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Dr. Dharmendra Das
Assistant Professor (Stage-II)
Department of Sanskrit Utkal
University, Vani Vihar
Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

Democratic Value in Sanskrit Literature: Global Perspective

Dharmendra Das

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Abstract

Democracy provides an environment that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms, and in which the freely expressed will of people is exercised. People have a say in decisions and can hold decision-makers to account. Women and men have equal rights and all people are free from discrimination. Democratic values refer to those values that reflect society's democratic way of life. It includes values like respect, equality, fairness and freedom, etc. Sanskrit has a pre-eminent position among all languages as its knowledge helps access the vast treasures of wisdom contained in our ancient scriptures. The Government has committed to the development of Sanskrit, which will be done with the help of modern technology. The exploration of democratic values within Sanskrit literature from a global perspective reveals several key insights. The present study is a humble attempt to discuss democratic value supplied in Sanskrit literature with global perspective.

Keywords: Sanskrit Literature, Democratic Values, Assembly, Council, Rāmāyaṇa, Arthaśāstra, Mahābhārata, Rājadharmā

Introduction

Sanskrit literature contains democratic values, notably in the Vedic period through assemblies like the *sabhā* (a council of elders) and *samiti* (a popular assembly). These bodies, which involved discussions and decisions among leaders and the public, laid the groundwork for collective governance and the election of leaders. Concepts of natural rights, equality, and the ruler's accountability to the people were also present in these texts. The earliest record of Indian thought and culture is found in Veda. The Vedic literature consists of certain ideas to be followed both by the king and the people for the relevance of a golden age of happiness where the people could lead a happy and peaceful life. In ancient India the science of politics was called “*dr̥ṣṭārtha*” and it was based on fifth Veda called *itihāsa* ^[1]. It was so called because it suggests interpreting the world which was visible to senses. In Vedic literature *dharma* and *dan̐ḍa* was the most important ideal. Arthaśāstra uses the phrase ‘*yoga-kṣema*’ to describe one of the important duties of the king ^[2]. The term ‘*yoga*’ refers to the successful accomplishment of an objective and *kṣema* to peaceful enjoyment of prosperity. The ‘*yoga-kṣema*’ of the subjects requires that they have the security of person and property. The ‘*yoga-kṣema*’ is disturbed by thieves, robbers, anti-social elements like corrupt officials, deceitful merchants, and others. The weeding out of these thorns is the main task accomplished by *dan̐ḍa*, an important function of the state. Arthaśāstra warns a king of the consequences of improper use of *dan̐ḍa*. The judges are called *dharmaśāstras*, a name which apparently refers to the *dharma* or law, by which they are to be guided in their work. The ultimate responsibility for the administration of law and justice rests with the king.

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Dharmendra Das
Assistant Professor (Stage-II)
Department of Sanskrit Utkal
University, Vani Vihar
Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

¹ See, Rao, K. S. S. (2007). Vedic ideals and Indian political thought. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 105-114.

² *tasmādariṣaḍvargatyāgenendriyajayaṃ kurvanti, vṛddhasaṃyogena prajñām, cāreṇa cakṣuḥ, utthānena yogakṣemasāadhanam, kāryānuśāsanena svadharmasthāpanam, vinayaṃ vidyopadeśena, lokapriyatvamarthasaṃyogena, hitena vṛttam* | Arthaśāstra-1.7.1

Objectives of the present study

- To understand the relevance of ancient Indian democratic system.
- To understand the democratic value reflected in various Sanskrit texts.
- To understand various aspects of democratic values in Indian Knowledge System.
- To connect the ancient Indian administrative system with the modern Indian political thought.

Relevance of the present study

Sanskrit literature occupies a very unique position in the repository of the Indian knowledge system. Ancient Indian democracy was based on righteousness that which is known from the Vedas, Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata and Arthaśāstra and many more literature of Sanskrit. The ancient Indian democratic values are not properly understood by the modern policy makers. Many of the ideas presented here may be taken as the model of governance. For examples, the aspect Rājadharmā related to administration discussed here apply to different models of governance. A list of Indian Texts on Rājadharmā is mentioned below.

- **Mahābhārata:** The Śāntiparva, which presents an elaborate conversation between Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīṣma has extensively covered several aspects of rājadharmā. Anuśāsanaparva also has details on rājadharmā.
- **Rāmāyaṇa:** The key attributes required of a king and the dos and don'ts of a king are important aspects of public administration. In the Chapter-100 of Book-II (Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa) of Ramayana, there is valuable information pertaining to these issues in verses 65 to 70.
- **Manusmṛti:** Chapter 7 and 9 cover the duties of the king and other elements of rājadharmā such as legal and justice.
- **Arthaśāstra:** A comprehensive treaties on rājadharmā and a composition of earlier thoughts with new perspectives from Kautilya.

Fourteen aspects related to administration supplied in the Rāmāyaṇa

In three verses (65-67) of Chapter 100 of Book -II of the Rāmāyaṇa, fourteen aspects related to administration have been flagged with a caution to the king to avoid these and to maintain the righteousness. This includes atheism, falsehood, anger, inattention, procrastination, evading the wise, indolence, gratification of all five senses, planning alone in the affairs of kingdom, consultation with the people who are proficient in worthless acts, failure to implement decisions, inability to keep the counsel secret, omission of auspicious practices and setting out against all the enemies at a time. These have the propensity to increase wasteful efforts on the part of the king leading to ineffective administration. The Sanskrit verses goes like this,

[nāstikyam anṛtam krodham pramādam dīrgha sūtratām |
adarśanam jñānavatām ālasyam panca vṛttitām ||
eka cintanam arthānām anarthajnaiḥ ca mantranam |
niścītānām anārambham mantrasya aparilakṣaṇam ||
mangalasya aprayogam ca pratyutthānam ca sarvaśaḥ |
kacci tvam varjayasy etān rāja doṣāmaḥ catur daśa ||
daśapaṃcaturvargān saptavargaṃ ca tattvataḥ |

aṣṭavargaṃ trivargaṃ ca vidyāstisraśca rāghava ||
indriyānām jayaṃ buddhyaṃ śāḍguṇyaṃ daivamānuṣam ||
kṛtyaṃ viṃśativargaṃ ca tathā prakṛtimaṇḍalaṃ ||
yātrādaṇḍavidhānam ca dviyonī samdhivigrahaḥ |
kacchidetān mahāprājña yathāmadanumanyase||^[3]

There is also a caution that is not worthwhile to negotiate with 20 different types of monarchs. These monarchs suffer from some inherent limitations or uncontrolled senses leading them to wrong methods of administration. The twenty categories are as follows:

- A king who is still a child.
- Aged
- Ailing for some time
- Ostracized by his own kith and kin
- Cowardly or nervous
- Surrounded by cowards
- Greedy
- Has greedy associates
- Has estranged his ministers
- Extremely voluptuous
- Confers with fickle minded persons
- Speaks ill of divine beings and Brahmanas
- Ill-fated
- Fatalist
- Afflicted by famine
- Afflicted by military reverses
- Mostly remains away from home
- Has numerous enemies
- In the clutches of adverse times
- Not devoted to truth and piety

The above aspects related to ancient India administrative system lead to a value -based democracy in the state. The core objectives behind these aspects are always helpful in case of nation-building.

Assemblies and collective decision-making

Mentioned in texts like the *Rig Veda* and *Atharva Veda*, these were assemblies where decisions were made through consultation and discussion. The *sabhā* was a smaller body, while the *samiti* was a larger assembly. Showing the significant of *sabhā* and *samiti*, the Vedic mantra goes like that,

[sabhā cā mā samitiścāvatām prajāpaterduhitarau
samvidāne /
yenā saṃgacchā upa mā sa śikṣāccāru vadāni pitarah
saṅgateṣu /
vidma te sabhe nāma nariṣṭā nāma vā asi /
ye te ke ca sabhāsadaste me santu savācasah ||
eṣāmahaṃ samāśīnānām varco vijñānamā dade ||
asyāḥ sarvasyāḥ saṃsado māmindra bhaginam kṛṇu ||
yad vo manah parāgataṃ yad baddhamiha vaha vā /
tad va ā vartayāmasi mayi vo ramatām manah ||^[4]

The above mantras are recited in a ceremony for gaining the victory in debate, or in the deliberations of an assembly. As per the Vedic tradition, *sabhā* and *samiti* are regarded as the

³ Rāmāyaṇa-2.100(65-70)

⁴ Atharvavedasamhitā-7.14(1-4)

two daughters of the *Prajāpati* and the Vedic Goddess for success in the assembly. Through reciting the speaker of an assembly says that “*your mind that is gone away, that is bound either here or here that of you we cause to turn hither; in me let your mind rest.*” The *sabhā* and *samiti* are sometimes considered precursors to modern bicameral legislatures, showing early evidence of a two-chamber legislative system.

Leadership and accountability

The term *Rājan* initially referred to a "householder" or "leader" of a household, and in the Vedic context, a leader was elected by the people. The king's power was not absolute. The assemblies, or *sabhā*, had the authority to remove a king who was not serving the people well. In this connection, *Viduranīti* can be taken as the most successful literature in ancient India. *Viduranīti* is a collection of 700 verses of the conversation between king *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* and *Vidura*. *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* with an agitated mind sought the counsel of *Vidura* and the conversation touched upon several aspects including leadership and accountability.

While describing some of the attributes of wise and unwise men, *Vidura* pointed to a few things about which the king must be alert. *Vidura* observed that there are seven issues that is best avoided by a king as they could be the source of calamities. Such calamities eventually lead to the destruction of a king, however well he is established.

[*saptadoṣāḥ sadā rājñā hātavyā vyasanodayāḥ* |
prāyaśo yairvinaśyanti kṛtamūlā apīśvarāḥ ||
striyo'kṣa mṛgayā pānaṃ vākpāruṣyaṃ ca pañcamam |
mahacca daṇḍapāruṣyaṃ arthadūṣaṇameva ca ||]^[5]

The seven issues that are to be avoided are women, dice, hunting, drinking liquor, harshness of speech, these five, and great severity of punishment and misuse of wealth of the state. By an intelligent use of the numbers from 1 to 7, *Vidura* suggested a method to handle the issues that a king faces. A king must be able to discriminate the two (good and the bad, appropriate and inappropriate etc.) by means of one (the intellect) and seek to bring under the control the three (friend, foe and the indifferent) using the four methods (*sāma*, *dāna*, *daṇḍa*, *bheda*). He should subjugate the five (senses) and know the six (six expedients to be used in foreign policy). Finally, the king must keep away from the seven (women, dice, hunting, drink, harshness of speech, severity of punishment and misuse of wealth) and be happy.

ekayā dve viniścītya trīṣcaturbhirvaśe kuru |
pañca jītvā viditvā ṣaṭ sapta hitvā sukhī bhava ||⁶

Lord *Rāma* promises to obey the orders given by *Vasiṣṭha* and says that,

[*snehaṃ dayāṃ ca saukhyaṃ ca yadi vā jñānakīmapī* |
ārādhanāya lokasya muñcato nāsti me vyathā ||]^[7]

I will not be in pain if I give up my affection, kindness, happiness or even my beloved *Sītā* to please the people. This means that even if I give up all my possessions to protect my subjects, I will not suffer any pain. It is my vow to worship even one person by using the singular "of the

world," but what about all people? This is the feeling expressed by a king showing the highest accountability for the subjects in Ancient India.

Individual rights and equality

The *Rig Veda* invokes deities for the liberty of the body, shelter, and life, viewing these as natural rights inherent to human beings, not granted by law or rulers. Verses from the *Rig Veda* state that no one is superior or inferior, and all are brothers who should work for the collective good. The *Rig Veda* contains several powerful mantras and a complete hymn dedicated to unity, harmony, and universal brotherhood. The most prominent among these is the final hymn of the entire text, the *saṃjñānasūktam* (Hymn of Concord). The *saṃjñānasūktam* emphasizes collective action, common purpose, and unity of minds and hearts for a harmonious society. The Vedic thought calls for moving and speaking in harmony with minds in agreement, just as ancient gods were united in purpose.

The Sanskrit is

saṃ gacchadhvaṃ saṃ vadadhvaṃ saṃ vo manāṃsi
jānatām |
devā bhāgaṃ yathā pūrve saṃjñānā upāsate ||⁸

The Vedic thought highlights the importance of common deliberations, assembly, and minds for a shared purpose and destiny. The Sanskrit is:

saṃāno mantraḥ samitiḥ samānī samānaṃ manaḥ saha
cittameṣām |
saṃānaṃ mantramabhi mantraye vaḥ samānena vo haviṣā
juhomī ||⁹

The Vedic thought also expresses the wish for similar intentions, hearts, and minds to unify everyone for harmonious co-existence. The Sanskrit is:

saṃānī va ākūtiḥ samānā hrdayāni vaḥ |
saṃānamastu vo mano yathā vaḥ susahāsati ||¹⁰

The Vedic thought states that none are superior or inferior, high or low; all are equal like brothers who should flourish together by practicing a universal code of life. The Sanskrit is:

ajyeṣṭhāso akaniṣṭhāsa ete saṃ bhrātaro vāyṛdhuḥ
saubhagāya ||¹¹

The Vedic thought contains the phrase “*kevalāgho bhavati kevalādī*”¹² meaning "The one who eats alone is nothing but a sinner," emphasizing the need to share wealth and food.

These mantras embody a core Vedic philosophy of universal harmony and social concordance, viewing all humans as "children of the Divine" (*śruṇvantu viśve amṛtasya putrā*) and advocating for a society based on mutual respect and shared responsibilities.

“*śruṇvantu viśve amṛtasya putrā*”^[13] is a Sanskrit verse from the *Śvetāśvetaropaniṣad*, meaning "Listen, O children

⁸ Rgvedasamhitā-10.191.2

⁹ Rgvedasamhitā-10.191.3

¹⁰ Rgvedasamhitā-10.191.4

¹¹ Rgvedasamhitā-5.60.5

¹² Rgvedasamhitā-10.117.6

¹³ Śvetāśvetaropaniṣad -2.5

⁵ *Viduranīti*-1.96-97

⁶ *Viduranīti*-1.49

⁷ *Uttararāmacaritam*-1.2

of immortality the world over". It is a profound statement asserting that all humans are, by nature, immortal and not sinful creatures, but beings of immortal bliss. The verse calls for people to hear and realize their true immortal identity. The phrase is a call to all people, referring to them as "sons of immortality" or "children of immortal bliss". It suggests that immortality is not something to be achieved but is the inherent nature of humankind. This teaching is part of the Vedāntic tradition which states that while the physical body may perish, the soul is eternal. It contrasts the perceived human state of powerlessness with the true identity of being a child of immortality. This concept is a central theme in Upaniṣadic philosophy, emphasizing that the path to liberation and a glorious life comes from recognizing this inherent immortal nature.

Social welfare and statecraft

Texts like Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* emphasize the king's duty to ensure social security, including providing food, seeds, and materials to the poor and unfortunate. A *Rig Veda* verse from the 10th Mandala is recited in unison to promote unity, harmonious discussion, and the equitable distribution of state resources.

*saṃ gacchadhvaṃ saṃ vadadhvaṃ saṃ vo manāṃsi
jānatām ।
devā bhāgaṃ yathā pūrve sañjānānā upāsate ॥¹⁴*

Democratic values are evident in Sanskrit literature through concepts like *Dharma* (duty/righteousness), equality, freedom of expression, and participatory governance models found in texts like the Vedas, Upaniṣads, Mahābhārata, and Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra*.

The *Rgveda* and *Atharvaveda* mention "*sabhā*" (gathering) and "*samiti*" (larger assembly), which were governing bodies responsible for collective decision-making and even the potential removal of a king (*rājā*). The philosophical underpinnings in the Vedas assert the equality of all beings by stating that no one is superior or inferior, as all shares the same conscious principle (*ātman*). Verses from the *Rgveda* call for unity, the amicable resolution of issues, and the equitable distribution of resources among all stakeholders. The concept of *Dharma* serves as a foundational principle, representing a universal moral law and the ethical duties of both the ruler and the ruled. Texts like the Mahabharata emphasize the ruler's responsibility (*rājadharma*) to govern with justice and ensure the welfare of the people (*lokasaṃgraha*), with blame for injustice falling on the entire assembly if not corrected. Vedic political theory recognized *Dharma* as the true sovereign. *Dharma* was corresponded more closely with the modern concept of rule of law.¹⁵ Rulers in Sanskrit literature were expected to be accountable to their subjects. In the Ramayana, King Rama is depicted gathering an assembly of citizens and encouraging them to express their opinions and even disagree with his decisions, highlighting openness to public input in administration. Ancient Sanskrit scriptures value the

liberty to question and debate. The ideal response to disagreements was considered more debate and counter-speech (*vāda* and *śāstrārtha*), not suppression. A well-known mantra from the *Rgveda* states, "May noble thoughts come to us from every quarter", promoting an environment of open exchange of diverse ideas.¹⁶ The Vedas also elude to fundamental rights, invoking deities for the liberty of body, shelter, and life, which are considered natural to human beings and part of the cosmic order (*Ṛta*), not merely outcomes of legal codes. In the ancient time, public administration was run by the King and his servants. Kautilya in his *Arthaśāstra* has given the duties of the Kings towards public which are far ahead from present public administration. The same idealism was incorporated by Kautilya in his *Arthaśāstra* while summing up the objects and purpose of exercise of sovereign power by the King. He stated that,

*prajāśukhe sukhaṃ rājñāḥ prajānāṃ hite hitam ।
nātmapiyaṃ hitam rājñāḥ prajānāṃ tu priyaṃ hitam ॥
(Arthaśāstra, Book-I, Chapter-IX, 39)*

In the happiness of his subjects lies his happiness; in their welfare, his welfare, whatever pleases him personally he shall not consider as good, but whatever makes his subjects happy, he shall consider good.¹⁷ The great poet Kalidasa presents a principle of governing the people. The king should always be like the father of his subjects. In the system of government in ancient India, the place of the subjects was in the form of the children of the king.

*prajānāṃ vinayadhānādrakṣaṇādbharaṇādapi ।
sa pitā pitarastāsāṃ kevalaṃ janmahetavaḥ ॥¹⁸*

King Dilipa in this kingdom expresses his fatherly feelings for the subjects by teaching, protecting and feeding. That Dilip inspired all the people on the right path by giving them good education, freed them from fear and fed them with food and other things. Therefore, he was the true father of the people. The fathers of the living entities were merely the givers of birth. That father is the one who is the breadwinner, and this means that he is the one who always teaches, protects, and feeds his children. In other words, King Dilipa¹⁹ was responsible for the education, protection and maintenance of the people. The great poet here

*16 ā no bhadrāḥ kratavo yantu viśvato'dabdhāso aparītāsa
udbhidaḥ ।
devā no yathā sadamidvṛdhe asannaprāyūvo rakṣitāro
dive dive ॥- Rgvedasamhitā-1.89.1*

¹⁷ See, Goel, A. (2003). *Good governance and ancient Sanskrit literature*. Deep and Deep Publications.pp.37-38

¹⁸ Raghuvamśam-1.24

¹⁹ King Dilipa is not a main character in the Mahabharata epic itself, but he is a legendary king from the Ikshvaku dynasty who is a distant ancestor of both the epic's royal lineage and Lord Rama. He is prominently featured in other Hindu texts, such as the *Raghuvamsha*, and is famous for his devotion to the divine cow Nandini after his royal sage Vashistha advised him to serve the cow to have children. He is known for his righteousness, bravery, and generosity, and is a significant figure in the ancestry of the Sun dynasty. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dil%C4%Ba#References>)

¹⁴ Rgvedasamhitā-10.191.2

¹⁵ Dr. ANNAIAH TAILUR, "Democratic Institutions in Ancient India", International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT), ISSN:2320-2882, Volume.7, Issue 1, pp.683-686, January 2019, Available at <http://www.ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT1135812.pdf>

describes the good governance of Mahārāja Dilīpa and the purpose of collecting taxes from the people.

*prajānāmeva bhūtyarthaṃ sa tābhyo balimagrahīt |
sahasraguṇamutsraṣṭumupadatte hi rasaṃ raviḥ ||* [20]

Just as the sun collects a thousand times more water to produce rain, so King Dilīpa collected taxes from his subjects for their welfare. Just as the sun attracts water from the earth with its rays and when it comes, gives it a thousand times as much water as rain and increases the wealth of the earth's crops, so King Dilīpa collected a sixth of the tax from the people and increased the wealth of the people by doing welfare works.

The Indian kings were punctual for the welfare of the people. There is a suggested schedule of how the king could spend his time in a 24-hour day. The following table has the details [21].

| Schedule | Tasks |
|-----------------------|---|
| 06.00A.M. - 07.30A.M. | Review reports on defence, financial matters |
| 07.30A.M.-09.00A.M. | Public audience |
| 09.00A.M.-10.30A.M. | Personal chores |
| 10.30A.M.-12.00Noon | Receive revenues, tributes, appoint high officials, allocate tasks |
| 12.00Noon-01.30P.M. | Write letters, confer with councillors, receive information from spies |
| 01.30P.M.-03.00P.M. | Personal time |
| 03.00P.M.-04.30P.M. | Inspect and review forces |
| 04.30P.M.-06.00P.M. | Consult with chief of defence, End the daytime with prayers. |
| 06.00P.M.-07.30P.M. | Interview with secret agents |
| 07.30P.M.-09.00P.M. | Personal chores |
| 09.00P.M.-01.30A.M. | Retire to the bed chamber |
| 01.30A.M.-03.00A.M. | Wake up, meditate on political matters and on work to be done for the day |
| 03.00A.M.-04.30A.M. | Consult with councillors, send out spies |
| 04.30A.M.-06.00A.M. | Religious duties, meeting with the teacher, purohita, astrologer, personal physician, chief cook, etc At daybreak he shall circum-ambulate a cow, its calf and the bull and then proceed to his court. |

As evident from the above table, the king can spend 10.5 hours on his personal needs including 4.5 hours of sleep. The balance time is spent on various aspects of administration. This shows the devotion of Indian kings to their country and society. This is a shining example of India's democratic system and its contribution to the entire world. This is a teaching to the modern democracy that the king's first duty is to do the work of the nation. The protection of the Indian tradition of knowledge is the supreme duty of modern rulers and administrators. It is rightly said by *Manu* that,

*etad deśa prasūtasya śakāsād agrajanmanah|
svam-svam caritraṃ śikṣaren prthivyaṃ sarva mānavah||* [22]

This verse means, "May all the people of the earth learn about their character from the scholars born in this country." This is a verse from *Manusmṛiti* which states that everyone should learn character building and ideal conduct from the Rishi tradition of India. This may be taken as the statement of Indian Knowledge Tradition with global perspective.

Discussion and Findings of the present study

According to Robert McNamara, President World Bank, "Management is the most creative of all the arts-for its medium is human talent itself." That essence and basis of the moral State, as per ancient Indian thinking, depends on the triangle of those actions for governance which are undertaken for universal welfare, maintaining and protecting each and everyone in the Creation, and securing universal care for all and everyone [23] Exploring the problematic ways in which people have interpreted and made use of India's ancient past, it critically examines arguments for the existence of secularism, free elections, and democratic assemblies in the Vedas [24]

- **Dandaniti(Statecraft and law):** While *danda* represents authority and justice, it is also linked to the concept of inner control and discipline. A true king, therefore, is someone who can maintain internal balance and dispense justice grounded in *dharma*.
- **Nyāya (Justice):** The concept of *nyāya*, derived from ancient Hindu philosophy and discussed in Vedic texts, emphasizes justice and ethical governance. This principle can be linked to democratic practices globally, suggesting that ancient Indian thought contributes to modern democratic ideals.
- **Gurukula System:** The traditional Gurukula system of education in pre-colonial South Asia promoted an egalitarian form of education, fostering a practical democracy by ensuring equal opportunities for all individuals to fit their environments.
- **Global Influence and Integration:** Sanskrit texts, such as the Ramayana, have been translated into various languages, broadening their reach and influence. These translations help disseminate the values embedded in these texts, such as justice and human values, to a global audience.
- **Cultural Renaissance:** The revival of Sanskrit and its integration into modern education and cultural practices is seen as a way to promote moral and cultural values globally. This revival is part of a broader effort to create a better world through a cultural renaissance.
- **Challenges and Contemporary Relevance:** The integration of Sanskrit into modern educational frameworks faces challenges, but it also offers opportunities to bridge traditional knowledge with contemporary disciplines. This integration can help preserve democratic values by promoting a holistic education system.

²³ See. Goel, A. (2003). *Good governance and ancient Sanskrit literature*.

²⁴ See, Gray, S. (2016). Cross-cultural intelligibility and the use of history: From democracy and liberalism to Indian rajanika thought. *The Review of Politics*, 78(2), 251-283

²⁰ Raghavaṃśam-1.18

²¹ See, Arthaśāstra, Book-1, Chapter-19

²² Manusmṛiti-2.20

- **Democratic Life in India:** The hierarchical nature of Indian society poses challenges to the egalitarian ideals of democracy. However, the historical and philosophical underpinnings of Indian democracy, influenced by thinkers like **Amartya Sen**, continue to shape democratic practices.
- **Comparative Perspectives:** The comparison between Western democratic values and those found in Indian traditions highlights both similarities and differences. For instance, while Western democracies emphasize equality, Indian democratic life often incorporates hierarchical values. The concept of *nyāya* can also be applied to global journalism, promoting ethical practices and justice in media coverage, which is essential for sustaining democratic societies.

Conclusion

Sanskrit literature, with its rich philosophical traditions and emphasis on justice and ethical governance, offers valuable insights into democratic values. The global dissemination and integration of these texts into modern educational and cultural practices can help promote and sustain democratic ideals worldwide. Despite challenges, the revival and study of Sanskrit continue to play a crucial role in shaping democratic values in contemporary society. These principles found in ancient Sanskrit literature demonstrate a long-standing tradition of governance that included democratic elements of consultation, rights, and ethical leadership, a heritage that has influenced modern Indian political thought.

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