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## Governance reimagined: Saptanga theory and the path to Amrit Kaal

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### Abstract

This paper explores the socio-economic political importance of Kautilya's Saptanga theory interpreting India's idea of Amrit Kaal (2022-2047). The Saptanga theory considers state as a system with 7 interdependent elements the ruler, ministers, territory and population, fortifications, treasury, armed forces, and allies. It provides a framework on governance, administrative efficiency, economic strength in ancient Indian governance. On the other hand, Amrit Kaal signifies transformation of Indian economy to a developed economy by 2047. It focusses on highlighting key policy priorities such as institutional reforms, infrastructure development, economic restructuring, inclusive growth, digital governance, and sustainable development. The paper tries to make a comparison of these two frameworks, which are parallel to Saptanga principles. At the same time, the study acknowledges the structural differences arising from the shift from monarchy to democracy and from a traditional agrarian economy to a technologically driven industrial and service-based economy. The paper concludes that revisiting classical Indian political thought through the lens of current policy discourse can provide valuable perspectives for strengthening governance, enhancing state capacity, and achieving holistic national development.

**Keywords:** Saptanga theory, Kautilya, Arthashastra, Amrit Kaal, socio-economic political development

### 1. Introduction

Saptanga theory is considered as the central theme of Kautilya's Arthshastra. According to Saptanga theory the state is defined as a system which is composed of 7 integral limbs-Swamin (King), Amatya (ministers), Janapada (territory and people), Durga (forts), Kosha (treasury), Panda (army) and Mitra (allies). All these elements give a strong political foundation for a state.

The idea of Amrit Kaal, in the contemporary India has been adopted with the aim of transforming the country into a developed one by 2047. The transformation does not confine to mere economic growth but also a holistic approach that incorporates a change in governance, infrastructure, social equity and global influence.

When both these frameworks are analysed together, it can be found that even though Amritkaal is a futuristic vision, it has got a strong deep connection with the ancient foundations which emphasis on strong governance. A comparative study helps to understand how monarchical idealism has got reconciled with the democratic modernisation.

### 2. Review of Literature

In recent years there has been an increasing reflection of ancient administration bot social economic political level into the modern world. Some of the insights are as follows.

R. Shamasastri (1967) <sup>[1]</sup> in his work has highlighted the holistic conception of the state where political power can be sustained only through balanced governance, economic stability and with a strong military base. In another work Bosche (2003) considered Kautilya as a realistic thinker when compared to Machiavelli and through Janapadas, Kautilya emphasised ethical governance and welfare orientation. From a socio economic perspective Sen (2009) <sup>[6]</sup> mentions that ancient Indian political philosophy placed strong emphasis on human welfare, social stability and also closely related with inclusive development framework. Mahajan (2024) <sup>[9]</sup> in his work on Indian Knowledge System emphasizes that India's ancient knowledge traditions in Ayurveda, agriculture, architecture, and governance offer viable solutions for modern challenges in sustainability, MSME development, and community upliftment.

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Sharma (2025) <sup>[10]</sup> analysis links the Arthashastra's ancient principles of self-reliance, local production, and environmental ethics directly to India's modern Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan initiative. The author argues that contemporary policies like "vocal for local" and MSME promotion are rooted in Kautilya's emphasis on strong economic sovereignty through self-sufficiency and controlled protectionism, highlighting these principles as crucial for sustainable development.

### 3. Significance of the study

The paper has tried to revive the Indian political thought and states that ancient Indian theories offer analytical tools for undertaking modern statecraft. The policy makers and students to connect classical wisdom with modern developmental strategies. The study is significant in the context that it ties to integrate political science, economics, public administration and development studies which is very useful for an inter disciplinary research. Amrit Kaal is a vision and by integrating to Saptanga theory this paper tries to strengthen the intellectual and cultural grounds of the idea of Viksit Bharat 2047.

### 4. Objectives

1. To compare the relevance of the seven elements of the Saptanga Theory with the pillars of India's contemporary governance and development strategies under Amrit Kaal.

### 5. Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive research design based entirely on secondary data collected from published books, scholarly articles, government reports, policy documents, and institutional publications related to Kautilya's Arthashastra and the concept of Amrit Kaal. Data sources include NITI Aayog vision documents, the Economic Survey of India, reports of international organizations such as the World Bank and UNDP, and peer-reviewed academic literature on Indian political thought and governance.

### 6. Saptanga Theory: A conceptual Framework

The word Saptanga is derived from two Sanskrit words 'sapta' meaning seven and 'anga' meaning limbs. Kautilya considers state as a living organism with 7 interconnected elements. These 7 prakritis are critical elements for a state. The Saptanga theory can be divided into two:

#### Leadership and Governance

On the basis of leadership and governance, the first anga is Swamin (king) is a person who is wise, a leader who upholds righteousness, ensures justice, and protects his people. His power is balanced by both moral and administrative responsibilities. Then the next element is Amatya (Council of Ministers) or they are advisors helps in policy-making and execution and their functioning similarly to modern bureaucracy. For a nation foreign policy is vital and for that there is Mitra (Alliances). This concept is integral to Kautilya's Mandala theory, which explains the strategies used for managing relationships with allies, enemies, and neutral states.

#### Socio-Economic Foundations

The socio economic foundations includes Janapada i.e. Territory and Population which means the people and land which is the base of a state. A disciplined, loyal population

with a fertile and fruitful land are considered as fundamental to the economy. Kosha means Treasury which is well-managed treasury, built on efficient revenue collection and financial prudence, is the economic engine that sustains defense, infrastructure, and welfare policies. Durga (Fortifications) which refers to strategic infrastructure and strongholds that project administration and defense capabilities. Strong fortifications make the state less vulnerable to external threats and serve as centers for governance. Danda (Coercive Power) includes both the military and the justice system. The state must maintain law and order, enforce a disciplined penal system, and protect its people through an efficient army and legal enforcement.

The core factor of this theory is that all these elements are interrelated. The failure of one limb affects the entire system. For example, a depleted Kosha (treasury) cripples the state's ability to fund its army (Danda) or build essential fortifications (Durga). Similarly, an effective king (Swamin) requires capable Amatyas (ministers) to govern effectively, preventing misrule. Diplomatic alliances (Mitra), without the backing of military strength or economic stability, become hollow and ineffective.

This organic and interdependent vision provides a practical blueprint for building state capacity, resilience, and long-term stability, emphasizing that balanced strength across all elements is essential for a functional and robust state.

### 7. Amrit Kaal: Indias vision for 2047

Amrit Kaal refers to the 25-year span from 2022 to 2047, envisioned by the Indian government as a transformative era culminating in a Viksit Bharat @ 2047. This vision is centred around the renewal of political system, modernising the economy, and sustained social development.

Under Amrit Kaal, India aims to strengthen democratic governance, decentralize power, which helps to enhance the country's institutional capacity. According to The Economic Survey 2023-24 there is a six-pronged strategy which includes private capital formation, public-private partnerships (especially for green infrastructure), formalization of MSMEs, sustainable agriculture, education and skilling, and reinforcement of state institutions. This means it is not only economic ambition but also administrative sophistication. The NITI Aayog, as per its annual report, is playing a central role in aligning state-level vision documents with the national Amrit Kaal agenda. This cooperative federalism model mirrors the Amatya principle in Saptanga, where governance is shared but coherent.

Economic modernization under Amrit Kaal is multifaceted. Key transitions identified by policy documents include: a. Rural-to-Urban Shift: By 2047, an estimated 60% of India's population may live in urban areas. This demands massive investment in infrastructure, housing, and urban governance. b. Formalization of Economy: Informal jobs are expected to be converted into formal employment; MSMEs will get legally registered, and enterprises will integrate with global value chains. c. Agricultural Transition: The share of agriculture in GDP is projected to fall to about 5%, while less than 20% of the population may depend on farming. Moreover, agricultural activity is expected to shift toward commercialization and diversification. d. Sustainable Development & Green Transition: A strong drive toward green infrastructure, renewable energy, and water conservation is underway. The government is constructing Amrit Sarovars (water conservation ponds), and dialoguing

on public participation in water conservation. These economic goals reflect not only growth but structural transformation, integrating classical governance with contemporary challenges.

A key feature of Amrit Kaal is peoples' participation and the slogan of "Sabka Prayas" (everyone's effort) has become central to this discourse. Public participation in water conservation in the case of Amrit Sarovars can be considered as one of the prominent among them. The government gives more thrust on the participation of people, social organizations, and civil society in all kinds of development initiatives. Another important aspect is with regard to the involvement of youth and engaging youth in nation building and it is a key strategy for the Amrit Kaal. The aim is to align modern socio-political goal with long-term vision of the nation.

On the global front, Amrit Kaal envisions India as a stronger diplomatic and economic actor. Infrastructure development, port expansion, and maritime ambitions are part of this vision. For example, the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 aims to quadruple port capacity, promote sustainable shipping, and deepen global maritime partnerships. These align with Kautilya's Mitra limb, where strategic alliances and external engagements are central to state strength.

## 8. Comparative Analysis: Saptanga Theory & Amrit Kaal

Bringing Saptanga Theory and Amrit Kaal side-by-side yields several illuminating similarities and contrasts. There are several similarities like:

- **Strong Institutions and State Capacity:** In Saptanga, Amatya, Swamin, Danda, and Kosha collectively build state capacity which is similar to in Amrit Kaal, strengthening institutions (bureaucracy, governance), fiscal discipline, and defense (indirectly through infrastructure).
- **Economic Stability and Strategy:** Kosha (treasury) is the bedrock of Kautilya's model. Amrit Kaal's also focus on capital formation, MSMEs, and PPPs which is a modern adaptation of the Kosha concept.
- **Security and Diplomacy:** Danda (military power) and Mitra (alliances) are core limbs in Saptanga which can also be seen in Amrit Kaal, where strategic partnerships (e.g., maritime, global trade) and infrastructure for national resilience.
- **People-Centric Development:** Janapada in Saptanga underlines the importance of population and territory. Amrit Kaal also focusses on peoples participation, urbanization, and social equity and also shows commitment in building a society-centered development framework.
- **Interdependent:** Kautilya's model is deeply interdependent. Similarly, Amrit Kaal is not just about economic growth alone also incorporates economic, social, environmental, and institutional reforms that is required for a nation.

### 8.1 Differences

- **Regarding governance structure:** Saptanga is monarchical where Swamin is the supreme authority, though advised by Amatya. Whereas in Amrit Kaal the state operates within a democratic framework, which includes checks and balances, decentralization, and peoples participation.

- **When we take the case of economic base:** Kautilya's model assumed an agrarian economy, with revenue largely from land and trade. Amrit Kaal has a vision of a state which is industrial, service-led, and knowledge economy, with infrastructure, digitalization, and green energy.
- **Technology and Modernity:** Artificial intelligence, globalized trade, public-private partnerships, and climate technology are central to Amrit Kaal elements which is not found in Kautilya's time. But here also, the philosophical grounding in statecraft prevails which includes the same principles of institutional strength, duty, and interdependence which remains significant even today.
- Another aspect with regards to the goals i.e the Temporal Horizon and Normative Goals; Saptanga is normative and descriptive as it describes what a state should have in order to survive and continue. Amrit Kaal is aspirational and programmatic as it is a vision plan, with concrete policy targets, timelines, and institutional mechanisms.

## 9. Challenges and Criticisms

In spite of the closeness between Saptanga Theory and Amrit Kaal is a few challenges and criticism needs to be pointed out.

- **Implementation Risk:** The policies in Amrit Kaal is not that easy to get implemented. suffer from policy-practice gaps. It is easy to say "Sabka Prayas" but difficult to get done. State capacity (Amatya) may be limited in some regions; bureaucratic hurdles could adversely affect transformative reforms.
- **Economic and Fiscal Constraints:** Large infrastructure and social programs requires continuous financing. If the Kosha is not efficient enough, the ambitious goals may not workout. PPPs and green transition require large amount of capital inflow and also external shocks could delay planning.
- **Social Equity:** An increase in urbanization leads to inequality, slum growth, and infrastructural backdrop. The policy of commercialization of agriculture may displace small farmers otherwise only if policies are inclusive.
- **Geopolitical Uncertainties:** Even if strategic alliances are encouraged, the instability at the global level or conflict may affect them and also the dependence on global supply chains (for trade, energy) may make India more vulnerable.
- **Environmental Risks:** The problems like climate change, resource scarcity, degradation of ecology are risky. Water conservation policies like Amrit Sarovars requires long-term public engagement and technological backing.

## 10. Conclusion

Kautilya's Saptanga Theory and modern India's Amrit Kaal might seem separated by several years, but a very close analysis we can find some similarity. The classical theory's emphasis on interdependent state limbs such as leadership, bureaucracy, treasury, security, alliances, territory, and people which actually forms the architecture of India's developmental vision, Amrit Kaal, does not just focus on economic growth alone but also the structural

transformation, institutional strengthening, sustainable development, also on decentralised governance.

Even though when the historical context is analysed there has been a change from monarchy to democracy, from an agrarian economy to an industrial economy the fundamental challenge remains the same that is how to build a nation which is strong and resilient and how it can be sustained. By interpreting Amrit Kaal through the lens of Saptanga, one appreciates that India's long-term vision is not merely technocratic, but deeply political and philosophical. But achieving this vision the state has to face real-world challenges such as fiscal constraints, social equity, institutional obstacles, and environmental problems.

But the interaction between ancient and modern development has opened up a powerful framework. If India can translate the principles of Saptanga theory to the goals of Amrit Kaal a truly holistic and sustainable Viksit Bharat @ 2047 or a state that is strong not just in power, but in purpose.

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