

Sustainable Development: The Four-fold Path to Governance

Rozwój zrównoważony: poczwórna ścieżka prowadząca do zarządzania

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Abstract

Good governance is central to sustainable development. As the age-old maxim goes, *As the King, so are the subjects*. Demonstrated commitment and integrity on the part of the governing bodies in villages, towns, cities, provinces and countries, is a *sine qua non*, if the subjects/citizens/denizens need to be motivated to cooperate in the pursuit of sustainable development. The governing bodies, needless to say, cannot adopt a *one-size-fits-all approach* while dealing with human beings who have elected them to power. This article seeks inspiration from ancient Indian history. To be more specific, from the treatise – Arthashastra (Statecraft, in Sanskrit) written by Chanakya, the adviser to the first Maurya Emperor Chandragupta who reigned between 340 BC and 293 BC. The four-fold path suggested includes *Saam* (gentle exhortation), *Daam* (providing incentives), *Dand* (penalizing, levying fines) and *Bhed* (discriminating and imposing sanctions), in that order of preference.

Key words: governance, sustainable development, *Saam*, *Daam*, *Dand*, *Bhed*

Streszczenie

Dobre zarządzanie to w kontekście rozwoju zrównoważonego kwestia kluczowa. Jak mówi stare przysłowie: *Jaki pan, taki kram*. Wykazanie prawości i zaangażowania przez organy zarządzające we wsiach, miastach, prowincjach, i krajach jest niezbędne, jeśli podmioty/mieszkańcy/obywatele mają włączyć się do współpracy na rzecz zrównoważonego rozwoju. Należy dodać, że organy zarządzające w kontekście problemów lokalnych społeczności, które reprezentują, nie dysponują uniwersalnym rozwiązaniem pasującym do wszystkich sytuacji.

W tym artykule poszukujemy inspiracji do działania wywodzącej się z ważnego w historii Hindusów traktatu Arthashastra, będącego dziełem doradcy cesarza Chandragupty (jego rządy przypadały na lata 340 – 293 przed Chrystusem). Przedstawiono tam poczwórny ścieżkę odnoszącą się do zarządzania, uwzględniającą w kolejności: *Saam* (delikatne napomnienie), *Daam* (dostarczanie zachęt), *Dand* (karanie, nakładanie grzywien i *Bhed* (nałożenie sankcji)

Słowa kluczowe: zarządzanie, rozwój zrównoważony, *Saam*, *Daam*, *Dand*, *Bhed*

Introduction and background

In Venkatesh (2010), the author had mapped holistic individual development to global sustainable development (Sanchez, 2008); and arguing on the premise that *parts make up the whole*, had urged individuals to embark on the path of personal development – physical, mental/emotional and spiritual.

This, the author had stated, would translate slowly but surely into global economic growth, social progress and environmental upkeep; the so-called triple bottom line of sustainable development into the future. In Venkatesh (2012), the author had pointed out that the *lubrication of law/policies/governance* from time to time was mandatory to keep the gears of sustainable development rotating. The thought-word-

action, ideas-policies-practice and academics-government-industry/ society nexus was also described in detail in the said paper. The first paper adopts a philosophical approach to motivate individuals to take charge and realise that each one of them can contribute to sustainable development, by first attempting to understand that every individual personality is but a miniature version of the macrocosm. The second one is a more practical analysis of the status-quo in modern-day society, and stresses on the need for collaboration and cooperation among laypersons, institutions, centres of learning, governing bodies, enterprises and firms, to clear the roadblocks on the path to sustainable development.

Beginning from a mechanistic understanding of human beings and the passions, Hobbes postulated in his Leviathan what would be like without government, a condition which he called the State of Nature. In that state, each person, according to Hobbes, would have a right, or license, to everything in the world. This, Hobbes argued, would lead to a *war of all against all*. He believed thereby that people need to be controlled. There is a middle path between the trusting appeal made in Venkatesh (2010) and the command-and-control advocated by Hobbes. One cannot certainly wish away the role of governments and trust all individuals to embark on the path deemed to be most suitable for the welfare of humanity as a whole, but at the same time, it would be demeaning to the educated, aware and enlightened populace if governments tarred everyone with the same brush.

It is here that Chanakya's Arthashastra comes in handy. Chanakya who lived in the 4th century BC, was an adviser and prime minister to the first Maurya Emperor Chandragupta (c. 340-293 BCE), and was the chief architect of his rise to power. Chanakya has been considered as the pioneer of the field of economics and political science; globally. He believed in four approaches to governance – *Saam*, *Daam*, *Dand*, *Bhed* (Sanskrit words); which can for the purpose of this paper be loosely translated into *Pacifying/Appealing*, *Providing incentives*, *Punishing/penalizing* and *Discriminating* respectively. In this article, hereafter, the shorter Sanskrit terms will be used. These four approaches have been, are and will continue to be valid for governing bodies around the world, be they at continental (supranational), national, provincial or municipal levels.

Mixed, not fixed

It must be mentioned here that *one size does not fit all*. Human beings are so different from one another – physically, mentally/emotionally and intellectually. The degrees of development on these different levels are varied. Hence, a fixed approach on the part of the governing bodies will not be effective enough. While *Saam*, *Daam*, *Dand* and *Bhed*, will all necessarily have to be enforced to different degrees to

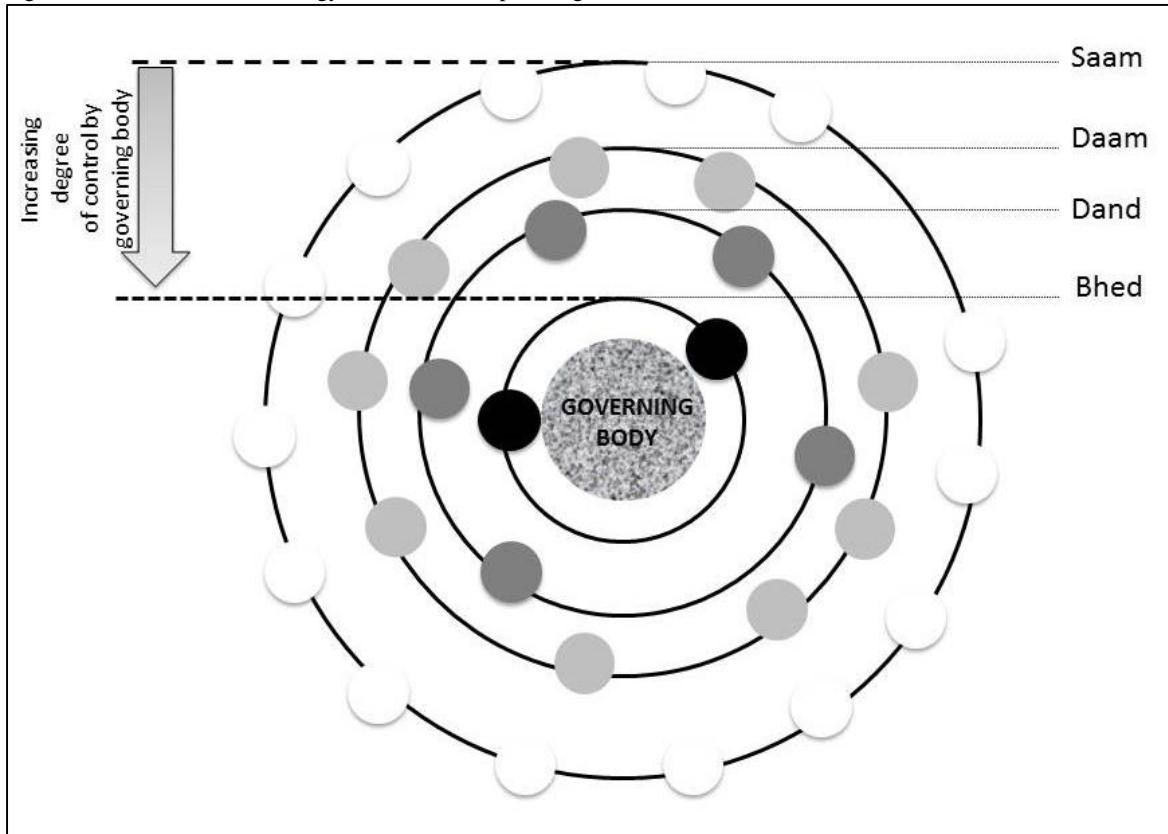
govern the population of a city or town, the progression preferably must be from the exercise of soft power towards the use of a command-and-control approach. In other words, one ought to start by assuming that all people respond favourably to gentle exhortation, polite requests and rhetorical explanations – *Saam*, in other words. The equivalent of *firing a shot in the air* to disperse an unruly mob, if one may say so. It should not however come as a surprise if a large percentage of the population addressed does not heed to the requests. This is just the start – a kind of a screening process, which separates the wheat from the chaff so to say. It uncovers the *wheat* component of the population – in other words, the extent of ready cooperation and total support the governing body can tap into, in the pursuit of its sustainable development goals (Redclift, 2009). This fraction, thus, has been won over by adopting the strategy of *Saam* – peaceful dialogue in which the governing body respects its subjects as equals and upholds their dignity as thinking and conscientious human beings. *Saam* thus is effective when the governing body interacts with selfless, spiritually-inclined people who are unflinching in their commitment to sustainable development. It is easier to influence and solicit the cooperation of this part of the population (Kras, 2011).

Figure 1 is a loose analogy to the atomic structure, with the Governing Body represented by the nucleus, and the people governed floating around in the (electronic) orbits. The orbit furthest from the nucleus is the *Saam* orbit, the one immediately below it is the *Daam* orbit, followed by *Dand* and *Bhed*. The degree of control (analogously the attraction between the protons in the nucleus and the electrons in the orbits) exercised by the governing body decreases with distance from the nucleus.

After *Saam*, the governing body needs to exercise *Daam* – providing incentives to win over those who are self-serving and skeptical. These need not necessarily be monetary incentives, but essentially a kind of a *give and take*. The *quid pro quo* here is necessary to make these people aware of the value of what there are being asked to do, not do, or sacrifice, for the welfare of humanity as a whole. Unlike the *Saam* orbit dwellers who cooperate of their own will, out of love for mankind, and a sense of purpose which transcends their personal interests and those of their near and dear ones; the *Daam*-orbit dwellers need to be coaxed with concrete material benefits. The challenge here is to determine the duration over which these benefits would be sustained by the governing body, lest the *Daam*-orbiters lapse into non-cooperation.

However, there is a distinct possibility that those among the *Daam*-orbiters who fall in the thin transition zone between the *Saam* and *Daam* orbits may

Figure 1. Atomic structure analogy to the four-fold path of governance. Source: Author's own work.



be inspired by those in the *Saam*-orbit to escape and evolve upwards.

Those who do not respond positively to both *Saam* and *Daam*, would have to be penalized. These belong to the *Dand*-orbit. The governing body is endowed with the power to exercise this hard power over its subjects when the cause justifies it. However, this is the third preference – after having exhausted the potentials of *Saam* and *Daam*. *Dand* is not corporeal punishment necessarily, but levies, taxes and fines for undesirable, unsustainable behaviour. Again, quite like in the case of *Daam*, the governing body needs to be persistent with the penalties. There are cases when penalties are enforced and they vanish after a while, owing to lack of dedicated implementation, corruption and lassitude on the part of the officials entrusted with the task. However, there are exemplars like Singapore, which stand out as beacons to interested emulators – *Singapore is a fine country* is a witty catchphrase which one finds on T-shirts sold in the country!

Consistent imposition of penalties may push some of the *Dand*-orbiters into the *Daam*-orbit, once they realise that it would be much better to yield a little and gain, than be stubborn and lose. This is good enough, as a first step. However, the governing body also needs to assess whether applying *Daam* for a long time to a greater and greater fraction of the population would be economically feasible. If

yes, then, this is the best thing that could happen! However, if not, the *Daam* has to be withdrawn, forcing the *Daam*-orbiters to think in terms of entering the *Saam*-orbit. Coercion, one may say...but then, there were many shots fired into the air, right? It is high time...

The most intransigent members of the population would refuse to yield even to *Dand*. Their ascent to *Daam* and ultimately to *Saam* could be brought about by *Bhed*. The literal meaning of the term – *Bhed* – is discrimination. Chanakya used it to mean *Sowing seeds of dissension*. However, for the purpose of modern-day governance and in the context of sustainable development pursuits, we could interpret the same as *sanctions imposed against the recalcitrant wrong-doer*. However, governing bodies are not out to harass the *Bhed*-orbiters. A well-meaning governing body having the support of most of the population in the city (those in the *Saam* and *Daam* belts), may even do so, for that matter. We are however not necessarily advocating a stoppage of essential services here. A general denouncement of such individuals and propaganda among the denizens of the city that these are the *black sheep* who need to be proselytized into sustainable development supporters, would help. It will not be long before these *black sheep* become wise enough to voluntarily ascend the ladder.

Governance is key

Governance thus is essentially being kind to the good and stern with the not-so-good. (*bad* is a derogatory term). The author is reminded of the Hindu God of sustenance – Lord Vishnu – who is depicted in paintings and sculptures carrying four objects in his four hands. A discus (*Bhed*), a mace (*Dand*), a conch (*Daam*) and a lotus (*Saam*). Administrators too can learn a lot from mythology, if they approach it with their eyes and ears open!

Good, committed and responsible governance is a key to sustainable development.

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