisite for human flourishing.

Security, accordingly, is not simply the preservation of state power but the protection of the social conditions necessary for the welfare of the people.

4.9. Administrative Ethics and Accountability

Institutional care also requires ethical administration. Chanakya repeatedly emphasizes the careful selection, supervision, and accountability of ministers and public officials. Corruption, negligence, and abuse of authority undermine the state's ability to fulfill its obligations toward society.

The *Arthaśāstra* therefore prescribes rigorous systems of financial auditing, inspection, intelligence gathering, and administrative oversight. Officials who misuse public resources are subject to investigation and punishment because corruption diverts resources away from public welfare.

Administrative integrity thus becomes an essential component of institutional care. Competent and accountable governance ensures that the state's ethical responsibilities are translated into practical benefits for the population.

4.10. Institutional Care and Human Flourishing

The various dimensions of Rājadharmā discussed above—justice, security, economic prosperity, administrative integrity, and public welfare—are not independent objectives. Together they constitute an integrated ethical framework directed toward **human flourishing**.

Chanakya does not reduce governance to the maintenance of political order, nor does he regard economic prosperity as an end in itself. Rather, stable

institutions create the conditions under which individuals, families, and communities may live securely, prosper economically, and pursue higher social and cultural goals. The state therefore serves not merely as an instrument of coercion but as an ethical institution responsible for sustaining collective well-being.

This conception distinguishes the *Arthaśāstra* from interpretations that portray it solely as a manual of political realism. While Chanakya undoubtedly recognizes the importance of power, strategy, and administrative efficiency, these are ultimately subordinate to the ethical obligations of Rājadharmā. Political authority achieves legitimacy only when exercised in the service of the people.

4.11. Summary

This chapter has argued that **Rājadharmā institutionalizes care by transforming the welfare of the people into an ethical obligation of governance.** Unlike interpersonal models of care ethics, Chanakya locates care within the structures and responsibilities of the state. Justice, security, economic administration, disaster relief, and administrative accountability collectively constitute an integrated system of institutional care. This interpretation provides the conceptual bridge between the *Arthaśāstra* and the proposed theory of **State-Centered Care Ethics**, which will be substantiated in the following chapter through a detailed textual analysis of Chanakya's prescriptions concerning governance and public welfare.

5. State-Centered Care Ethics in the *Arthaśāstra*

5.1. Introduction

The preceding chapters established the theoretical foundation for interpreting the *Arthaśāstra* through the lens of care ethics and argued that **Rājadharmā** provides the ethical basis for institutionalizing care within political governance. Building upon this framework, the present chapter undertakes a close textual analysis of the *Arthaśāstra* to demonstrate that Chanakya systematically conceptualizes the state as an institution of care. Rather than treating care as an interpersonal virtue arising primarily from emotional relationships, the *Arthaśāstra* embeds care within the normative responsibilities of governance. The ruler's legitimacy is measured not merely by the acquisition or preservation of power but by the extent to which political institutions protect, sustain, and promote the well-being of the people.

The *Arthaśāstra* is frequently interpreted as a realist treatise emphasizing political strategy, diplomacy, military organization, and economic management. Such interpretations have undoubtedly highlighted important dimensions of Chanakya's political philosophy. Nevertheless, an exclusive emphasis on realism risks obscuring the ethical architecture that unifies these diverse administrative functions. Throughout the text, discussions of taxation, justice, agriculture, commerce, intelligence, public works, disaster relief, and foreign policy are consistently directed toward a common normative objective—the security, prosperity, and welfare of the kingdom and its people. These administrative prescriptions therefore acquire their full significance only when understood within the broader framework of **Rājadharmā**, where governance is conceived as a moral

responsibility rather than merely an exercise of political power.

The principal argument advanced in this chapter is that Chanakya institutionalizes care by assigning the state comprehensive responsibilities for the protection and flourishing of society. Care is expressed not through isolated acts of charity or personal benevolence but through the creation and maintenance of stable institutions capable of ensuring justice, security, economic prosperity, social protection, and administrative integrity. In this respect, the *Arthaśāstra* presents an ethical model fundamentally different from many contemporary formulations of care ethics. Whereas modern care ethics generally begins with interpersonal relationships and extends outward toward political institutions, Chanakya begins with the ethical obligations of political authority and develops an institutional framework through which care reaches every member of society.

This distinction is of considerable philosophical importance. The concept of care in the *Arthaśāstra* is neither sentimental nor paternalistic. It does not depend upon the ruler's personal affection toward individual subjects, nor does it encourage arbitrary intervention based on emotional preference. Instead, care is embedded within a system of laws, administrative procedures, economic policies, judicial institutions, and public responsibilities that operate independently of the ruler's personal inclinations. The ethical quality of governance is therefore assessed according to the effectiveness with which these institutions protect citizens, promote prosperity, and preserve social stability. Institutional competence itself becomes an expression of ethical responsibility.

The analysis undertaken in this chapter is organized around the principal functions of the state described in the

Arthaśāstra. These functions include the promotion of public welfare (*prajāśukha*), protection (*rakṣaṇa*), administration of justice, economic governance, disaster relief, ethical administration, and environmental stewardship. Although these responsibilities are discussed in different books and chapters of the *Arthaśāstra*, they collectively reveal a coherent ethical vision. Each represents a distinct manifestation of care exercised through the institutions of governance rather than through private relationships alone.

Methodologically, the discussion relies primarily upon close textual analysis of relevant passages from the *Arthaśāstra*. Wherever appropriate, the original Sanskrit text is presented together with transliteration and English translation in order to preserve the conceptual precision of Chanakya's terminology. Particular attention is given to key concepts such as *prajā* (subjects or citizens), *sukha* (well-being or happiness), *hita* (welfare or benefit), *rakṣaṇa* (protection), *yogakṣema* (security and well-being), and *Rājadharmā* (the ethical duties of governance). Rather than examining these concepts in isolation, the analysis seeks to identify the normative principles that connect them into a unified philosophy of governance.

The chapter also adopts a comparative philosophical approach. The objective is not to claim that Chanakya anticipated contemporary care ethics in a historical sense, nor to suggest that the *Arthaśāstra* should be read merely as an ancient version of modern political theory. Instead, the comparison serves as a heuristic device that illuminates the distinctive features of Chanakya's political ethics. While modern care ethicists such as Gilligan, Noddings, Held, and Tronto emphasize relational responsibility, dependency, and responsiveness within interpersonal or democratic contexts, the *Arthaśāstra* locates analogous ethical concerns within the institutional responsibilities of the state. This comparison highlights both important

convergences and significant philosophical differences.

The sections that follow demonstrate that the diverse prescriptions contained in the *Arthaśāstra* are not disconnected administrative regulations but components of a comprehensive ethical system. Public welfare is treated as the supreme objective of political authority; security is understood as a form of protection that enables human flourishing; justice functions as an institutional mechanism for safeguarding the vulnerable; economic administration is directed toward collective prosperity; disaster relief reflects the state's responsibility during periods of crisis; and administrative accountability ensures that public institutions remain faithful to their ethical purpose. Taken together, these responsibilities form an integrated model of governance in which care is institutionalized through **Rājadharmā**.

Accordingly, this chapter argues that the *Arthaśāstra* offers more than a sophisticated science of statecraft. It presents a coherent philosophy of ethical governance in which the state serves as the primary agent of care for society. This institutional conception of care constitutes the foundation of what the present study identifies as **State-Centered Care Ethics**—a distinctive model of political ethics in which the protection, welfare, prosperity, and flourishing of the people are not merely desirable outcomes of effective government but the very criteria by which political authority is ethically justified.

5.2. Welfare of the People (*Prajāsukha*) as the Supreme Political Objective

Among the various principles that define Chanakya's theory of governance, the welfare of the people occupies the highest normative position. Although the *Arthaśāstra* is renowned for its discussions of political strategy, economic administration, diplomacy, intelligence, and

military organization, these elements are not presented as independent objectives of statecraft. Rather, they function as instruments through which the ruler fulfills the fundamental obligation of securing the prosperity and well-being of the people. The ultimate measure of successful governance is therefore not the expansion of royal power but the achievement of *prajāsukha*—the happiness, welfare, and flourishing of the subjects.

The ethical foundation of this principle is expressed in one of the most frequently cited passages attributed to Chanakya:

प्रजासुखे सुखं राज्ञः प्रजानां च हिते हितम् ।
नात्मप्रियं हितं राज्ञः प्रजानां तु प्रियं हितम् ॥

Prajāsukhe sukhaṃ rājñāḥ prajānām ca hite hitam;

Nātmāpriyaṃ hitaṃ rājñāḥ prajānām tu priyaṃ hitam.

"The happiness of the king lies in the happiness of his subjects; his welfare lies in their welfare. What is personally pleasing to the king is not necessarily beneficial; what is pleasing and beneficial to the people is truly beneficial."

This statement represents one of the clearest expressions of the ethical foundation of Chanakya's political philosophy. The ruler's personal interests are subordinated to the collective welfare of society. Political authority is therefore not justified merely by possession of power but by its capacity to serve the well-being of those under its protection. The king does not exist as the beneficiary of the state; rather, the state exists as a mechanism through which the welfare of the people is secured.

From the perspective of **State-Centered Care Ethics**, this principle establishes the foundational relationship between political authority and ethical responsibility. The

ruler is not merely an administrator managing resources or a strategist pursuing political advantage. The ruler assumes a fiduciary responsibility toward the people. Like a trustee, the king holds power on behalf of society and is morally obligated to use that power for the protection and advancement of public welfare.

5.2.1. The Meaning of *Prajā* and the Scope of Political Care

The Sanskrit term **prajā** is central to understanding Chanakya's conception of welfare. While often translated as "subjects," the term carries a deeper meaning. Derived from the root *jan* ("to be born" or "to generate"), *prajā* literally refers to those who are brought forth or those belonging to the social body. In the political context of the *Arthaśāstra*, *prajā* refers to the entire population whose security and prosperity depend upon the effective functioning of the state.

The use of *prajā* indicates that Chanakya does not conceptualize governance as a relationship between a ruler and passive recipients of royal commands. Rather, the ruler and the people are interconnected within a shared political and ethical order. The prosperity of one depends upon the prosperity of the other. The king's own success is inseparable from the condition of society as a whole.

This understanding differs significantly from conceptions of sovereignty in which the ruler's authority is independent of public welfare. For Chanakya, political power without social welfare lacks ethical legitimacy. A prosperous kingdom requires prosperous citizens, and a secure throne requires a stable and satisfied population.

5.2.2. *Sukha* as Collective Flourishing

The term **sukha** also requires careful interpretation. Although commonly translated as "happiness," its meaning extends beyond subjective pleasure or emotional satisfaction. In the context of the *Arthaśāstra*, *sukha* refers to a spiritual condition of collective well-being that includes security, economic stability, social order, and the ability to live a prosperous life.

Thus, *prajāsukha* does not represent a narrow psychological concept of happiness. It includes:

- Freedom from fear and insecurity.
- Protection from exploitation.
- Access to economic opportunities.
- Availability of essential resources.
- Justice and social stability.
- Conditions necessary for individual and collective development.

This broader interpretation aligns closely with the objectives of care ethics, which emphasizes the creation of conditions in which vulnerable and dependent individuals can flourish. However, Chanakya expands this concern from interpersonal relationships to the entire political community. The object of care is not merely an individual in need but the social body as a whole.

5.2.3. Welfare as the Basis of Political Legitimacy

The principle of *prajāsukha* transforms the relationship between power and legitimacy. In many political theories, legitimacy is derived from sovereignty, legal authority, inheritance, or institutional procedures. Chanakya introduces another criterion: the capacity of governance to promote public welfare.

A ruler who fails to protect and support the people fails in the essential duty of kingship. Conversely, a ruler who promotes prosperity, security, and justice fulfills the purpose of political authority. The ethical evaluation of governance therefore depends upon outcomes experienced by society.

This does not mean that Chanakya advocates a purely consequentialist theory in the modern philosophical sense. Welfare is not pursued through arbitrary means. The ruler remains bound by duties of justice, law, administrative discipline, and moral responsibility. Public welfare must be achieved through ethical governance rather than through unrestricted exercise of power.

Thus, Chanakya combines practical realism with normative responsibility. The state must be effective, but effectiveness itself is directed toward an ethical purpose—the welfare of the people.

5.2.4. *Prajāsukha* and Modern Care Ethics

The principle of *prajāsukha* demonstrates significant philosophical convergence with modern care ethics, particularly concerning the importance of responsibility toward the well-being of others. Care ethicists argue that ethical life requires attentiveness to human vulnerability and responsiveness to human needs. Similarly, Chanakya argues that political authority must remain attentive to the conditions affecting the welfare of the population.

However, the location of responsibility differs significantly. Modern care ethics generally begins with interpersonal relationships and subsequently explores their implications for institutions. Chanakya begins with political authority and defines the ethical responsibilities of institutions toward society.

For Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings, care emerges from relationships of connection and dependency. For Chanakya, care emerges from the relationship between governance and the governed. The ruler's responsibility is not based upon personal affection but upon the institutional duty attached to kingship.

Similarly, Joan Tronto's concept of political care emphasizes that public institutions must recognize needs, assume responsibility, provide competent responses, and remain accountable. These principles find a remarkable parallel in Chanakya's understanding of kingship, where the ruler must identify social needs, organize administrative responses, and ensure the effectiveness of public institutions.

Nevertheless, Chanakya's framework remains distinct because care is not merely one value among many; it is integrated into the very definition of legitimate governance.

5.2.5. From *Prajāsukha* to State-Centered Care Ethics

The principle of *prajāsukha* provides the conceptual foundation for the theory of State-Centered Care Ethics proposed in this study. It establishes three essential propositions.

First, the purpose of political authority is the welfare of the people. Power is not an end in itself but a means of fulfilling social responsibility.

Second, welfare requires institutional mechanisms. The ruler cannot achieve *prajāsukha* through personal virtue alone. It requires systems of justice, administration, economic regulation, security, and public welfare.

Third, the success of governance must ultimately be evaluated by its contribution to human flourishing. A state that possesses military strength or economic wealth but neglects the welfare of its people fails to fulfill its ethical purpose.

Therefore, *prajāśukha* represents more than a statement about benevolent kingship. It establishes a comprehensive political ethic in which care becomes the organizing principle of governance. Through this principle, Chanakya transforms the ruler's relationship with society from one of domination into one of responsibility.

5.2.6. Conclusion

The concept of *prajāśukha* provides the foundational principle upon which Chanakya's theory of ethical governance rests. The ruler's happiness, security, and prosperity are inseparable from those of the people because political authority exists fundamentally for the welfare of society. This principle establishes the ethical orientation of the *Arthaśāstra*: governance is justified not merely by the possession of power but by the responsible use of power for collective flourishing.

From the perspective of State-Centered Care Ethics, *prajāśukha* represents the transformation of care from a personal virtue into an institutional obligation. The state becomes ethically responsible for creating conditions of security, justice, prosperity, and well-being. In this respect, Chanakya's political philosophy provides a distinctive contribution to global discussions of care ethics by demonstrating that care can function not only as an interpersonal moral practice but also as a foundational principle of governance.

5.3. Protection (*Rakṣaṇa*) as the First Duty of Care

5.3.1. Introduction

If *prajāsukha* represents the ultimate objective of Chanakya's political philosophy, then **rakṣaṇa** (protection) constitutes the first practical expression through which that objective is achieved. A society cannot experience prosperity, justice, or human flourishing unless individuals are protected from threats to their life, property, dignity, and social stability. Accordingly, the *Arthaśāstra* places protection at the foundation of kingship and presents it as the primary obligation of the ruler.

Within the framework of **State-Centered Care Ethics**, protection represents the most fundamental dimension of institutional care. Modern theories of care emphasize attentiveness to vulnerability and responsiveness to human needs. Chanakya extends this principle to the political sphere by arguing that the state has an ethical responsibility to identify conditions of vulnerability and establish institutions capable of protecting society from harm. Care, therefore, begins not merely with compassion after suffering occurs but with the creation of systems that prevent suffering.

This understanding challenges interpretations that portray the *Arthaśāstra* solely as a text of political realism. Although Chanakya gives considerable importance to military power, intelligence networks, law enforcement, and strategic planning, these instruments are not ends in themselves. Their purpose is the preservation of social security and the protection of the people. Power becomes ethically legitimate only when it serves the protective function of governance.

5.3.2. Protection as the Foundation of Kingship

In classical Indian political thought, the fundamental justification for the existence of the state is the protection of society from disorder and insecurity. The ruler's authority is inseparable from the responsibility to maintain peace and prevent harm. The *Arthaśāstra* reflects this understanding by assigning the king the duty of protecting the people from internal disturbances, external enemies, criminal activities, economic exploitation, and social instability.

The Sanskrit concept **rakṣaṇa** derives from the verbal root *rakṣ*, meaning "to protect," "to preserve," or "to guard." The term implies an active responsibility rather than passive non-interference. The ruler is not merely required to avoid harming citizens; he must actively create conditions in which citizens can live securely and prosperously.

This active dimension is central to understanding Chanakya's ethic of care. In many modern liberal theories, protection is often understood primarily as protection from state interference. Chanakya's approach is different: the state itself is the primary institution responsible for actively organizing protection. Without effective governance, individuals remain vulnerable to stronger forces, whether criminals, corrupt officials, economic exploitation, or foreign aggression.

Thus, protection is not a limitation on state power but the ethical purpose that gives state power its legitimacy.

5.3.3. Protection of Life and Property

One of the primary responsibilities of the ruler in the *Arthaśāstra* is safeguarding the lives and property of citizens. A stable society requires confidence that

individuals may pursue economic activity, family responsibilities, education, and social participation without constant fear of violence or theft.

The protection of property is particularly significant because economic prosperity depends upon security. Merchants must be able to conduct trade, farmers must cultivate land, and householders must preserve the fruits of their labor. When theft, violence, or corruption become widespread, social welfare declines.

From the perspective of State-Centered Care Ethics, protection of property is not merely an economic concern. It represents recognition of human dependency upon stable social conditions. Citizens require institutional protection because individual capacity alone is insufficient to guarantee security. The state therefore assumes responsibility for creating an environment where human potential can develop.

5.3.4. Protection through Law and Justice

Chanakya does not separate protection from justice. A ruler who fails to establish fair legal institutions allows the powerful to exploit the weak. Therefore, law becomes an instrument of care because it prevents vulnerability from becoming a permanent condition.

The *Arthaśāstra* provides extensive discussions of:

- Judicial procedures.
- Evidence and testimony.
- Property disputes.
- Criminal offenses.
- Punishment.
- Administrative accountability.

These provisions demonstrate that justice is not merely

concerned with punishing wrongdoing after it occurs. It serves a protective function by maintaining social trust and preventing exploitation.

This relationship between justice and care is significant because modern ethical discussions sometimes present justice and care as opposing approaches. Chanakya's framework suggests that effective care requires justice. Compassion without legal protection cannot secure social welfare, while justice without concern for human vulnerability becomes merely procedural.

Therefore, justice becomes one of the institutional mechanisms through which the state performs its caring responsibility.

5.3.5. Protection from Internal Threats

A significant portion of the *Arthaśāstra* concerns internal administration and the prevention of threats arising within society. Chanakya discusses the role of officials, intelligence systems, policing, and administrative supervision in maintaining public order.

These mechanisms are often interpreted as evidence of surveillance and political control. While such elements are certainly present, they should also be examined within the ethical context of protection. Chanakya's concern is that disorder, corruption, and criminal activity disproportionately harm ordinary citizens who lack the power to protect themselves.

From the perspective of care ethics, vulnerability creates an obligation for institutions to respond. The state's intelligence and administrative systems are therefore justified not merely as instruments of power but as mechanisms for identifying and preventing conditions that threaten social well-being.

However, this interpretation also requires critical reflection. Because protective institutions possess significant power, Chanakya emphasizes supervision and accountability of officials. The same institutions created to protect society must themselves be controlled to prevent abuse. This reveals an important aspect of institutional care: those who provide care must also be subject to ethical regulation.

5.3.6. Protection from External Threats

External security is another essential dimension of rakṣaṇa. The *Arthaśāstra* devotes considerable attention to military organization, diplomacy, alliances, and strategic relations with neighboring states. These discussions have frequently contributed to Chanakya's reputation as a political realist.

However, from the perspective developed in this study, external security represents another form of care. A state unable to defend itself cannot protect the lives, livelihoods, and cultural institutions of its citizens. Military preparedness is therefore not simply an expression of ambition but a responsibility to preserve the conditions necessary for social flourishing.

Chanakya's approach recognizes that citizens depend upon political institutions for protection from threats beyond individual capacity. The state assumes responsibility for collective security because no individual or private group can adequately provide it.

Thus, defense becomes an ethical obligation rather than merely a strategic necessity.

5.3.7. Protection of Vulnerable Groups

A significant feature of Chanakya's political thought is

the recognition that some members of society require greater protection because of their vulnerability. The *Arthaśāstra* contains provisions concerning:

- Women.
- Children.
- Elderly persons.
- Orphans.
- Economically disadvantaged persons.
- Persons unable to protect their own interests.

The ethical significance of these provisions lies in the recognition that equal treatment does not always mean identical treatment. Individuals differ in their capacity to protect themselves and therefore may require differentiated forms of institutional support.

This principle closely parallels a central insight of care ethics: ethical responsibility arises particularly in situations of dependency and vulnerability. While modern care ethics developed this idea primarily through interpersonal relationships, Chanakya applies it to governance. The state becomes responsible precisely because certain members of society cannot fully secure their own welfare without institutional assistance.

5.3.8. Security (*Yoga-kṣema*) and the Dual Responsibility of the State

A particularly important concept related to protection in Indian political thought is **yoga-kṣema**. Although the term has multiple meanings across Sanskrit literature, it generally conveys the idea of acquisition, preservation, security, and well-being.

In political philosophy, this concept expresses a dual responsibility:

- **Yoga:** securing necessary resources and opportunities.
- **Kṣema:** preserving and protecting what has been acquired.

This distinction is highly relevant to State-Centered Care Ethics. A caring state does not merely prevent harm; it also creates conditions for prosperity. Protection and development are interconnected. Security without prosperity produces stagnation, while prosperity without security remains unstable.

Chanakya's ideal governance therefore combines protective and developmental functions. The state must protect existing welfare while creating opportunities for further flourishing.

5.3.9. Protection as Preventive Care

One of the most important contributions of Chanakya's political philosophy is the recognition that effective care is preventive rather than merely reactive. The ruler should not wait until society experiences crisis; rather, governance must anticipate threats and establish systems to prevent suffering.

This preventive orientation appears throughout the *Arthaśāstra*:

- Maintaining law and order before disorder spreads.
- Regulating economic activity before exploitation occurs.
- Preparing for famine before scarcity becomes catastrophic.
- Monitoring officials before corruption damages administration.
- Maintaining defense before external threats become invasions.

This principle closely corresponds with contemporary approaches to public health, social policy, and disaster management, where prevention is considered a central responsibility of institutions.

Thus, Chanakya's protection ethic represents an advanced conception of governance in which the state actively manages risks affecting collective welfare.

5.3.10. Conclusion

Protection (*rakṣaṇa*) represents the first and most fundamental expression of care within Chanakya's theory of governance. The ruler cannot achieve *prajāśukha* without first ensuring security, justice, and stability. Protection is therefore not merely a function of government but the ethical foundation upon which all other functions depend.

From the perspective of **State-Centered Care Ethics**, Chanakya transforms care into an institutional obligation. The state cares not primarily through personal affection or charitable action but through the establishment of protective systems that safeguard citizens from vulnerability and create conditions for human flourishing.

The significance of Chanakya's approach lies in his recognition that care requires power, organization, and institutional capacity. Compassion without protection remains ineffective, while protection without ethical purpose becomes domination. Through *Rājadharmā*, Chanakya integrates authority with responsibility, demonstrating that legitimate governance is ultimately measured by its ability to protect and promote the welfare of the people.

5.4. Justice as Institutional Care

5.4.1. Introduction

Justice occupies a central position in Chanakya's theory of governance because no society can achieve welfare (*prajāśukha*) or security (*rakṣaṇa*) without a reliable system of law and fair administration. In the *Arthaśāstra*, justice is not treated merely as a mechanism for punishing wrongdoing or maintaining political authority. Rather, it functions as an essential institution through which the state protects individuals, regulates social relationships, prevents exploitation, and preserves the moral and economic stability of society.

From the perspective of **State-Centered Care Ethics**, justice represents one of the most significant expressions of institutional care. Care is often associated with compassion, assistance, and support; however, genuine care also requires protection from harm and the establishment of fair conditions in which individuals can flourish. A society without justice leaves vulnerable persons exposed to stronger actors, allowing wealth, power, and social influence to determine outcomes. Therefore, justice becomes a caring responsibility because it safeguards those who cannot adequately protect their own interests.

Chanakya's integration of justice and care demonstrates that his political philosophy cannot be reduced either to harsh authoritarianism or to administrative pragmatism. The legal system of the *Arthaśāstra* reflects a deeper ethical purpose: the prevention of suffering, the restoration of social balance, and the protection of public welfare.

5.4.2. Justice as the Foundation of Social Order

For Chanakya, the absence of justice creates a

condition of insecurity in which individuals and communities become vulnerable to exploitation. Political authority exists precisely because society requires an institution capable of resolving conflicts, protecting rights, and restraining harmful actions.

The *Arthasāstra* emphasizes that the ruler's primary responsibility is maintaining order through proper administration of law. Without justice, economic activity declines, social trust disappears, and the vulnerable suffer disproportionately. Thus, justice is not separate from welfare; it is one of the conditions that makes welfare possible.

This understanding corresponds with the broader Indian conception of **Dharma**, where justice is not merely a human invention but an expression of moral order. The ruler preserves Dharma by ensuring that individuals receive appropriate protection and that harmful conduct does not disturb social harmony.

In this sense, judicial institutions serve a caring function. They preserve the ethical environment necessary for individuals and communities to pursue their goals securely.

5.4.3. The Concept of *Daṇḍa*: Punishment as Protection

One of the most distinctive features of Chanakya's political philosophy is his discussion of **daṇḍa**, commonly translated as punishment or the power of coercive authority. At first glance, the concept of punishment may appear inconsistent with care ethics, which emphasizes empathy and responsiveness. However, Chanakya understands punishment within a broader framework of social protection.

The purpose of *daṇḍa* is not revenge but the prevention of harm and the preservation of order. When properly administered, punishment protects society by restraining individuals who threaten the security and welfare of others. Without effective enforcement of law, innocent persons become vulnerable to criminals, corrupt officials, and powerful individuals who misuse their influence.

Thus, punishment becomes an instrument of care because it protects the many from the harmful actions of a few.

Chanakya's position resembles the modern idea that justice systems serve both corrective and preventive functions. A legal system that fails to punish wrongdoing effectively does not demonstrate compassion; rather, it abandons victims and leaves society exposed to repeated harm.

5.4.4. Justice and Protection of the Vulnerable

A central principle of care ethics is recognition of vulnerability. Individuals are not equally positioned in society; some possess greater economic, social, or political power than others. Without institutional safeguards, weaker members of society may experience exploitation.

Chanakya's legal framework recognizes this reality. The state is expected to prevent:

- Fraud.
- Theft.
- False testimony.
- Exploitation.
- Abuse of authority.
- Unfair economic practices.

These concerns reveal that justice is directed particularly toward protecting those who lack sufficient power to defend themselves.

From the perspective of State-Centered Care Ethics, the legal system functions as a protective institution. It compensates for inequalities of power by creating mechanisms through which every person can seek remedy and protection.

Justice therefore becomes an organized response to human vulnerability.

5.4.5. Judicial Procedure as an Expression of Care

Care is not achieved merely by having laws; it requires fair procedures through which justice can be administered. The *Arthaśāstra* provides detailed discussions concerning judicial processes, including:

- The role of judges.
- Examination of evidence.
- Witness testimony.
- Legal procedures.
- Investigation.
- Determination of penalties.

These procedural requirements demonstrate that Chanakya recognizes the danger of arbitrary authority. Justice itself must be regulated because an uncontrolled judicial system can become a source of harm.

This principle is highly significant for institutional care. A caring institution must not only possess good intentions; it must operate through reliable procedures that protect individuals from abuse. The *Arthaśāstra* therefore anticipates an important principle of modern governance: ethical institutions require accountability and procedural

5.4.6. Justice, Compassion, and Proportionality

Although Chanakya emphasizes the importance of punishment, he does not advocate unlimited severity. The effectiveness of justice depends upon proportionality, wisdom, and appropriate application.

Excessive punishment can generate fear and resentment, while insufficient punishment can encourage disorder. The ruler must therefore balance firmness with consideration of circumstances.

This balance reflects a central insight of care ethics: ethical decisions require attention to context rather than mechanical application of rules. A just ruler must consider intention, consequences, social circumstances, and the specific nature of harm.

Thus, Chanakya's justice system combines the principles of order and responsiveness. Justice protects society precisely because it is guided by judgment rather than mere force.

5.4.7. Anti-Corruption as Institutional Care

One of the most advanced aspects of Chanakya's administrative thought is his recognition that corruption within government institutions directly harms public welfare. Officials entrusted with public resources possess power over citizens; therefore, misuse of that power represents a violation of the state's caring responsibility.

The *Arthaśāstra* discusses mechanisms for:

- Monitoring officials.
- Auditing financial activities.

- Preventing misuse of state resources.
- Investigating administrative misconduct.

From the perspective of State-Centered Care Ethics, anti-corruption measures are not merely administrative controls. They are ethical safeguards designed to ensure that institutions created for public welfare do not become instruments of exploitation.

A state cannot claim to care for its people while allowing its own officials to harm them. Administrative integrity is therefore an essential component of institutional care.

5.4.8. Justice Beyond Retribution: Restoration of Social Balance

A significant feature of Chanakya's approach is that justice is ultimately concerned with restoring social balance. Crime is not viewed merely as a violation against an individual victim but as an injury affecting the stability of the wider community.

The purpose of law is therefore broader than punishment. It is to restore trust, maintain social cooperation, and preserve the conditions necessary for collective prosperity.

This understanding has similarities with restorative approaches to justice, where the goal is not only to punish offenders but also to repair social relationships and prevent future harm.

Although Chanakya's framework differs from contemporary restorative justice theories, both recognize that justice serves a larger ethical purpose beyond retribution.

5.4.9. Comparison with Modern Care Ethics

Modern care ethics has sometimes been contrasted with justice ethics because care emphasizes relationships while justice emphasizes impartial rules. However, Chanakya's political philosophy demonstrates that justice and care need not be opposing principles.

For Joan Tronto, caring societies require institutions capable of recognizing needs, assuming responsibility, and responding effectively. Chanakya's judicial system performs precisely these institutional functions. It identifies social harms, establishes responsibility, and creates mechanisms for protection.

Similarly, Virginia Held argues that political institutions must incorporate values of care rather than relying exclusively on abstract justice. The *Arthaśāstra* offers a historical example of such integration: justice itself becomes a mechanism of care.

The difference lies in the foundation. Modern care ethics generally begins with relationships and extends toward institutions, whereas Chanakya begins with political responsibility and develops institutions through which care is delivered.

5.4.10 Justice as a Pillar of State-Centered Care Ethics

The analysis of justice in the *Arthaśāstra* demonstrates that institutional care cannot exist without legal order. Protection without justice leaves individuals vulnerable to arbitrary power, while welfare without justice cannot be sustained.

Within the framework of State-Centered Care Ethics, justice performs several caring functions:

1. **Protection** — safeguarding individuals from harm.
2. **Fairness** — ensuring equal access to legal remedies.
3. **Accountability** — restraining misuse of authority.
4. **Stability** — maintaining conditions for social flourishing.
5. **Trust** — preserving confidence in public institutions.

Justice is therefore not opposed to care; it is one of its essential institutional expressions.

5.4.11. Conclusion

Chanakya's conception of justice reveals a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between authority, protection, and welfare. The legal institutions described in the *Arthasāstra* are not merely instruments through which the ruler maintains control; they are mechanisms through which the state fulfills its ethical responsibility toward society.

By integrating punishment with protection, law with welfare, and authority with accountability, Chanakya presents justice as a form of institutional care. The purpose of governance is not simply to enforce obedience but to create a social environment in which individuals can live securely and prosper.

Therefore, within the framework of **State-Centered Care Ethics**, justice represents an indispensable dimension of Rājadharmā. A caring state is not one that merely provides assistance; it is one that establishes fair institutions capable of protecting human dignity, preventing exploitation, and sustaining the conditions necessary for collective flourishing.

5.5. Economic Governance as Care

5.5.1. Introduction

Economic governance occupies a central position in Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra* because the stability and prosperity of the state are inseparably connected with the economic well-being of the people. Although the text is often regarded as an early treatise on political economy and public finance, its economic prescriptions cannot be understood merely as techniques for increasing royal revenue. Agriculture, taxation, trade regulation, infrastructure development, resource management, and economic administration are presented as essential responsibilities of the ruler toward society.

Within the framework of **State-Centered Care Ethics**, economic governance represents a major dimension of institutional care. Human beings require not only physical protection and legal security but also access to the material conditions necessary for a dignified life. Food, livelihood, economic opportunity, and stability are fundamental aspects of human welfare. Therefore, a state that neglects economic conditions fails in its ethical responsibility toward its citizens.

Chanakya's economic philosophy demonstrates that care is not limited to responding to suffering after it occurs. A responsible state must actively create conditions that prevent poverty, scarcity, unemployment, and economic insecurity. Economic policy thus becomes a form of preventive and developmental care. The ruler cares for society by establishing institutions that enable individuals and communities to sustain themselves and flourish.

5.5.2. Wealth (*Artha*) as a Foundation of Social Welfare

The title of Chanakya's work itself—*Arthaśāstra*—reveals the importance of economic well-being within his political philosophy. The term *artha* possesses a wide range of meanings, including wealth, material prosperity, resources, livelihood, and practical objectives. In the classical Indian understanding of human goals (*puruṣārthas*), *artha* is recognized as one of the legitimate aims of human life, alongside *dharma*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*.

However, Chanakya does not treat wealth as an end in itself. Economic prosperity has ethical significance because it supports social stability, individual security, and the fulfillment of higher human purposes. A society suffering from poverty and economic insecurity cannot effectively pursue moral, intellectual, or spiritual development.

Therefore, economic administration becomes a responsibility of governance. The ruler must ensure that resources are generated, protected, and distributed in ways that sustain the welfare of the people.

From the perspective of State-Centered Care Ethics, this represents a crucial principle: **material well-being is a necessary condition of human flourishing, and therefore economic policy is an ethical function of the state.**

5.5.3. Agriculture and Food Security as Public Responsibility

Agriculture receives extensive attention in the *Arthaśāstra* because Chanakya recognizes that food production forms the foundation of social stability. In an agrarian society, the prosperity of farmers directly determines the prosperity of the kingdom.

The state is expected to support agricultural development through:

- Irrigation systems.
- Land management.
- Agricultural expansion.
- Protection of crops.
- Regulation of agricultural resources.
- Assistance during agricultural crises.

This approach demonstrates that food security is not viewed as merely a private matter between farmers and markets. The state has an active responsibility to ensure that society has access to essential resources.

From the perspective of care ethics, agriculture represents one of the clearest examples of institutional responsibility toward human dependency. Every society depends upon food production, yet agricultural communities are vulnerable to drought, floods, pests, and economic instability. The state therefore performs a caring function by reducing these vulnerabilities through planning and public intervention.

Food security becomes a form of social protection.

5.5.4. Irrigation and Public Infrastructure as Care

One of Chanakya's most significant contributions to economic governance is his recognition of the importance of public infrastructure. Irrigation, roads, storage facilities, and other forms of collective resources are essential for economic prosperity.

The state is expected to undertake projects that individuals alone cannot effectively organize. These projects demonstrate that governance involves creating shared conditions necessary for social welfare.

In modern terminology, such activities resemble public investment in social infrastructure. However, within Chanakya's framework, they are not justified merely by economic efficiency. They represent the ruler's responsibility to promote the prosperity and security of the population.

Infrastructure therefore becomes an expression of institutional care. By constructing systems that support livelihoods, the state protects society from economic vulnerability and expands opportunities for development.

5.5.5. Taxation as an Ethical Relationship

Taxation is one of the most important areas where Chanakya connects economics with political ethics. The ruler requires revenue to maintain administration, defense, justice, and public services. However, taxation must be balanced with the capacity and welfare of the people.

A state that extracts excessive resources from citizens ultimately destroys the economic foundation upon which its own power depends. Therefore, taxation must be conducted with moderation, fairness, and awareness of social conditions.

Chanakya's approach reflects a reciprocal relationship between ruler and subjects:

- Citizens contribute resources to the state.
- The state provides protection and welfare in return.

This relationship resembles the ethical principle of responsibility found in care ethics. The state is not merely a collector of resources but a trustee responsible for using those resources for collective benefit.

Taxation becomes ethical when it serves the welfare of society rather than merely enriching the ruling authority.

5.5.6. Regulation of Markets and Protection from Exploitation

The *Arthaśāstra* provides detailed discussions of trade, prices, weights and measures, merchants, commodities, and market regulation. These provisions demonstrate Chanakya's recognition that unregulated economic activity can create opportunities for exploitation.

The state is expected to prevent:

- Fraudulent trade practices.
- Manipulation of prices.
- False measurement.
- Hoarding of essential commodities.
- Unfair commercial practices.

These regulations illustrate another dimension of economic care: protection of individuals from economic vulnerability.

Markets are not treated as completely independent systems. Because economic relationships involve unequal power, the state has a responsibility to establish fair conditions. Regulation therefore becomes an ethical tool for protecting both producers and consumers.

From the perspective of State-Centered Care Ethics, economic regulation represents institutional attentiveness to human needs and social vulnerabilities.

5.5.7. Employment and Livelihood Security

A significant feature of Chanakya's economic vision is its concern for productive engagement and livelihood

opportunities. A prosperous state requires citizens who can participate meaningfully in economic life.

The ruler's responsibility extends beyond collecting revenue; it includes creating conditions where economic activity can flourish. Productive citizens contribute to social prosperity while gaining the means necessary for personal and family well-being.

This reflects a fundamental principle of care ethics: genuine care does not merely provide temporary assistance but strengthens the capacity of individuals to sustain themselves.

In this respect, Chanakya's economic governance combines protection with empowerment. The state protects citizens from economic insecurity while simultaneously creating opportunities for self-sufficiency.

5.5.8. Economic Relief During Crisis

A particularly important aspect of Chanakya's economic care is the state's responsibility during periods of crisis. Drought, famine, natural disasters, and economic disruption can severely affect social stability. The ruler must therefore adopt measures to protect the population during such periods.

These measures include:

- Providing essential supplies.
- Supporting affected communities.
- Adjusting economic burdens.
- Maintaining food availability.
- Preventing exploitation during scarcity.

Such policies reveal that Chanakya does not view economic hardship as merely an individual's personal

failure. Certain forms of suffering arise from circumstances beyond individual control and therefore require collective institutional responses.

This principle strongly corresponds with care ethics, which emphasizes attention to vulnerability and dependency. The state becomes responsible precisely because citizens may face conditions that exceed their individual capacity to overcome.

5.5.9. Economic Governance and *Yoga-kṣema*

The concept of **yoga-kṣema** provides a useful framework for understanding Chanakya's economic philosophy. Effective governance requires both:

- **Yoga** — acquisition and creation of resources.
- **Kṣema** — preservation and protection of those resources.

Applied economically, this means that the state must not only encourage wealth creation but also ensure that prosperity remains secure and beneficial to society.

Economic development without protection can lead to instability, exploitation, and inequality. Conversely, protection without development can produce stagnation. Chanakya therefore presents a balanced approach in which economic growth and social security are mutually reinforcing.

This balance reflects the central principle of State-Centered Care Ethics: the purpose of economic governance is not merely accumulation of wealth but the preservation and enhancement of collective well-being.

5.5.10. Comparison with Modern Care Ethics

Modern care ethicists have increasingly recognized that economic structures influence human relationships and social vulnerability. Virginia Held argues that societies must organize economic and political institutions around values of care rather than treating economic activity as morally neutral. Joan Tronto similarly emphasizes that caring societies require institutions capable of recognizing needs and responding effectively.

Chanakya's economic philosophy demonstrates a comparable insight. Economic systems are not separate from ethics; they directly affect human welfare. Therefore, economic governance becomes a moral responsibility of the state.

The difference lies in the starting point. Modern care ethics often critiques economic systems from the perspective of marginalized or dependent individuals. Chanakya begins from the responsibilities of the ruler and develops an institutional framework through which economic welfare is protected.

Both approaches, however, recognize that social flourishing requires more than abstract rights or political stability. It requires institutions attentive to material human needs.

5.5.11. Economic Governance as a Pillar of State-Centered Care Ethics

The economic dimensions of the *Arthaśāstra* demonstrate that Chanakya views prosperity as an ethical responsibility of governance. Agriculture, taxation, trade regulation, infrastructure, and crisis management are not merely administrative concerns; they are mechanisms through which the state fulfills its duty toward society.

Economic governance functions as care because it:

1. Protects livelihoods.
2. Ensures food security.
3. Prevents exploitation.
4. Creates opportunities.
5. Supports social stability.
6. Enables human flourishing.

Thus, the caring state is not one that merely provides relief after suffering occurs. It is one that creates economic conditions in which suffering is reduced and individuals can develop their capabilities.

5.5.12. Conclusion

Chanakya's economic philosophy reveals a profound connection between wealth, governance, and ethical responsibility. The *Arthaśāstra* does not treat economic administration as a separate technical domain but as an essential component of Rājadharmā. The ruler's responsibility includes ensuring that society possesses the material foundations necessary for security and prosperity.

From the perspective of **State-Centered Care Ethics**, economic governance represents a major form of institutional care. By supporting agriculture, regulating markets, ensuring fair taxation, developing infrastructure, and assisting citizens during economic crises, the state fulfills its responsibility to protect and promote human flourishing.

Therefore, Chanakya's economic thought provides an important contribution to political ethics: it demonstrates that care is not limited to interpersonal compassion but extends to the economic institutions through which societies sustain human life and collective well-being.

5.6. Disaster Relief and Public Health as Institutional Care

5.6.1. Introduction

A comprehensive theory of care must address not only ordinary conditions of social life but also moments of exceptional vulnerability. Human societies inevitably experience periods of crisis caused by famine, drought, floods, epidemics, fires, economic disruption, and other unforeseen circumstances. During such situations, individuals often lack the capacity to protect themselves through personal effort alone. The ethical responsibility of political institutions therefore becomes most visible during times of collective suffering.

In the *Arthaśāstra*, Chanakya recognizes that the ruler's duty extends beyond maintaining order and promoting prosperity during stable conditions. The state must also respond effectively when society faces severe disruption. Disaster management, food security, public health measures, and relief administration are therefore integral components of **Rājadharmā**.

From the perspective of **State-Centered Care Ethics**, disaster relief and public health represent some of the clearest examples of institutional care. Care is not merely the emotional response of individuals toward suffering; it is the organized capacity of institutions to recognize vulnerability, mobilize resources, and restore conditions necessary for human flourishing. Chanakya's political philosophy demonstrates that a responsible state must anticipate crises, reduce risks, and provide protection when individuals and communities cannot adequately protect themselves.

5.6.2. The Ethical Responsibility of the State During Crisis

The foundation of Chanakya's approach to disaster

management lies in the principle that the ruler is responsible for the welfare of the people under all circumstances. The king's duty does not end when ordinary administration functions successfully; rather, extraordinary circumstances test whether governance truly fulfills its ethical purpose.

A famine, epidemic, or natural disaster creates conditions in which normal social and economic mechanisms may fail. Farmers may lose crops, merchants may lose resources, workers may lose livelihoods, and vulnerable groups may face severe deprivation. In such situations, the state must intervene because the welfare of the population cannot be secured through ordinary individual efforts.

This reflects a fundamental principle of care ethics: responsibility increases in situations of dependency and vulnerability. When people face circumstances beyond their control, institutions have an ethical obligation to provide support.

Thus, disaster relief is not an act of royal generosity but a duty arising from the very nature of political authority.

5.6.3. Famine Relief and Food Security

Among the crises discussed in ancient Indian political thought, famine represents one of the most serious threats to social welfare. Since agriculture formed the foundation of the economy, failure of rainfall, crops, or agricultural production could create widespread suffering.

Chanakya's economic and administrative recommendations reflect an awareness that food security requires preparation and institutional planning. The state must maintain systems that enable society to withstand periods of scarcity.

Important measures include:

- Maintenance of grain reserves.
- Regulation of food supplies.
- Prevention of hoarding and artificial scarcity.
- Assistance to affected populations.
- Support for agricultural recovery.

These measures demonstrate that Chanakya does not regard famine merely as an unfortunate natural event. It becomes a political and ethical responsibility because the ruler has a duty to protect the population from preventable suffering.

From the perspective of State-Centered Care Ethics, food security represents one of the most basic forms of institutional care. The state protects the biological foundation of human existence.

5.6.4. Public Distribution and Protection Against Exploitation

During periods of scarcity, vulnerable populations become particularly susceptible to exploitation. Traders may manipulate prices, individuals may hoard essential goods, and powerful groups may take advantage of social instability.

Chanakya's emphasis on market regulation and administrative supervision during crises reflects the recognition that disaster situations require stronger institutional protection.

The state must ensure:

- Availability of essential commodities.
- Fair distribution.
- Prevention of profiteering.

- Protection of weaker sections.

This reveals an important dimension of care: assistance alone is insufficient if social structures continue to allow exploitation. Effective care requires both direct support and institutional regulation.

In this respect, Chanakya's approach resembles modern disaster management principles, where emergency relief must be accompanied by systems preventing abuse and ensuring equitable access to resources.

5.6.5. Natural Disasters and Preventive Governance

A significant feature of Chanakya's administrative philosophy is its emphasis on prevention. Good governance does not merely respond after disaster occurs; it anticipates risks and develops systems to minimize future harm.

The *Arthaśāstra* discusses various aspects of resource management and public administration that contribute to disaster resilience, including:

- Water management.
- Agricultural planning.
- Storage systems.
- Infrastructure maintenance.
- Administrative preparedness.

This preventive orientation is central to institutional care. A state demonstrates responsibility not only through emergency response but also through preparation that reduces vulnerability before crises occur.

Modern concepts such as disaster preparedness, resilience planning, and risk management reflect similar

principles. Chanakya's framework therefore provides an early example of preventive governance.

5.6.6. Public Health and the Responsibility to Protect Life

Although the *Arthaśāstra* is not a medical treatise, it contains important references to health-related responsibilities of the state. Chanakya recognizes that the well-being of society depends upon maintaining conditions favorable to health, cleanliness, and safety.

Public health concerns include:

- Sanitation.
- Regulation of harmful substances.
- Protection of food quality.
- Management of disease-related risks.
- Organization of social responses during health emergencies.

These provisions indicate that health is not viewed solely as an individual's personal responsibility. The conditions affecting collective health require institutional attention.

From the perspective of care ethics, public health represents one of the clearest examples of collective responsibility. Individuals depend upon social systems—clean environments, safe food, disease prevention, and organized responses—to maintain well-being.

Therefore, public health becomes a fundamental expression of the state's obligation to care for its people.

5.6.7. Protection of Vulnerable Populations During Crisis

Disasters rarely affect all members of society equally.

Those with fewer resources, weaker social support, or limited physical capacity experience greater vulnerability. Chanakya's political philosophy recognizes that governance must pay special attention to those who cannot easily recover from hardship.

The state's responsibility extends toward:

- The poor.
- The elderly.
- Children.
- Those without family support.
- Individuals affected by economic disruption.

This principle strongly parallels modern care ethics, which emphasizes attention to dependency and unequal vulnerability.

However, Chanakya's distinctive contribution is that he places this responsibility within the framework of political duty. Care is not dependent upon personal relationships; it is embedded within the obligations of governance.

5.6.8. Disaster Relief as an Expression of *Rājadharmā*

The importance of disaster relief becomes clearer when understood through the concept of *Rājadharmā*. The ruler's duty is not limited to maintaining authority but includes preserving the conditions necessary for the survival and flourishing of society.

A ruler who ignores suffering during crisis fails in the fundamental purpose of kingship. Conversely, a ruler who mobilizes resources, protects citizens, and restores social stability fulfills the ethical obligations of governance.

Thus, disaster response becomes a test of political legitimacy. The state's moral character is revealed not only through everyday administration but also through its response to human suffering.

5.6.9. Comparison with Modern Care Ethics and Welfare Governance

Modern care ethics emphasizes that caring societies must develop institutions capable of recognizing needs and responding effectively. Joan Tronto argues that care involves several stages:

1. Recognizing a need.
2. Taking responsibility.
3. Providing competent care.
4. Evaluating whether care has achieved its purpose.

Chanakya's disaster governance reflects a similar institutional process.

- Recognition of vulnerability occurs through administrative observation.
- Responsibility is assumed by the ruler.
- Resources and officials are mobilized.
- The effectiveness of measures is evaluated through continued governance.

The difference is that modern care ethics often emerges from democratic citizenship and social relationships, while Chanakya frames care within the duties of kingship. Nevertheless, both approaches recognize that ethical societies require institutions capable of responding to human dependency.

5.6.10. Disaster Relief, Public Health, and State-Centered Care Ethics

Disaster management and public health demonstrate

that Chanakya's conception of governance extends beyond maintaining political order. The state is responsible for preserving the basic conditions of human life, especially when individuals and communities face circumstances beyond their control.

Within the framework of State-Centered Care Ethics, disaster relief and public health illustrate several principles:

1. **Recognition of vulnerability** — the state identifies conditions threatening human welfare.
2. **Institutional responsibility** — governance accepts responsibility rather than leaving individuals alone.
3. **Preventive action** — systems are created to reduce future suffering.
4. **Protection of life** — human survival becomes a political priority.
5. **Restoration of welfare** — governance aims to return society to conditions of stability and prosperity.

These principles demonstrate that care in the *Arthaśāstra* is active, organized, and institutional.

5.6.11. Conclusion

Disaster relief and public health reveal one of the most profound aspects of Chanakya's political philosophy: the ethical responsibility of the state becomes most evident during periods of crisis. The ruler's obligation is not merely to govern during prosperity but to protect society when ordinary mechanisms fail.

Through famine relief, food security measures, public health responsibilities, and preventive administration, the *Arthaśāstra* presents governance as a system designed to preserve human welfare under changing conditions.

From the perspective of **State-Centered Care Ethics**, Chanakya demonstrates that care is not limited to compassion between individuals. It can become an institutional principle guiding public policy, resource allocation, and crisis response. A truly ethical state is therefore one that recognizes vulnerability, accepts responsibility, and acts effectively to protect human life and collective flourishing.

5.7. Administrative Ethics and Accountability as Institutional Care

5.7.1. Introduction

A comprehensive theory of state-centered care cannot be limited to the duties of the ruler toward society; it must also address the ethical character of the institutions through which those duties are performed. A state may possess extensive responsibilities for public welfare, security, justice, and economic prosperity, but these objectives cannot be achieved unless the administrative system itself functions with integrity, competence, and accountability.

Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra* demonstrates a profound awareness of this challenge. The text recognizes that government officials possess significant authority over the lives and resources of citizens. Consequently, administrative power creates both the possibility of public service and the danger of exploitation. For this reason, Chanakya devotes considerable attention to the selection, training, supervision, evaluation, and control of officials.

Within the framework of **State-Centered Care Ethics**, administrative ethics represents a higher dimension of institutional care. A caring state must not only establish welfare-oriented policies; it must also ensure that the institutions responsible for implementing those policies

remain trustworthy and accountable. Care requires competent agents, ethical procedures, and mechanisms that prevent misuse of power.

Thus, Chanakya's administrative philosophy reveals an important principle: **the state must care for the people, but the state itself must also be governed through systems of care, discipline, and accountability.**

5.7.2. The Importance of Ethical Administration

For Chanakya, the effectiveness of governance depends greatly upon the quality of administrators. The king alone cannot directly manage the complex responsibilities of the state. Ministers, advisors, judges, financial officers, military commanders, and various departmental officials serve as the instruments through which governance reaches society.

Therefore, the moral quality of administration determines the moral quality of the state.

An incompetent or corrupt administration can undermine even the best intentions of the ruler. Resources intended for public welfare may be misappropriated, justice may become inaccessible, taxation may become oppressive, and vulnerable populations may suffer.

Chanakya's emphasis on administrative ethics demonstrates that institutional care is not merely a matter of creating policies. It requires reliable human agents who possess competence, honesty, discipline, and commitment to public responsibility.

5.7.3. Selection and Qualification of Officials

One of Chanakya's significant contributions to political thought is his systematic approach to the selection of

officials. Administrative positions should not be assigned merely on the basis of personal loyalty, family connections, or social status. Officials must possess appropriate qualities and abilities necessary for their responsibilities.

Important qualities include:

- Intelligence.
- Integrity.
- Self-control.
- Knowledge of administrative principles.
- Loyalty to public duty.
- Ability to make sound judgments.

This emphasis reflects a crucial principle of institutional care: those entrusted with caring responsibilities must themselves possess the competence required to fulfill them.

In modern terms, Chanakya recognizes that public institutions require professional administrators. Good governance depends not only on ethical ideals but also on the practical capacity to implement them.

5.7.4. Officials as Trustees of Public Resources

A central feature of Chanakya's administrative philosophy is the recognition that officials do not own the resources they manage. They hold authority on behalf of the state and, ultimately, the people.

This trustee-like understanding is particularly evident in discussions concerning financial administration. Revenue collected from citizens must be used for legitimate public purposes rather than personal enrichment.

Corruption therefore represents more than a financial crime. It is an ethical violation because it diverts resources away from their intended purpose: the welfare of society.

From the perspective of State-Centered Care Ethics, corruption is a failure of care. It represents the transformation of institutions created for public protection into mechanisms of private benefit.

5.7.5. The Problem of Corruption

Chanakya demonstrates remarkable realism in recognizing the vulnerability of officials to corruption. He famously compares the difficulty of detecting the misuse of public funds by officials to the difficulty of knowing when a person drinking water from a river has actually consumed water.

This observation reflects Chanakya's understanding that administrative corruption is a structural problem requiring institutional solutions.

Rather than relying solely on personal morality, the *Arthaśāstra* recommends systems of:

- Supervision.
- Inspection.
- Financial review.
- Intelligence gathering.
- Punishment for misconduct.

This approach is significant because it recognizes that ethical institutions cannot depend only on individual virtue. They require mechanisms that encourage accountability and prevent abuse.

5.7.6. Accountability through Supervision and Audit

A major contribution of the *Arthaśāstra* is its emphasis

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on administrative oversight. Officials must be monitored because unchecked authority creates opportunities for misuse.

Chanakya recommends various methods of supervision, including:

- Regular examination of officials.
- Verification of financial records.
- Independent information gathering.
- Investigation of complaints.
- Review of administrative performance.

These mechanisms reflect a sophisticated understanding of institutional accountability.

From the perspective of care ethics, accountability is not merely a method of control. It is a protective mechanism that ensures institutions continue to serve their ethical purpose.

A state that provides welfare without monitoring its own officials risks harming the very people it intends to protect. Therefore, accountability becomes a necessary condition of institutional care.

5.7.7. Competence as an Ethical Obligation

An important but often overlooked aspect of Chanakya's administrative thought is that competence itself has ethical significance. An official who lacks the necessary knowledge or ability may cause harm even without malicious intention.

Poor administration can result in:

- Economic loss.
- Delayed justice.

- Ineffective disaster response.
- Mismanagement of public resources.
- Increased suffering among citizens.

Therefore, competence is not merely an administrative virtue; it is a moral obligation.

This insight closely corresponds with modern care ethics, particularly Joan Tronto's emphasis on "competent care." Good intentions are insufficient. Care requires the ability to respond effectively to actual needs.

Chanakya's administrative philosophy anticipates this principle by insisting that public officials must possess both character and capability.

5.7.8. The Ethical Relationship Between Ruler and Officials

Although the king occupies the highest position within Chanakya's political structure, the ruler is not independent of administrative responsibility. The king must carefully select, supervise, and evaluate officials because their actions directly affect the welfare of society.

This creates a chain of ethical responsibility:

- The ruler is responsible for governance.
- Officials are responsible for administration.
- Institutions are responsible for protecting citizens.

Failure at any level can harm society.

Thus, Chanakya presents governance as a network of responsibilities rather than a simple hierarchy of authority.

This relational structure resembles the central insight of care ethics: ethical life depends upon networks of

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responsibility and dependence.

5.7.9. Administrative Accountability and Modern Care Ethics

Modern care ethics has increasingly emphasized that caring relationships require institutional structures. Care cannot depend solely upon individual compassion because social welfare depends upon systems, policies, and organizations.

Joan Tronto argues that caring institutions must possess:

1. Recognition of needs.
2. Acceptance of responsibility.
3. Competent implementation.
4. Accountability for outcomes.

Chanakya's administrative philosophy demonstrates similar principles.

The state must:

- Recognize social needs.
- Assign responsibility to officials.
- Ensure competent administration.
- Monitor performance and correct failures.

The difference is that modern care ethics often emerges within democratic institutions, while Chanakya frames these responsibilities within the duties of kingship. Nevertheless, both recognize that ethical governance requires accountable institutions.

5.7.10 Administrative Ethics as Protection Against Institutional Harm

One of the deepest insights of Chanakya's administrative theory is that the state itself can become a source of harm if not properly regulated. Officials who abuse authority can create suffering equal to, or greater than, external threats.

Therefore, protecting citizens requires not only protection from external enemies and criminals but also protection from institutional failure.

This represents a highly advanced conception of care:

- The state protects people from society's dangers.
- The state protects society from administrative corruption.
- The state protects itself from misuse of power.

Such internal accountability transforms governance from mere authority into ethical responsibility.

5.7.11 Administrative Ethics as a Pillar of State-Centered Care Ethics

Administrative ethics completes the institutional structure of Chanakya's care-oriented governance. Welfare policies, justice systems, economic programs, and disaster responses can succeed only when supported by ethical and competent administration.

Within the framework of State-Centered Care Ethics, administrative accountability performs several functions:

- 1. Ensures responsible use of public resources.**
- 2. Prevents exploitation by those in authority.**
- 3. Maintains public trust.**
- 4. Improves institutional effectiveness.**
- 5. Protects citizens from administrative harm.**

Thus, accountability is not separate from care; it is one of its essential requirements.

A state cannot claim to care for its citizens unless its own institutions are worthy of trust.

5.7.12. Conclusion

Chanakya's treatment of administration reveals that ethical governance depends not only on the objectives of the state but also on the integrity of the institutions through which those objectives are pursued. Officials must be competent, disciplined, and accountable because they serve as the practical agents of Rājadharmā.

From the perspective of **State-Centered Care Ethics**, administrative ethics represents the self-reflective dimension of governance. The state must not only care for society; it must ensure that the mechanisms of care themselves remain ethical, effective, and accountable.

Through his emphasis on official responsibility, corruption control, supervision, and institutional discipline, Chanakya presents a remarkably sophisticated vision of governance in which power is continuously restrained by responsibility. The *Arthaśāstra* therefore demonstrates that genuine care requires not only compassion and welfare-oriented policies but also strong institutions capable of delivering those commitments faithfully.

5.8. Environmental Stewardship as Care

5.8.1. Introduction

The relationship between human society and the natural world represents an essential but often overlooked

dimension of Chanakya's political philosophy. While the *Arthaśāstra* is widely recognized for its discussions of governance, economics, diplomacy, and administration, it also contains a sophisticated understanding of resource management, ecological preservation, and sustainable utilization of nature. Forests, water resources, agricultural lands, wildlife, and mineral resources are treated not merely as sources of economic value but as elements requiring careful regulation and responsible administration.

Within the framework of **State-Centered Care Ethics**, environmental stewardship represents an extension of the state's responsibility beyond immediate social welfare toward the preservation of the ecological foundations upon which human life depends. Just as the state has a duty to protect citizens from violence, injustice, and economic insecurity, it also has a responsibility to protect the natural systems that sustain society.

Chanakya's environmental vision is not based on a modern concept of environmentalism in the contemporary sense. Rather, it emerges from a recognition of interdependence: human prosperity depends upon the health of natural resources, and therefore responsible governance requires their protection. The ruler's duty is not unlimited exploitation of nature but the careful management of resources for long-term social welfare.

Thus, environmental stewardship becomes a form of institutional care because the state acts as a guardian of shared resources that are essential for present and future generations.

5.8.2. Nature as a Foundation of Public Welfare

The economic and social stability described in the

Arthaśāstra depends fundamentally upon natural resources. Agriculture requires fertile land and water; trade requires forests and materials; settlements require sustainable resource management. Therefore, ecological stability is inseparable from human welfare.

Chanakya's political philosophy recognizes that the prosperity of the kingdom cannot be maintained if natural resources are destroyed. Economic development without resource conservation creates future vulnerability.

This insight connects environmental responsibility with the broader principle of *prajāsukha*. The happiness and prosperity of the people depend not only upon political stability and economic growth but also upon the continued availability of natural resources.

From the perspective of State-Centered Care Ethics, environmental protection is therefore not an optional additional responsibility of governance. It is a necessary condition for fulfilling the state's primary duty toward human flourishing.

5.8.3. Forests as Protected Resources

One of the most significant aspects of environmental administration in the *Arthaśāstra* is the detailed attention given to forests. Chanakya recognizes that forests possess multiple forms of importance:

- Economic value through timber and forest products.
- Ecological value through biodiversity.
- Strategic value for security and resources.
- Social value for communities dependent upon forests.

The state regulates forest resources through designated

officials responsible for their management. This demonstrates that forests are not viewed as unregulated spaces available for unrestricted exploitation. They require organized administration and protection.

The appointment of forest officials reflects an important principle of institutional care: valuable resources shared by society require responsible guardianship.

The ruler's responsibility is therefore not simply to extract wealth from forests but to ensure their continued productivity and availability.

5.8.4. Protection of Wildlife and Biodiversity

The *Arthaśāstra* contains provisions concerning the protection and management of animals, including regulations related to hunting and the preservation of certain species. While these provisions are partly connected with royal resources and economic considerations, they also demonstrate awareness of the importance of regulating human interaction with the natural world.

The existence of protected areas and restrictions on certain forms of exploitation indicates recognition that uncontrolled human activity can damage ecological balance.

From the perspective of care ethics, this represents an expansion of the moral community. Care is not limited to immediate human relationships but includes responsibility toward the wider conditions that sustain life.

Although Chanakya's framework remains primarily anthropocentric, it recognizes that responsible governance requires attention to non-human elements of the

5.8.5. Water Management as Public Care

Water occupies a central position in Chanakya's economic and environmental thought. Agricultural productivity, human settlements, and social prosperity depend upon effective water management.

The state is expected to support:

- Irrigation systems.
- Water storage.
- Maintenance of water resources.
- Regulation of water usage.

These responsibilities demonstrate that essential natural resources require collective management. Individual actors alone may be unable to maintain systems necessary for the survival and prosperity of the wider community.

Water management therefore represents a classic example of institutional care. The state protects a shared resource because the well-being of the entire population depends upon it.

This principle has significant relevance for contemporary environmental governance, where water security remains one of the most important challenges facing societies.

5.8.6. Sustainable Resource Management

A distinctive feature of Chanakya's economic philosophy is the recognition that resources must be managed in ways that preserve their long-term value. The purpose of administration is not simply immediate

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extraction but sustained prosperity.

This principle appears throughout discussions of:

- Forest resources.
- Mining.
- Agriculture.
- Animal husbandry.
- Land management.

The ruler must balance present needs with future security. Excessive exploitation may produce temporary gain but ultimately weaken the economic foundation of the kingdom.

This reflects a fundamental ethical principle of environmental care: responsibility extends beyond the present generation.

Although Chanakya does not formulate this idea in modern ecological terminology, his emphasis on preservation and regulated use demonstrates an awareness of sustainability.

5.8.7. Environmental Governance and *Yoga-kṣema*

The concept of **yoga-kṣema** provides a useful philosophical framework for understanding Chanakya's environmental thought.

Just as economic governance requires both acquisition (*yoga*) and preservation (*kṣema*), environmental governance requires both utilization and conservation.

The state must:

- Develop resources necessary for social prosperity.
- Preserve those resources for continued availability.

This balance prevents two extremes:

1. Complete neglect of resources, resulting in poverty and stagnation.
2. Excessive exploitation, resulting in long-term decline.

Environmental stewardship therefore represents the application of the same principle that guides Chanakya's broader political philosophy: prosperity must be achieved through responsible preservation.

5.8.8. Environmental Protection as Intergenerational Responsibility

One of the deepest implications of Chanakya's environmental thought is the recognition that governance has consequences beyond the immediate present. The ruler's decisions affect the future prosperity and security of society.

A kingdom that destroys its natural foundations may experience economic decline and social instability in future generations.

Therefore, responsible governance requires consideration of long-term consequences.

This principle corresponds with contemporary theories of environmental ethics, particularly the idea of intergenerational justice. Present generations have obligations because future generations depend upon the decisions made today.

From the perspective of State-Centered Care Ethics, environmental stewardship is therefore a form of care extended across time.

5.8.9. Comparison with Modern Environmental Care Ethics

Contemporary environmental ethics increasingly emphasizes the relationship between ecological systems and human responsibility. Scholars of environmental care ethics argue that moral responsibility should extend beyond individual human relationships to include the natural environments that sustain life.

Chanakya's approach shares important similarities with this perspective:

- Recognition of human dependence upon nature.
- Need for responsible resource management.
- Importance of institutional regulation.
- Protection of common resources.

However, the foundation differs. Modern environmental ethics often develops from ecological philosophy and concern for non-human life, whereas Chanakya's environmental thought emerges primarily from the ruler's responsibility to maintain social welfare.

Nevertheless, both approaches converge on an important principle: human flourishing requires responsible relationships with the natural world.

5.8.10 Environmental Stewardship as a Dimension of State-Centered Care Ethics

The environmental dimensions of the *Arthaśāstra* demonstrate that institutional care extends beyond immediate social administration. A responsible state must preserve the ecological conditions necessary for human life and prosperity.

Environmental stewardship contributes to State-

Centered Care Ethics in several ways:

1. **Protection of essential resources** — safeguarding the foundations of survival.
2. **Prevention of future harm** — reducing ecological vulnerability.
3. **Sustainable prosperity** — balancing development with preservation.
4. **Collective responsibility** — managing resources for society as a whole.
5. **Intergenerational care** — protecting future welfare.

Thus, environmental governance becomes another expression of Rājadharmā.

5.8.11. Conclusion

Chanakya's treatment of forests, water, agriculture, wildlife, and resources reveals that his theory of governance contains an important environmental dimension. The ruler's responsibility is not limited to managing human affairs but includes preserving the natural foundations upon which society depends.

From the perspective of **State-Centered Care Ethics**, environmental stewardship represents an expansion of political responsibility. The state cares not only by protecting citizens from immediate threats but also by maintaining the ecological conditions necessary for long-term human flourishing.

The *Arthaśāstra* therefore presents an integrated vision of governance in which social welfare, economic prosperity, and environmental responsibility are interconnected. The ethical ruler is not merely a conqueror or administrator but a guardian of the complex network of resources that sustain the life of the kingdom.

In this sense, Chanakya's environmental thought enriches the concept of Rājadharmā by demonstrating that care is ultimately a responsibility toward the entire system of life upon which society depends.

5.9. Human Flourishing as the Goal of Governance

5.9.1. Introduction

The ultimate purpose of governance in Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra* is not merely the preservation of political authority, expansion of territory, or accumulation of wealth. Although the text provides detailed discussions of administration, taxation, diplomacy, military organization, and economic management, these institutions derive their ethical legitimacy from a higher objective: the welfare and flourishing of the people.

The concept of **prajāśukha**—the happiness, welfare, and prosperity of the subjects—represents the central moral orientation of Chanakya's political philosophy. The ruler exists not for personal enjoyment or power but for the protection, prosperity, and advancement of society. In this sense, governance becomes an ethical project directed toward creating conditions in which human beings can develop their physical, social, economic, and moral capacities.

Within the framework of **State-Centered Care Ethics**, human flourishing represents the final purpose toward which all institutional forms of care are directed. Protection without prosperity, justice without compassion, economic growth without social welfare, and administration without accountability cannot achieve the complete purpose of governance. The caring state must therefore create an integrated environment in which individuals and communities can live with security,

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dignity, and opportunity.

Chanakya's political philosophy thus presents governance as a responsibility for enabling human flourishing rather than merely controlling society.

5.9.2. From Survival to Flourishing: The Expanding Scope of Governance

An important feature of Chanakya's political thought is that governance begins with basic protection but extends toward broader human development. The state must first secure life and order; however, security is not the final goal. It provides the foundation upon which individuals can pursue prosperity, social relationships, knowledge, and ethical advancement.

The progression of Chanakya's political vision can be understood as follows:

Rakṣaṇa (Protection) → Yoga-kṣema (Security and Prosperity) → Prajāsukha (Welfare) → Human Flourishing

Protection prevents destruction, but flourishing requires positive conditions for development.

A society free from violence but suffering from poverty cannot be considered fully successful. Similarly, economic prosperity without justice or social stability remains incomplete. Chanakya's integrated approach recognizes that human well-being requires multiple interconnected dimensions.

This holistic understanding closely corresponds with contemporary theories of human flourishing, which view well-being as involving not only material conditions but also security, relationships, capabilities, and meaningful

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participation in society.

5.9.3. *Prajāsukha* as the Ethical Measure of Kingship

The famous principle expressed in the *Arthaśāstra* that:

"The happiness of the king lies in the happiness of his subjects; his welfare lies in their welfare."

represents the ethical foundation of Chanakya's conception of rulership.

This principle transforms the relationship between ruler and society. The ruler is not an independent authority whose interests exist separately from those of the people. Rather, the ruler's success is measured by the condition of society.

A king who accumulates wealth while citizens suffer fails in his fundamental duty. Conversely, a ruler who promotes prosperity, security, and justice fulfills the purpose of governance.

From the perspective of State-Centered Care Ethics, this represents a shift from power-centered governance to responsibility-centered governance. Authority becomes legitimate only when it produces collective well-being.

5.9.4. Human Flourishing and Material Well-Being

Chanakya's understanding of flourishing begins with recognition of the importance of material conditions. Hunger, insecurity, poverty, and economic instability prevent individuals from pursuing higher human goals.

Therefore, governance must ensure:

- Food security.

- Economic opportunity.
- Protection of property.
- Stable livelihoods.
- Public infrastructure.
- Fair economic systems.

This emphasis does not reduce human flourishing to material prosperity alone. Rather, Chanakya recognizes that material stability provides the foundation upon which intellectual, ethical, and social development becomes possible.

In this respect, the *Arthaśāstra* presents an important philosophical insight: a society cannot demand moral excellence from individuals while ignoring the material conditions necessary for human dignity.

5.9.5. Human Flourishing and Social Justice

Flourishing also requires a just social environment. Individuals cannot develop their potential if they are constantly threatened by exploitation, arbitrary authority, or insecurity.

Therefore, Chanakya's emphasis on justice serves a deeper purpose: creating conditions where individuals can participate in society with confidence and dignity.

Justice contributes to flourishing by:

- Protecting rights and property.
- Resolving disputes.
- Preventing exploitation.
- Maintaining social trust.
- Ensuring predictable social order.

Thus, justice is not merely a mechanism for punishment. It is a foundation for human development.

Within the framework of care ethics, justice becomes a means through which institutions protect the conditions necessary for individuals to flourish.

5.9.6. Human Flourishing and Capability Development

Although Chanakya does not use the modern language of "capabilities," his political philosophy recognizes that good governance should enhance the capacity of individuals and society.

Education, economic activity, social stability, and institutional support enable people to pursue meaningful lives.

The state's responsibility is therefore not simply to prevent harm but to create opportunities.

This reflects an important principle of care ethics: genuine care seeks empowerment rather than permanent dependency. A caring institution helps individuals develop their own capacities to achieve well-being.

Chanakya's governance model similarly aims to create a prosperous and capable society rather than merely a protected population.

5.9.7. The Relationship Between Individual and Collective Flourishing

A significant feature of Chanakya's political thought is the integration of individual and collective welfare. The prosperity of individuals contributes to the strength of the state, while effective governance creates conditions for individual advancement.

The relationship is reciprocal:

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- Citizens contribute through economic activity, social participation, and public responsibility.
- The state provides security, justice, and opportunities for prosperity.

This relationship reflects the ethical foundation of Rājadharmā. Governance is not a one-way exercise of authority; it is a system of mutual responsibilities.

From the perspective of State-Centered Care Ethics, flourishing emerges through cooperation between individuals and institutions.

5.9.8. Human Flourishing and Moral Development

Although the *Arthaśāstra* primarily focuses on political and economic governance, it does not separate material prosperity from ethical order. The stability of society depends upon responsible conduct by rulers, officials, and citizens.

The state therefore supports moral development by maintaining institutions that encourage:

- Justice.
- Discipline.
- Social responsibility.
- Trust.
- Order.

For Chanakya, prosperity without ethical governance is unstable. Wealth and power must operate within a framework of responsibility.

Thus, human flourishing involves not only external prosperity but also the development of a morally organized society.

5.9.9. Comparison with Modern Theories of Human Flourishing

Modern philosophical theories of flourishing, particularly the capability approach developed by thinkers such as Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, emphasize that societies should create conditions enabling individuals to achieve meaningful forms of life.

Although Chanakya's framework emerges from a different historical and cultural context, important parallels exist:

Chanakya's Concept	Modern Flourishing Theory
Prajāsukha (welfare of people)	Human well-being
Rakṣaṇa (protection)	Security and basic conditions
Artha (material prosperity)	Economic capability
Nyāya (justice)	Social fairness
Administrative responsibility	Institutional accountability
Resource preservation	Sustainable development

Both approaches reject the idea that governance should be judged only by power or wealth. Instead, they evaluate governance by its ability to enhance human life.

5.9.10. Human Flourishing as the Completion of State-Centered Care Ethics

The analysis of the *Arthaśāstra* reveals that Chanakya's conception of governance follows a comprehensive ethical structure:

The state protects life through rakṣaṇa.

↓

The state maintains justice through nyāya and daṇḍanīti.

↓

The state secures prosperity through economic governance.

↓

The state responds to vulnerability through disaster relief and public welfare.

↓

The state maintains ethical functioning through administrative accountability.

↓

The state preserves future welfare through environmental stewardship.

↓

All these functions culminate in human flourishing.

Thus, care is not an isolated activity within governance. It is the organizing principle that connects all functions of the state.

5.9.11. Conclusion

Human flourishing represents the highest objective of governance in Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra*. The various responsibilities of the state—protection, justice, economic management, crisis response, administrative ethics, and environmental stewardship—are not independent functions but interconnected expressions of a single ethical purpose: the welfare of society.

From the perspective of **State-Centered Care Ethics**, Chanakya offers a vision of governance in which political

authority exists as a means of enabling human development. The ruler is not merely a commander or administrator but a guardian responsible for creating conditions in which individuals and communities can achieve security, prosperity, and dignity.

Therefore, the *Arthaśāstra* presents a distinctive model of political care: a model in which the legitimacy of the state is measured not by the extent of its power but by the quality of life it creates for its people.

In this sense, Chanakya's Rājadharmā anticipates a profound principle of ethical governance:

The highest purpose of the state is not the preservation of power; it is the preservation and flourishing of human life.

6. Developing a New Theory: State-Centered Care Ethics

6.1. Introduction: The Need for a New Theoretical Model

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra* contains a comprehensive vision of governance in which political authority is inseparably connected with responsibility toward human welfare. Through the principles of *Rājadharmā*, *prajāśukha* (welfare of the people), *rakṣaṇa* (protection), justice, economic administration, crisis management, environmental responsibility, and administrative accountability, Chanakya presents the state as an institution whose legitimacy depends upon its capacity to protect and promote human flourishing.

However, existing theoretical frameworks of care ethics have largely focused on interpersonal relationships, social dependency, and the moral responsibilities arising within human relationships. Although contemporary scholars such as Carol Gilligan, Nel Noddings, Virginia Held, and Joan Tronto have significantly expanded the scope of care ethics into political and social domains, the role of the state as an organized structure of care remains insufficiently theorized.

Modern political philosophy has traditionally approached the state primarily through concepts such as:

- sovereignty,
- authority,
- justice,
- rights,
- security,
- economic regulation.

Care ethics, by contrast, has emphasized:

- vulnerability,
- dependency,
- relationships,
- responsibility,
- responsiveness to human needs.

The theory of **State-Centered Care Ethics (SCCE)** developed in this paper seeks to bridge this conceptual gap by proposing that the state itself can be understood as a moral institution whose primary ethical function is to recognize vulnerability, assume responsibility, and create conditions for collective human flourishing.

Drawing inspiration from Chanakya's conception of *Rājadharmā*, this theory argues that political authority becomes ethically legitimate not merely through the possession of power but through the responsible exercise of power for the welfare of society.

6.2. Definition of State-Centered Care Ethics

State-Centered Care Ethics (SCCE) may be defined as:

A political-ethical framework in which the legitimacy of state authority is measured by its ability to recognize human vulnerability, accept responsibility for collective welfare, establish competent institutions of protection and support, and create sustainable conditions for human flourishing.

Unlike traditional theories that view the state primarily as an authority structure, SCCE views the state as a **responsible care institution**.

The state does not replace interpersonal care; rather, it

addresses forms of vulnerability that cannot be adequately managed through individual relationships alone.

Examples include:

- national security threats,
- economic crises,
- public health emergencies,
- natural disasters,
- environmental degradation,
- systemic injustice.

In these situations, institutional care becomes necessary because the scale and complexity of human needs exceed individual capacity.

6.3. Philosophical Foundation of State-Centered Care Ethics

The theoretical foundation of SCCE rests upon five interconnected philosophical assumptions.

6.3.1. Human Beings are Fundamentally Vulnerable

The first assumption is that human beings exist within conditions of dependency and vulnerability.

Individuals depend upon:

- social institutions,
- economic systems,
- legal protection,
- environmental resources,
- collective security.

Chanakya recognizes this reality by placing the protection and welfare of citizens at the center of political responsibility.

The existence of the state itself is justified because individuals and communities face challenges that cannot be addressed through isolated action.

Therefore, vulnerability becomes the foundation of political responsibility.

6.3.2. Authority Creates Responsibility

The second assumption is that greater power creates greater responsibility.

The state possesses unique authority:

- law-making power,
- coercive power,
- economic power,
- administrative power.

Because the state possesses capacities unavailable to ordinary individuals, it also carries special ethical obligations.

Chanakya's *Rājadharma* reflects this principle. The ruler's authority is not a personal possession; it is a responsibility entrusted for the welfare of society.

Thus:

Power without responsibility becomes domination.

Power guided by responsibility becomes care.

6.3.3. Care Requires Institutions

The third assumption is that genuine care cannot depend only on personal goodwill. Complex societies require organized systems.

Institutional care includes:

- laws,
- administrative structures,
- welfare mechanisms,
- public health systems,
- economic regulations,
- environmental policies.

Chanakya's administrative philosophy demonstrates this institutionalization of responsibility.

A ruler's compassion alone is insufficient. Care must become embedded in governance structures.

6.3.4. Effective Care Requires Competence

The fourth assumption is that good intentions are not enough. Care requires knowledge, skill, and effective implementation.

An incompetent institution may cause harm despite claiming good intentions.

Therefore, SCCE emphasizes:

- professional administration,
- accountability,
- monitoring,
- evaluation,
- correction of failures.

Chanakya's emphasis on the selection, training, and supervision of officials represents an early recognition of this principle.

6.3.5. The Purpose of Governance is Human Flourishing

The final assumption is that governance ultimately exists to enable human flourishing.

Security, economic prosperity, justice, and environmental sustainability are not separate objectives; they are interconnected conditions necessary for a meaningful human life.

Thus, SCCE rejects the idea that the success of the state should be measured only by:

- military strength,
- territorial expansion,
- political stability,
- economic accumulation.

The true measure of governance is the quality of life experienced by society.

6.4. Core Principles of State-Centered Care Ethics

Based on the analysis of Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra*, SCCE consists of seven fundamental principles.

Principle 1: Recognition of Vulnerability (*Dainya-anubhava*)

A caring state must first recognize conditions in which individuals and communities cannot protect themselves adequately.

Examples:

- poverty,
- insecurity,
- illness,

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- disaster,
- exploitation.

Chanakya's emphasis on protection and welfare reflects this principle.

Principle 2: Institutional Responsibility *(Rājadharmā)*

Recognition of vulnerability must be followed by acceptance of responsibility.

The state cannot remain neutral toward human suffering.

Its ethical duty is to:

- protect,
- support,
- regulate,
- restore.

This transforms governance from authority into responsibility.

Principle 3: Protective Authority (*Rakṣaṇa*)

Care requires the ability to prevent harm.

Therefore, legitimate authority includes:

- maintaining law and order,
- defending society,
- preventing exploitation,
- protecting vulnerable groups.

Chanakya's concept of *daṇḍanīti* demonstrates that protective authority is an essential component of care.

Principle 4: Welfare-Oriented Governance
(*Prajāsukha*)

The ultimate objective of governance is public welfare.

Economic policies, taxation, administration, and justice must be evaluated according to their contribution to collective well-being.

This principle provides the ethical criterion for measuring political success.

Principle 5: Competent Administration (*Karma-kaśāla*)

Care must be delivered effectively.

Therefore, SCCE requires:

- capable officials,
- efficient institutions,
- transparency,
- accountability.

A state that intends to care but fails to deliver care has not fulfilled its ethical obligation.

Principle 6: Accountability of Care Institutions

Because institutions possess power, they must themselves be monitored.

A caring state requires mechanisms against:

- corruption,
- abuse of authority,
- administrative negligence.

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Chanakya's emphasis on supervision and auditing represents this principle.

Principle 7: Sustainable and Intergenerational Care

Care extends beyond present needs.

The state has responsibility toward future generations through:

- resource conservation,
- environmental protection,
- sustainable development.

Chanakya's resource management principles provide an early foundation for this idea.

6.5. Structure of State-Centered Care Ethics

The theoretical model can be represented as follows:

Human Vulnerability

↓

Recognition of Responsibility

↓

Institutional Organization of Care

↓

Protection, Justice, Welfare, and Sustainability

↓

Human Flourishing

This structure demonstrates that care is not merely a personal virtue but a complete theory of political organization.

6.6. Difference Between Traditional Care Ethics and State-Centered Care Ethics

Traditional Care Ethics	State-Centered Care Ethics
Begins with interpersonal relationships	Begins with political responsibility
Focuses on caregiver and recipient	Focuses on state and society
Emphasizes emotional responsiveness	Emphasizes institutional responsibility
Often addresses private and social care	Addresses governance and public systems
Care as moral relationship	Care as political obligation

SCCE does not replace traditional care ethics; rather, it expands its scope.

6.7. Theoretical Significance of SCCE

The development of State-Centered Care Ethics contributes to political philosophy in several ways.

First, it demonstrates that care can serve as a foundation for understanding political legitimacy.

Second, it challenges the assumption that care belongs only to private life.

Third, it provides a framework for evaluating governments according to their ability to respond to vulnerability.

Fourth, it creates a dialogue between ancient political thought and contemporary ethical theory.

Through Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra*, SCCE shows that ancient political philosophy contains resources for understanding modern questions of welfare, governance, and institutional responsibility.

6.8. Limitations of the Theory

Although SCCE provides a useful framework, it also requires critical awareness.

A state-centered model carries risks:

- excessive paternalism,
- limitation of individual autonomy,
- concentration of authority,
- possibility of abuse.

Therefore, SCCE requires complementary principles:

- accountability,
- transparency,
- participation,
- protection of individual dignity.

Chanakya's emphasis on administrative supervision provides an early response to this challenge, but contemporary democratic principles further develop these safeguards.

6.9. Conclusion

The theory of **State-Centered Care Ethics** developed in this study proposes that the state should be understood not merely as an authority structure but as an institution with ethical responsibilities toward human welfare.

Through the reinterpretation of Chanakya's *Rājadharmā*, this theory demonstrates that governance

becomes legitimate when it recognizes vulnerability, assumes responsibility, establishes competent institutions, and creates conditions for human flourishing.

Chanakya's contribution lies in showing that care can operate at the level of political organization. The ruler does not care merely through personal compassion; the state cares through justice, administration, protection, welfare policies, and sustainable governance.

Thus, State-Centered Care Ethics provides a conceptual bridge between ancient Indian political philosophy and contemporary ethical theory.

Its central proposition may be summarized as:

The ethical purpose of the state is not merely to exercise power over society, but to transform power into responsibility and responsibility into care for human flourishing.

7. Critical Analysis: Care Ethics, Power, and the Realist Dimension of the *Arthaśāstra*

7.1. Introduction

The interpretation of Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra* through the framework of care ethics raises an important philosophical question: **Can a political text known for its realism, strategic thinking, espionage, punishment, and military calculations be understood as expressing an ethic of care?**

At first glance, Chanakya appears to represent a tradition of political realism rather than care-oriented governance. The *Arthaśāstra* contains extensive discussions of statecraft, intelligence networks, diplomatic strategies, warfare, and coercive authority. These elements have often led scholars to characterize Chanakya as a realist thinker primarily concerned with power, stability, and political survival.

However, such an interpretation captures only one dimension of the text. The presence of political realism does not necessarily eliminate ethical responsibility. Rather, the central question is how power is justified and directed. In Chanakya's framework, political power is not an end in itself; it is an instrument whose legitimacy depends upon its ability to preserve social order and promote the welfare of the people.

This section argues that the *Arthaśāstra* represents a synthesis of **realism and responsibility**. Chanakya recognizes the realities of human conflict, self-interest, and political competition, but he places these realities

within the larger ethical framework of *Rājadharmā*. The ruler must possess power because power is necessary to protect society; however, power must remain oriented toward *prajāśukha* (the welfare of the people).

Thus, Chanakya's political thought does not reject care. Rather, it presents a distinctive form of **institutional care grounded in political realism**.

7.2. The Realist Character of the *Arthaśāstra*

The realist dimension of the *Arthaśāstra* is undeniable. Chanakya begins from a practical understanding of human society rather than an idealized assumption of universal harmony. Individuals and states pursue interests, conflicts emerge, and political instability remains a constant possibility.

The text therefore emphasizes:

- Strategic diplomacy.
- Military preparedness.
- Intelligence gathering.
- Political alliances.
- Punishment of wrongdoing.
- Administrative control.

These discussions demonstrate Chanakya's awareness that a state unable to maintain power cannot fulfill its responsibilities. A weak state may become incapable of protecting citizens, maintaining justice, or responding to crises.

From this perspective, realism becomes a prerequisite for effective care. A state that lacks authority cannot protect the vulnerable. Compassion without institutional strength may remain ineffective.

Therefore, Chanakya's realism should not necessarily be understood as opposed to ethics. Instead, it represents the practical foundation required for ethical governance.

7.3. Power as an Instrument of Care

One of the central contributions of Chanakya's political philosophy is his understanding that power itself is morally neutral; its ethical value depends upon its purpose and application.

Political authority may become oppressive when used for personal ambition, but it becomes legitimate when directed toward public welfare.

The ruler requires:

- Military power to defend society.
- Administrative power to implement policies.
- Legal power to prevent injustice.
- Economic power to support welfare.

Thus, power becomes a tool of care when it protects and enables human flourishing.

This principle challenges the assumption that care must always operate through weakness, softness, or non-coercive relationships. Chanakya demonstrates that institutional care sometimes requires authority, discipline, and enforcement.

A state unable to restrain violence or corruption does not demonstrate compassion; it abandons those who depend upon protection.

7.4. The Tension Between *Danḍa* and Care Ethics

The concept of *danḍa* (punishment or coercive authority) represents one of the greatest challenges in

interpreting Chanakya through care ethics. Modern care theories often emphasize empathy, dialogue, and relational responsibility, whereas Chanakya accepts punishment as an essential element of governance.

However, within Chanakya's framework, *daṇḍa* is not primarily an expression of anger or revenge. It serves a protective purpose.

Without effective punishment:

- Criminals may harm innocent people.
- Powerful individuals may exploit weaker groups.
- Social trust may collapse.
- Disorder may spread.

Therefore, punishment becomes a form of protective care when it prevents greater suffering.

This does not mean that all forms of punishment are ethically justified. Chanakya emphasizes appropriate application, proportionality, and administrative discipline. The ethical value of punishment depends upon whether it restores order and protects society.

Thus, *daṇḍa* illustrates the distinctive character of Chanakya's care ethic: care may require firmness when firmness protects human welfare.

7.5. Espionage and Surveillance: Protection versus Control

The use of intelligence networks in the *Arthaśāstra* presents another significant ethical challenge. Modern perspectives may view extensive surveillance as a threat to individual freedom and privacy.

Chanakya, however, understands intelligence primarily

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as a mechanism for protecting the state and preventing threats before they harm society.

The purposes of intelligence include:

- Detecting corruption.
- Identifying criminal activity.
- Preventing rebellion and instability.
- Protecting the security of the kingdom.

From the perspective of institutional care, intelligence represents preventive responsibility: the state attempts to recognize dangers before they create suffering.

However, this area also reveals the limits of Chanakya's model. Institutions created for protection may themselves become instruments of oppression if not properly regulated.

Therefore, a critical interpretation must acknowledge both dimensions:

- Intelligence can protect society.
- Uncontrolled surveillance can threaten liberty.

This tension remains relevant in contemporary discussions of security, privacy, and state responsibility.

7.6. War and the Ethics of Protection

Chanakya's extensive discussions of warfare may appear incompatible with a care-oriented interpretation. However, his approach to war is not based upon violence as an independent value. Military action is justified primarily through considerations of security, political necessity, and protection of the kingdom.

The ruler's responsibility includes protecting citizens

from external threats. A state unable to defend itself exposes society to greater suffering.

Thus, military capability becomes part of the protective function of governance.

Nevertheless, Chanakya's realism requires critical evaluation. The use of strategic deception and military force raises ethical questions concerning limits on political action.

The significance of Chanakya's thought lies not in rejecting these tensions but in acknowledging that governance often requires difficult choices where competing values must be balanced.

7.7. Care Ethics Beyond Sentimentalism

One of the most important theoretical contributions of Chanakya's framework is that it expands the meaning of care beyond personal compassion.

A narrow understanding of care may associate it primarily with:

- Kindness.
- Emotional concern.
- Personal relationships.
- Direct assistance.

Chanakya demonstrates another dimension:

- Institutional responsibility.
- Administrative competence.
- Public protection.
- Social stability.
- Long-term planning.

A ruler cannot personally care for millions of citizens through direct relationships. Therefore, care must be transformed into institutions, laws, policies, and systems.

This represents the distinctive contribution of **State-Centered Care Ethics**: care becomes a function of governance.

7.8. The Balance Between *Artha* and *Dharma*

A central philosophical tension within the *Arthaśāstra* is the relationship between *artha* (political and economic necessity) and *dharma* (ethical responsibility).

Chanakya does not deny the importance of power, wealth, and strategy. However, these must ultimately serve social order and welfare.

The relationship can be expressed as:

Artha provides the capacity for governance.

↓

Dharma provides the ethical direction of governance.

↓

Prajāsukha provides the final measure of success.

Without *artha*, the state lacks the resources to protect society. Without *dharma*, power becomes exploitation.

Therefore, Chanakya's political philosophy represents an attempt to integrate practical realism with ethical responsibility.

7.9. Limitations of Chanakya's Care Model

A critical analysis must also recognize the limitations of Chanakya's approach.

7.9.1. Hierarchical Structure

The *Arthaśāstra* emerges from a hierarchical political context in which the ruler occupies a central position. Unlike modern democratic theories, citizens are not presented as equal participants in governance.

7.9.2. Limited Individual Autonomy

The emphasis on state security and order may sometimes restrict individual freedom in favor of collective stability.

7.9.3. Instrumental View of Some Relationships

Certain political strategies discussed in the text reflect a pragmatic approach in which individuals may sometimes be considered in relation to political objectives.

These limitations demonstrate that Chanakya's model cannot simply be equated with modern care ethics. Rather, it represents a historically situated theory of institutional responsibility.

7.10 The Contribution of Chanakya's Model to Political Ethics

Despite these limitations, Chanakya's integration of power and responsibility offers a significant contribution to political philosophy.

His model demonstrates that:

1. Ethical governance requires institutional strength.
2. Care requires protection and security.
3. Welfare requires economic and administrative capacity.

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4. Power becomes legitimate when directed toward public good.
5. Institutions themselves require accountability.

This perspective challenges the assumption that realism and ethics are necessarily opposed.

Chanakya shows that political realism can be ethically oriented when power exists for the purpose of protecting and promoting collective welfare.

7.11. Conclusion

The *Arthaśāstra* presents a complex relationship between care, power, and realism. It cannot be understood as a simple text of compassion, nor can it be reduced to a manual of political manipulation. Its distinctive contribution lies in demonstrating that ethical governance must operate within the realities of human conflict, institutional limitations, and political necessity.

From the perspective of **State-Centered Care Ethics**, Chanakya's realism provides the practical foundation through which care becomes possible. Protection requires power, justice requires authority, welfare requires resources, and social stability requires effective institutions.

At the same time, Chanakya's framework reminds us that power must always be evaluated by its purpose. Political authority becomes ethically legitimate only when it serves the welfare and flourishing of society.

Therefore, the *Arthaśāstra* represents not a rejection of care but a distinctive form of political care—one in which responsibility is expressed through organized power, institutional competence, and the continuous pursuit of *prajāśukha*.

8. Comparative Analysis: Chanakya's Care Ethics and Modern Care Ethics

8.1. Introduction

The emergence of modern care ethics in the twentieth century represented a significant challenge to traditional approaches to morality and political philosophy that emphasized abstract principles, individual autonomy, and universal rules. Thinkers such as Carol Gilligan, Nel Noddings, Virginia Held, and Joan Tronto argued that ethical life cannot be fully understood without attention to relationships, dependency, vulnerability, responsibility, and the practical conditions required for human well-being.

Although modern care ethics developed primarily within contemporary Western philosophical discourse, several of its fundamental concerns find meaningful parallels in Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra*. The text does not present a theory of care in the modern philosophical sense, nor does it use the language of relational ethics. Nevertheless, its conception of *Rājadharmā* reveals a systematic concern with human vulnerability, institutional responsibility, welfare, protection, and the creation of conditions necessary for social flourishing.

The comparison between Chanakya and modern care ethics therefore does not suggest historical identity between the two traditions. Rather, it demonstrates a conceptual convergence: both recognize that ethical responsibility arises from human dependency and that institutions must be organized around the preservation and enhancement of human life.

The major difference lies in their starting points.

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Modern care ethics generally begins with interpersonal relationships and extends toward social institutions, whereas Chanakya begins with the responsibilities of political authority and develops institutional mechanisms through which care is delivered.

Thus, Chanakya may be understood as representing an early form of **state-centered institutional care**, while modern care ethics provides a theoretical framework for analyzing and evaluating such institutional responsibility.

8.2. Care as Responsibility: Gilligan and Chanakya

8.2.1. Carol Gilligan's Ethics of Care

Carol Gilligan's influential work *In a Different Voice* challenged dominant moral theories that prioritized abstract justice and individual autonomy. She argued that moral reasoning also involves attention to relationships, context, responsibility, and responsiveness to human needs.

According to Gilligan, ethical action emerges from recognizing the interconnectedness of human beings and responding appropriately to situations of dependency and vulnerability.

Care, therefore, is not merely emotion or kindness; it is a moral orientation toward responsibility.

8.2.2. Chanakya's Concept of Rājadharmā as Responsibility

Chanakya's conception of kingship similarly begins with responsibility rather than personal privilege. The ruler possesses authority because society depends upon governance for protection, stability, and prosperity.

The king's responsibilities include:

- Protecting citizens.
- Ensuring justice.
- Supporting economic life.
- Responding during crises.
- Maintaining social order.

The ruler's legitimacy is therefore derived from fulfilling obligations toward society.

This parallels Gilligan's emphasis on responsibility as a foundation of ethical life. However, the context differs:

- Gilligan examines interpersonal moral relationships.
- Chanakya examines political responsibility.

Thus, Chanakya transforms care from an interpersonal virtue into a governing principle.

8.3. Nel Noddings and the Relationship Between Care and Dependency

8.3.1. Noddings' Relational Understanding of Care

Nel Noddings emphasizes that care arises from relationships in which one party recognizes and responds to the needs of another. For Noddings, genuine care requires attentiveness, responsibility, and appropriate response.

A central idea in her theory is that human beings are fundamentally dependent upon relationships of care throughout life.

8.3.2. Chanakya's Recognition of Social Dependency

Chanakya's political philosophy similarly recognizes

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that individuals cannot secure all aspects of life independently. Citizens depend upon institutions for:

- Security.
- Justice.
- Economic stability.
- Disaster protection.
- Resource management.

The state therefore assumes responsibility because society contains conditions of dependency.

However, the relationship differs from Noddings' interpersonal model. The ruler does not provide care through personal emotional engagement with every citizen. Instead, care is mediated through institutions:

- Laws.
- Officials.
- Administrative systems.
- Public policies.

This distinction explains the concept of **institutional care**. Chanakya extends the logic of care from personal relationships to political structures.

8.4. Joan Tronto and the Institutionalization of Care

8.4.1. Tronto's Political Theory of Care

Joan Tronto provides one of the most relevant comparisons for Chanakya because she argues that care is not merely a private activity but a political and institutional concern.

According to Tronto, a caring society requires:

1. Recognizing needs.
2. Assuming responsibility.
3. Providing competent care.
4. Ensuring accountability.

Care must therefore become embedded within social and political institutions.

8.4.2. Chanakya's Administrative Model and Institutional Care

Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra* demonstrates a similar understanding. The state must:

Recognize needs:

Through administration, intelligence, economic observation, and social assessment.

Assume responsibility:

Through the duties of the ruler (*Rājadharmā*).

Provide competent care:

Through trained officials, economic policies, justice systems, and disaster management.

Ensure accountability:

Through supervision, audits, and punishment of corrupt officials.

This parallel is particularly significant because it demonstrates that Chanakya's model is not based merely on benevolent intention. It requires organized institutional capacity.

Thus, Tronto's modern theory of political care provides an analytical framework through which Chanakya's administrative philosophy can be understood.

8.5. Virginia Held and the Ethics of Care in Public Life

8.5.1. Held's Expansion of Care Beyond Private Relationships

Virginia Held argues that care ethics should not be restricted to family or personal relationships. Modern societies require institutions and political systems guided by values of care.

She criticizes approaches that separate justice from human relationships and argues that social institutions should reflect concern for human dependency and vulnerability.

8.5.2. Chanakya's Political Care Model

Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra* similarly rejects the separation between governance and human welfare. Political institutions exist precisely because human beings require collective support.

The state must address:

- Economic vulnerability.
- Security threats.
- Social disorder.
- Natural disasters.
- Administrative corruption.

Thus, governance becomes a form of organized care.

However, an important difference remains. Held's

framework emerges from democratic concerns regarding equality and participation, whereas Chanakya's framework is based on responsible kingship.

Therefore:

- Held asks how societies can be organized around care.
- Chanakya asks how rulers can responsibly govern society.

The ethical concern is similar, but the political structure differs.

8.6. Chanakya and the Capability Approach: Sen and Nussbaum

8.6.1. Human Flourishing and Capabilities

The capability approach developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum argues that social systems should be evaluated according to their ability to enable individuals to achieve meaningful forms of human flourishing.

Human well-being requires more than resources; it requires real opportunities and capabilities.

8.6.2. Parallels with Chanakya's *Prajāsukha*

Chanakya's concept of *prajāsukha* shares important similarities with this approach.

The ruler must create conditions that enable citizens to experience:

- Security.
- Prosperity.

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- Social stability.
- Economic opportunity.
- Protection of dignity.

The goal of governance is therefore not merely survival but flourishing.

The difference is that Sen and Nussbaum emphasize individual capabilities and freedom, whereas Chanakya emphasizes collective welfare and social order.

Nevertheless, both traditions evaluate governance according to its contribution to human well-being rather than merely institutional strength.

8.7. Justice and Care: Integration Rather Than Opposition

One of the most important contributions of comparing Chanakya with modern care ethics is the recognition that justice and care need not be opposing principles.

Traditional moral philosophy often presents:

- Justice as impartial rules.
- Care as relational responsibility.

Chanakya's political philosophy integrates both.

Justice protects individuals from harm, while care provides the broader purpose behind justice.

Examples include:

- Punishment protects society.
- Law protects vulnerable persons.
- Taxation supports public welfare.
- Administration preserves social stability.

Thus, Chanakya demonstrates that institutional care requires both compassion and justice.

8.8. Major Differences Between Chanakya and Modern Care Ethics

Despite important similarities, significant differences must be acknowledged.

8.8.1. Political Structure

Modern care ethics generally develops within democratic frameworks emphasizing equality and participation.

Chanakya's model operates within a monarchy where responsibility flows primarily from ruler to subjects.

8.8.2. Individual Autonomy

Modern care ethics places strong emphasis on individual voice and agency.

Chanakya places greater emphasis on social order, stability, and collective welfare.

8.8.3. Moral Foundation

Modern care ethics often begins with human relationships and vulnerability.

Chanakya begins with political duty and the responsibilities of sovereignty.

These differences prevent a simplistic identification of Chanakya with modern care theorists.

8.9. Toward a Theory of State-Centered Care Ethics

The comparison suggests that Chanakya's contribution lies in developing a distinctive form of institutional care.

Modern care ethics asks:

How should humans care for one another and how should societies organize care?

Chanakya asks:

How should political authority be organized so that society is protected and enabled to flourish?

The answer in both traditions involves:

- Recognition of vulnerability.
- Acceptance of responsibility.
- Development of institutions.
- Protection of human welfare.

Therefore, Chanakya can be interpreted as an early theorist of state-centered care, where political authority becomes ethically meaningful through its capacity to protect and promote human flourishing.

8.10. Conclusion

The comparison between Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra* and modern care ethics reveals both remarkable similarities and important differences. While Chanakya does not present a philosophical theory of care comparable to contemporary scholars, his conception of *Rājadharmā* contains many principles central to care ethics: responsibility, protection, responsiveness, institutional accountability, and concern for human welfare.

Modern care ethics provides a valuable conceptual framework for understanding these dimensions of Chanakya's political thought. Conversely, Chanakya's model expands the scope of care ethics by demonstrating how care can operate through political institutions and systems of governance.

The central contribution of this comparative analysis is the recognition that care is not limited to private relationships or interpersonal morality. It can also become a principle of governance.

In Chanakya's vision, the ethical state is one that transforms power into responsibility, authority into protection, and administration into a mechanism for human flourishing.

Therefore, the *Arthaśāstra* may be understood as representing an early and distinctive tradition of **State-Centered Care Ethics**, where the ultimate measure of political success is not the strength of the ruler but the well-being of the people.

9. Contemporary Relevance of Chanakya's State-Centered Care Ethics

9.1. Introduction

The reinterpretation of Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra* through the framework of **State-Centered Care Ethics** is not limited to an examination of ancient political thought. The principles embedded within *Rājadharmā* address several fundamental questions that remain central to contemporary political philosophy:

- What is the ethical purpose of the state?
- Why should political authority be considered legitimate?
- What responsibilities do governments have toward vulnerable populations?
- How should power be exercised to promote human welfare?
- How can institutions balance security, prosperity, justice, and sustainability?

Modern states operate in an increasingly complex environment characterized by economic inequality, public health emergencies, climate change, technological transformation, migration, and global insecurity. These challenges have renewed interest in understanding governance not merely as the exercise of authority but as a system of responsibility toward human well-being.

In this context, Chanakya's conception of *Rājadharmā* provides a valuable philosophical resource. Although developed within an ancient monarchical framework, its underlying principles—protection, welfare, accountability, responsible administration, and sustainable resource management—continue to resonate with

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contemporary ideas of ethical governance.

The relevance of Chanakya's political thought lies not in reproducing ancient institutions but in recovering a fundamental principle:

The legitimacy of political power depends upon its capacity to care for society.

9.2. Relevance to the Modern Welfare State

One of the strongest parallels between Chanakya's political philosophy and contemporary governance is the idea that the state has positive obligations toward the welfare of citizens.

Modern welfare states recognize that governments must provide conditions necessary for a dignified life, including:

- healthcare,
- education,
- social security,
- economic protection,
- assistance during hardship.

Similarly, Chanakya does not view the ruler's responsibility as limited to maintaining law and order. The state must actively promote *prajāsukha*—the welfare and prosperity of the people.

This represents a significant shift from the minimal conception of the state as merely a protector against external threats. Both Chanakya and modern welfare theory recognize that political authority carries obligations of positive support.

The contemporary relevance of this principle is evident

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in debates regarding:

- poverty reduction,
- social protection programs,
- public services,
- equitable economic development.

A government that ignores social vulnerability fails to fulfill the ethical purpose of governance.

9.3. Public Health and Crisis Governance

The global experience of pandemics and health emergencies has demonstrated the essential role of the state in protecting collective well-being.

Public health crises reveal that individual action alone is insufficient. Effective responses require:

- institutional coordination,
- scientific planning,
- resource management,
- emergency administration,
- protection of vulnerable populations.

Chanakya's emphasis on disaster management, food security, and administrative preparedness reflects a similar understanding.

The state's responsibility during crises includes:

- recognizing threats,
- mobilizing resources,
- protecting citizens,
- restoring social stability.

From the perspective of State-Centered Care Ethics, public health governance represents one of the clearest

examples of institutional care because it directly concerns the preservation of human life.

The lesson from Chanakya's framework is that a responsible state must prepare not only for political threats but also for conditions that endanger the physical well-being of society.

9.4. Ethical Administration and Good Governance

Contemporary governance places increasing emphasis on:

- transparency,
- accountability,
- corruption prevention,
- institutional effectiveness.

These concerns closely parallel Chanakya's detailed treatment of administrative ethics.

Chanakya recognized that even a welfare-oriented ruler could fail if administrative institutions became corrupt or inefficient. Therefore, he emphasized:

- careful selection of officials,
- supervision,
- financial accountability,
- punishment for misuse of authority.

This principle remains highly relevant today.

Modern states face challenges such as:

- misuse of public funds,
- bureaucratic inefficiency,
- lack of institutional trust,

- abuse of administrative power.

Chanakya's insight that institutions responsible for public welfare must themselves be ethically regulated provides an important foundation for contemporary discussions of good governance.

9.5. Human Security and the Changing Meaning of Protection

Traditional political theories often define security primarily in terms of military strength and territorial defense. Contemporary political thought, however, increasingly emphasizes **human security**—the protection of individuals from threats affecting their survival, dignity, and well-being.

Chanakya's concept of *rakṣaṇa* can be interpreted through this broader understanding.

Protection in the *Arthaśāstra* includes:

- defense from external enemies,
- prevention of crime,
- maintenance of justice,
- economic stability,
- protection during disasters.

Thus, security is not merely protection of the state; it is protection of society.

This principle has contemporary relevance in discussions regarding:

- food security,
- economic insecurity,
- refugee protection,
- disaster resilience,

- public safety.

Chanakya's approach anticipates the modern shift from "security of the state" toward "security of human beings."

9.6. Environmental Governance and Sustainable Development

Environmental challenges represent one of the most significant concerns of contemporary governance. Climate change, resource depletion, biodiversity loss, and water scarcity have demonstrated that political responsibility must extend beyond immediate human needs toward long-term ecological sustainability.

Chanakya's discussions of:

- forests,
- water management,
- agriculture,
- resource regulation,

reveal an understanding that natural resources require responsible administration.

The modern concept of sustainable development rests upon a similar principle:

Present prosperity must not destroy the foundations of future well-being.

State-Centered Care Ethics extends this responsibility by arguing that environmental governance is a form of care toward both present and future generations.

The state's responsibility is therefore not merely economic development but sustainable human flourishing.

9.7. Economic Governance and Social Justice

Economic inequality remains one of the central challenges of contemporary societies. Questions concerning taxation, wealth distribution, employment, and economic opportunity continue to shape political debates.

Chanakya's economic philosophy provides a relevant perspective because it rejects both economic neglect and uncontrolled exploitation.

The state must:

- encourage productive activity,
- regulate harmful practices,
- maintain economic stability,
- protect vulnerable groups.

Economic governance, therefore, is not separate from ethics. It is a mechanism through which the state fulfills its responsibility toward society.

The contemporary relevance of this principle can be seen in debates concerning:

- inclusive growth,
- economic justice,
- social welfare,
- responsible taxation.

9.8. Artificial Intelligence, Technology, and Emerging Forms of Governance

A new area where State-Centered Care Ethics may provide insight is the governance of emerging technologies, especially artificial intelligence.

Modern states increasingly face questions regarding:

- data protection,
- algorithmic fairness,
- employment disruption,
- technological inequality.

The principles derived from Chanakya's framework suggest that technological governance should be evaluated according to its impact on human welfare.

A caring state must ask:

- Does technology reduce vulnerability or increase it?
- Does it promote human flourishing?
- Are vulnerable populations protected?

Thus, SCCE provides a useful ethical framework for evaluating contemporary technological governance.

9.9. Global Governance and International Responsibility

Contemporary challenges such as pandemics, climate change, migration, and economic instability demonstrate that care cannot remain limited within national boundaries.

Although Chanakya's political theory focuses primarily on the kingdom, the underlying principle of responsible governance can be extended to global contexts.

States today have responsibilities toward:

- international cooperation,
- humanitarian assistance,
- environmental commitments,
- global health security.

The idea that power carries responsibility is therefore applicable beyond domestic governance.

9.10 Limitations in Applying Chanakya to Contemporary Governance

While Chanakya's principles remain relevant, they must be interpreted critically.

Modern democratic societies differ significantly from Chanakya's political environment.

Contemporary governance requires additional principles, including:

- individual rights,
- equality before law,
- democratic participation,
- freedom of expression,
- protection of minority interests.

Therefore, State-Centered Care Ethics should not seek to recreate ancient monarchy but rather extract universal ethical principles of responsibility and welfare.

The relevance of Chanakya lies in his philosophical insights, not in a direct replication of his institutional model.

9.11 Conclusion

The contemporary relevance of Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra* lies in its enduring vision of governance as responsibility. In an age facing complex social, economic, environmental, and technological challenges, the question of what makes political authority legitimate remains as important as ever.

The theory of **State-Centered Care Ethics** demonstrates that Chanakya's conception of *Rājadharmā* provides a valuable framework for understanding the ethical obligations of modern states.

Its central lessons include:

- Power must serve welfare.
- Authority must protect vulnerability.
- Institutions must be accountable.
- Development must be sustainable.
- Governance must ultimately promote human flourishing.

Therefore, Chanakya's political philosophy continues to offer a meaningful contribution to contemporary discussions of ethical governance. The ancient principle that the ruler's welfare lies in the welfare of the people remains relevant today:

A state achieves legitimacy not merely by governing society, but by caring for the conditions that allow society to flourish.

10. Rethinking the Relationship Between Power, Ethics, and Care

10.1 Introduction

The reinterpretation of Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra* through the framework of **State-Centered Care Ethics (SCCE)** raises several important philosophical questions regarding the relationship between power, morality, governance, and human welfare.

At the center of this discussion is a fundamental tension:

Can an institution based on authority and coercive power genuinely be understood as an institution of care?

Traditional understandings of care often associate it with compassion, interpersonal relationships, emotional responsiveness, and voluntary responsibility. Political power, on the other hand, is frequently associated with authority, enforcement, control, and the exercise of force.

The contribution of this research lies in demonstrating that these two concepts are not necessarily contradictory. Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra* suggests that care at the level of society requires institutional capacity. A state that lacks authority may be unable to protect vulnerable populations, maintain justice, or provide conditions necessary for human flourishing.

However, this does not mean that all forms of state power constitute care. The ethical character of power depends upon its purpose, limitations, and accountability.

Therefore, the central argument of this discussion is:

Power becomes care when it is exercised responsibly for the protection and flourishing of society; power without responsibility becomes domination.

10.2 Beyond the Traditional Opposition Between Power and Care

A common assumption in political and ethical theory is that power and care represent opposing orientations.

Power is often associated with:

- authority,
- control,
- hierarchy,
- coercion.

Care is often associated with:

- compassion,
- cooperation,
- responsiveness,
- relationship.

However, this opposition becomes problematic when applied to large-scale societies. Individual compassion alone cannot address collective challenges such as:

- national security,
- public health emergencies,
- economic crises,
- environmental disasters,
- systemic injustice.

These challenges require institutional mechanisms.

Chanakya's political philosophy demonstrates that care must sometimes operate through organized authority.

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Protection requires enforcement, justice requires legal power, and welfare requires administrative capacity.

Thus, SCCE proposes a broader understanding:

Care is not the absence of power; rather, ethical care requires power directed toward responsible purposes.

10.3 The Ethical Transformation of Political Power

One of the central insights of Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra* is that political power is not inherently moral or immoral. Its ethical character depends upon how it is used.

Power directed toward:

- personal wealth,
- domination,
- exploitation,

violates the principles of *Rājadharmā*.

Power directed toward:

- protection,
- justice,
- prosperity,
- social stability,

becomes ethically justified.

This distinction allows us to reinterpret Chanakya's political realism.

His emphasis on military strength, intelligence systems, taxation, and punishment should not be understood merely as mechanisms of control. They are instruments

whose legitimacy depends upon whether they serve the welfare of society.

Therefore, SCCE does not reject political realism; it places realism within an ethical framework.

10.4 Can Coercion Be a Form of Care?

One of the most challenging issues in Chanakya's political thought concerns the role of *daṇḍa* (punishment and coercive authority).

Modern care ethics may raise the question:

Can punishment and enforcement be considered forms of care?

The answer depends upon the purpose and application of coercive power.

If punishment is used for:

- revenge,
- political suppression,
- personal authority,

it cannot be considered care.

However, if punishment serves to:

- prevent violence,
- protect vulnerable individuals,
- maintain justice,
- preserve social order,

it may represent protective care.

Chanakya's concept of *daṇḍanīti* reflects this

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understanding. The absence of authority may allow stronger individuals to exploit weaker members of society.

Therefore, a caring state must possess the capacity to prevent harm.

This introduces an important dimension to care ethics:

Sometimes caring for the vulnerable requires the ability to restrain those who cause harm.

10.5 The Risk of Paternalism in State-Centered Care

Although SCCE emphasizes the responsibility of the state, it also faces a significant philosophical challenge:

Could a state that claims to care become excessively paternalistic?

A powerful state may justify restrictions on individual freedom in the name of welfare and protection.

This danger is particularly relevant in any theory where the state assumes responsibility for citizens' well-being.

Therefore, State-Centered Care Ethics must include safeguards:

- accountability of institutions,
- transparency of decision-making,
- respect for human dignity,
- participation of citizens,
- legal limitations on authority.

Chanakya himself recognized the danger of administrative abuse by emphasizing supervision of officials and punishment of corruption.

However, contemporary democratic systems provide additional mechanisms for preventing excessive concentration of power.

Thus, SCCE should be understood not as unlimited state authority but as **responsible and accountable state responsibility**.

10.6 Care and Citizenship: From Subjects to Participants

Another important question concerns the relationship between the state and citizens.

Chanakya's political framework primarily describes the relationship between ruler and subjects. Modern democratic theory, however, emphasizes citizens as active participants in governance.

This creates a significant difference.

A traditional model may ask:

"How should the ruler care for the people?"

A modern democratic model asks:

"How should society collectively organize care through institutions?"

Therefore, contemporary SCCE requires a transformation from:

Paternal care by the ruler

to:

Participatory care through democratic institutions.

The ethical insight of Chanakya remains valuable, but its application must evolve according to modern principles of citizenship and equality.

10.7 Care as a Measure of Political Legitimacy

One of the strongest implications of SCCE is that it provides an alternative criterion for evaluating political legitimacy.

Traditional approaches often evaluate states according to:

- sovereignty,
- territorial control,
- constitutional structure,
- military strength.

SCCE proposes another question:

How effectively does the state care for the conditions necessary for human flourishing?

A legitimate state should demonstrate:

- protection of life,
- reduction of suffering,
- social stability,
- economic opportunity,
- environmental responsibility.

This does not eliminate the importance of law and political institutions; rather, it provides an ethical purpose for them.

10.8 The Relationship Between Dharma, Care, and Justice

The discussion also reveals a deep relationship between *dharma*, care, and justice.

Care without justice may become favoritism.

Justice without care may become rigid and insensitive.

Chanakya's framework attempts to integrate both.

Justice establishes:

- fairness,
- order,
- accountability.

Care provides:

- purpose,
- compassion,
- responsiveness.

Within Rājadharmā:

- Justice protects society.
- Care sustains society.
- Governance enables society to flourish.

Thus, care ethics does not replace justice; it expands the understanding of why justice matters.

10.9 Contribution of State-Centered Care Ethics to Political Philosophy

The theoretical model developed in this research contributes to political philosophy in three important ways.

First: Expanding the Scope of Care Ethics

SCCE expands care ethics beyond interpersonal relationships and demonstrates how care can operate through political institutions.

Second: Reinterpreting Political Authority

It proposes that authority derives ethical legitimacy from responsibility rather than merely power.

Third: Connecting Ancient and Contemporary Thought

It creates a dialogue between Chanakya's *Rājadharmā* and modern theories of care, welfare, and human development.

Through this framework, ancient Indian political thought becomes part of global discussions on ethical governance.

10.10 Remaining Questions and Future Research

Although SCCE provides a new theoretical direction, several questions require further investigation:

1. How can state-centered care be balanced with individual freedom?

Future research should explore the relationship between care and rights.

2. How can care institutions remain accountable?

The problem of institutional abuse requires continued

3. Can SCCE apply beyond national states?

Global challenges may require extending care ethics to international institutions.

4. How can ancient concepts such as *Rājadharmā* contribute to modern democratic governance?

Comparative research between Indian political thought and contemporary political theory may further develop this framework.

10.11 Conclusion

The discussion demonstrates that Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra* provides a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between power and responsibility. While the text is undoubtedly realistic in its approach to politics, its realism is not detached from ethical concerns.

The central insight of State-Centered Care Ethics is that political authority achieves moral legitimacy when it becomes a means of protecting and promoting human welfare.

Chanakya's contribution lies in showing that care at the societal level requires:

- institutional capacity,
- administrative competence,
- protective authority,
- ethical responsibility.

At the same time, the discussion recognizes that state power must remain accountable and limited. A state

cannot claim to care merely because it possesses authority; it must demonstrate care through responsible action.

Therefore, the relationship between power and care should not be understood as oppositional. Rather:

Power without care becomes domination; care without power becomes ineffective; but power guided by responsibility becomes ethical governance.

Through this synthesis, Chanakya's *Rājadharmā* offers a significant contribution to contemporary debates on political ethics, demonstrating that the highest purpose of governance is not merely maintaining order but creating the conditions for human flourishing.

11. Conclusion: Reinterpreting Rājadharmā through the Lens of Care Ethics

11.1. Introduction

The present study has attempted to reinterpret Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra* through the philosophical framework of care ethics, arguing that the ethical foundation of governance in the text can be understood as a form of **State-Centered Care Ethics**. While modern care ethics emerged as a critique of purely abstract, individualistic, and justice-centered approaches to morality, Chanakya's political philosophy demonstrates that care can also operate through institutions, administrative systems, and structures of governance.

The central argument of this research is not that Chanakya developed care ethics in the modern philosophical sense. Rather, it is that the *Arthaśāstra* contains a distinctive conception of political responsibility in which the purpose of authority is to protect, sustain, and promote the flourishing of society. Through the concept of *Rājadharmā*, Chanakya transforms political power from an instrument of domination into a responsibility directed toward collective welfare.

The reinterpretation of Rājadharmā through care ethics reveals that governance, in Chanakya's vision, is fundamentally an ethical relationship between authority and dependency. The ruler possesses power because society requires protection, organization, and support. Therefore, the legitimacy of political authority depends upon the ability of the state to respond responsibly to human needs.

11.2. Rājadharmā as the Ethical Foundation of Governance

The analysis throughout this paper demonstrates that Rājadharmā is not merely a collection of duties imposed upon the ruler; it represents a comprehensive ethical framework governing the relationship between the state and society.

In Chanakya's political philosophy, the ruler's responsibilities include:

- Protection of citizens (*rakṣaṇa*).
- Promotion of welfare (*prajāśukha*).
- Maintenance of justice (*nyāya*).
- Economic prosperity (*artha-vyavasthā*).
- Crisis management and relief.
- Administrative accountability.
- Environmental preservation.

These responsibilities reveal that kingship is not defined primarily by privilege but by obligation.

The ruler is therefore not merely the holder of sovereignty but the guardian of social well-being. Authority becomes ethically meaningful only when it serves the conditions necessary for human flourishing.

Through this interpretation, Rājadharmā emerges as a political ethic of responsibility.

11.3. From Personal Virtue to Institutional Care

One of the major contributions of this study is the argument that Chanakya's concept of care extends beyond personal morality. Traditional understandings of care often emphasize interpersonal relationships, compassion, and direct assistance. However, the complexity of political

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society requires care to be institutionalized.

A ruler cannot personally respond to the needs of every individual. Therefore, care must be transformed into:

- Laws that protect society.
- Administrations that deliver services.
- Economic systems that sustain prosperity.
- Justice institutions that prevent exploitation.
- Disaster mechanisms that respond to vulnerability.

The *Arthaśāstra* demonstrates this transformation of care from personal concern into institutional responsibility.

This is the distinctive contribution of Chanakya's model: it presents care not simply as an emotion or virtue but as a principle of governance.

11.4. The Integration of Care and Realism

A significant finding of this research is that Chanakya's care ethic cannot be separated from his political realism. The *Arthaśāstra* recognizes that societies contain conflict, competition, corruption, and threats. Therefore, effective care requires institutional strength.

Protection requires authority.

Justice requires enforcement.

Economic welfare requires administration.

Social stability requires regulation.

Thus, Chanakya challenges the assumption that care is opposed to power. Instead, he demonstrates that power can become ethically legitimate when it is directed toward

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protection and welfare.

The presence of punishment, intelligence systems, and military organization does not negate care; rather, these mechanisms represent the instruments through which the state attempts to preserve social order.

However, Chanakya's realism also creates ethical tensions. Excessive emphasis on security may threaten individual autonomy, and unchecked authority may become oppressive. Therefore, the *Arthaśāstra* should not be interpreted as a simple model of benevolent governance but as a complex theory balancing power with responsibility.

11.5 The State as a Care-Giving Institution

The most significant conclusion emerging from this study is that Chanakya presents the state itself as a care-giving institution.

The state cares by:

Protecting vulnerability

Through security, law enforcement, and justice systems.

Supporting prosperity

Through economic management, taxation, agriculture, and trade regulation.

Responding to suffering

Through disaster relief, food security, and public welfare measures.

Maintaining ethical functioning

Through administrative supervision and accountability.

Preserving future welfare

Through environmental and resource management.

This understanding closely parallels modern political theories of care, particularly Joan Tronto's argument that care must be recognized as an institutional and political responsibility.

However, Chanakya's contribution is unique because he develops this idea within the framework of ancient political theory, where the ethical purpose of sovereignty is defined by the welfare of the governed.

11.6 Reconsidering the Relationship Between Dharma and Care

The reinterpretation of Rājadharmā through care ethics also provides a deeper understanding of the relationship between *dharma* and political responsibility.

Care ethics does not replace dharma; rather, it provides a contemporary philosophical lens through which certain dimensions of dharma become visible.

In Chanakya's framework:

- *Dharma* provides the ethical foundation.
- *Rājadharmā* translates ethical responsibility into governance.
- *Artha* provides the resources and capacity to act.
- *Prajāsukha* becomes the measure of success.

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Therefore, care ethics may be understood as an interpretive framework revealing the practical, relational, and welfare-oriented dimensions of Rājadharmā.

The state does not fulfill dharma merely by maintaining order; it fulfills dharma by sustaining the conditions in which life can flourish.

11.7 Contribution to Comparative Political Philosophy

This study contributes to comparative political philosophy by demonstrating that theories of care and responsibility are not limited to modern Western traditions.

Modern care ethics has made significant contributions by emphasizing:

- Human vulnerability.
- Dependency.
- Relational responsibility.
- Social obligations.

Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra* contributes an ancient political perspective emphasizing:

- Institutional responsibility.
- Administrative competence.
- Welfare-oriented governance.
- Protection of social order.

The comparison reveals both convergence and difference.

Modern care ethics generally develops from interpersonal morality toward political institutions.

Chanakya develops from political authority toward institutional responsibility.

Yet both traditions share a fundamental insight:

Ethical societies must be organized around the recognition of human vulnerability and the responsibility to respond to human needs.

11.8 Limitations and Future Directions

This study also recognizes that interpreting Chanakya through care ethics has certain limitations.

First, the *Arthaśāstra* emerges from a historical context fundamentally different from modern democratic societies. Its conception of authority is hierarchical rather than participatory.

Second, Chanakya's emphasis on state stability and security may sometimes conflict with contemporary concerns regarding individual freedom and human rights.

Third, the concept of care in Chanakya remains primarily state-centered and does not fully address questions of equality, gender relations, or individual autonomy emphasized by modern care theorists.

Future research may explore:

- Gender and care perspectives in ancient Indian political thought.
- Comparisons between Chanakya and Buddhist political ethics.
- Environmental care in Indian philosophical traditions.
- Applications of Rājadharmā to contemporary governance models.

11.9 Final Conclusion

The reinterpretation of Chanakya's *Arthaśāstra* through the lens of care ethics reveals a profound ethical dimension of ancient Indian political thought. Beneath its discussions of power, economics, administration, and strategy lies a central concern: the responsibility of political authority toward human welfare.

Chanakya's vision of governance demonstrates that the purpose of the state is not merely to maintain sovereignty but to create the conditions necessary for human flourishing. The ruler's success is measured not by personal power or territorial expansion but by the prosperity, security, and happiness of the people.

Therefore, Rājadharmā may be understood as an early theory of institutional care—one in which governance becomes a moral practice of protecting life, reducing suffering, maintaining justice, and enabling collective flourishing.

The ultimate philosophical message of the *Arthaśāstra* can thus be expressed as follows:

Power achieves legitimacy only when it becomes responsibility; authority becomes ethical only when it becomes care; and governance fulfills its highest purpose only when it enables human flourishing.

In this sense, Chanakya's political philosophy provides a significant contribution to the global history of ethical governance by demonstrating that care is not merely a private virtue but a foundational principle of political responsibility.

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