

Eastern Ideas on Governance: Can it Inform Nepali Policy Makers?

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Abstract

This article explores how Eastern philosophical traditions and worldviews can inform and enhance governance practices in Nepal. It emphasizes the multifaceted nature of human existence—biological, societal, and cosmological—and advocates for a holistic approach rooted in Eastern thought, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and other indigenous philosophies. The piece contrasts the East's systemic, interdependent worldview with the West's binary, conflict-oriented paradigm, highlighting the importance of cosmic harmony, moral virtues, and the golden mean in governance. It underscores the role of knowledge, wisdom, and culture in shaping just, sustainable, and participatory governance at multiple levels. The article also discusses the significance of philosophers as advisors, the need for contextualized policies, and the importance of integrating indigenous values with modern governance frameworks. Ultimately, suggested that embracing Eastern philosophical insights can help Nepali policymakers foster justice, social cohesion, and resilience amid structural and political challenges, paving the way for a more equitable and sustainable future.

Keywords: Eastern philosophy, governance, Nepal, holistic approach, cultural values, social cohesion, resilience, indigenous knowledge, moral virtues, systemic worldview.

Introduction

The *telos* of philosophy is *darshana*, the worldview or reflective thought about the human nature, living condition, and application of wisdom affirming *yug dharma*, the Spirit of the Age. Human beings' desire to know the meaning and purpose of life and the nature of the world is aimed at living a fulfilling life in a good society and polity. These traits of philosophy follow more metaphysical, comprehensive, and systemic roots. They purport to civilize people by awakening them to inner vigilance and the external world through the light of reason and informed faith, and cultivate just and

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good governance at local, national, regional, and global levels for a long-term vision of human survival. The classical notion of governance presupposes not only the process of formulation and execution of public policies but its just outcomes for the people. Johan Galtung rightly says that the West is governed by Aristotelian-Cartesian rule of “either-or” while the East seems to have “both-and” extolled its standard (Galtung, 1995). The binary worldview and inevitability of conflict between opposition forces can hardly shape national, regional, and global governance that can free people and nation-states from fear and ensure the psychology of safety and stability. This essay sheds light on the dimensions of human existence, the cosmic view of life, coherence of knowledge and wisdom, multi-sided acculturation, cross-spheric scale of justice and peace, the golden mean, the tradition of different paths, philosophers as advisors, and conclusion.

Dimension of Human Existence

Eastern philosophy, like its Western counterparts, finds three dimensions of human existence: a biological one rooted in the physical survival and continuity of offspring, a societal one based on the socialization of people for coexistence in a political community, the state and a cosmological one acting on the conscience of humanity. They provide three springs of knowledge--scientific, rational, and spiritual. Russ Mittermeier, like Charles Darwin, says, “Nature is brutal. It is a system of conflict, stress, and adaptation, where different species of plants and animals are beating the hell out of each other in a dynamic struggle to reproduce themselves” (Mittermeier, 1998). Each living species imbued with the common heritage of nature holds a supreme value of its own and cannot be unreasonably sacrificed to the claim of ideology, economic growth, society, or even mankind. This natural world, however, keeps its balance. Both animals and plants do not over indulge in the accumulation of excess food for consumption more than they need for their physical survival. They leave the resources in nature for others to consume. They thus avoid many diseases that human beings face.

Societal knowledge based on social science theories of rational choice, greed, creed, and grievances combines both in-group affinity and out-group competition and conflict, rooted in the monopoly of resources, interests, ideologies, and identities by denying the same rights to others. Human minds are superior to other species and sensitive too. But they survive on consuming the products of plants and animals, make a distinction between the public and the private, over-accumulate, and deprive others, thus disrupting natural and social order. The societal sphere, therefore, requires a higher order of knowledge on governance, affirming nature’s resilience, human rights, democracy, social justice, peace, and rule of law. An incremental policy response

cannot address climate change now. When demographic weight is increasing, and modern technologies have eased the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, it requires a long-term, non-violent, holistic strategy and the use of cutting-edge green technologies. Only enlightened persons seek to transcend the former two biological and social dimensions, for the attainment of the last one, associated with enlightenment, moksha or nirvana, where the distinction between we and they is expunged, and reflective learning overcomes cognitive disabilities and behavioral disorders (Mukerjee, 2010).

As the scale of consciousness mounts from scientific, rational to spiritual knowledge, they discover the cosmic web of life of all souls in perfect unity. Here, *atma* (soul) merges with ultimate reality, *brahma*, or *paramatma* (indestructible, indivisible, and eternal atom). This life is of a higher order of mindfulness of human beings, a life above the disciplinary boundaries of fragmented Cartesian sciences and social sciences and above the vegetative virtues of plants and locomotive virtues of micro-organisms, insects, fishes, birds, and animals. The cosmological approach integrates the fragmented knowledge and lifts life to a higher order. The Hindu-Buddhist philosophy says that the souls of all living species are interrelated. Jainism, propounded by Mahavira, and Buddhism by Siddhartha Gautama had evolved around the same time. Both eschew the killing or harming of living species. Both reject caste discrimination and find blissful life in kindness, compassion, and empathy, and making individuals responsible for their actions. The social nature of human beings provides a perfect frame for good governance. The Japanese religion, Shinto too believes humans are fundamentally good. The purpose of Shintoism is to remove evil spirits, spur work ethics, hard work, and honesty, like Buddhism and Confucianism and freedom is acquired in participation with other groups (Doi, 2001).

Human beings have a greater responsibility to keep the sustainability, resilience, and regenerative capacity of natural products for their own survival and long-term progress. Connecting oneself to bigger causes and pictures provides them with the larger perspective of governance and the deeper purpose of life. In this sense, unlike Western philosophy, Eastern philosophy is neither anthropocentric nor completely deterministic. It says that one cannot become bound by the Vedas or outdated books, even traditional prejudices. Nepal's enlightenment tradition thus gradually widened with the inquiry of the Vedas (2000-1500 BCE), King Janak (7th Century BCE), and Buddha (480-400 BCE); the meaning of each is enlightenment (Dahal, 2011). Each linked the discursive knowledge with intelligence, wisdom, and insight. Nepal's three traditions of enlightenment represent three different values. The Vedic scriptures are pre-religious;

Janaka is highly spiritual and introspective, while Buddhism is a rational philosophy aiming to create a holistic nature of governance. Each cultivated joy and freedom of the soul from the worldly fetters of matters, not only the satisfaction of bodily appetite, but also the courage of the heart and prudence of the mind.

The Cosmic View of Life

Western philosophy largely tends to instill linear thinking, individualism, choice, and rights, while Eastern philosophies are oriented toward group ties, duties, and obligations to multi-scale governance and interdependence of phenomena. The former, especially the Anglo-Saxon one, is linear while the latter one is holistic, cosmic, and systemic (Pavan, 2006). The Vedic ethos of *aham asmi*, (I am) ricochets existentialism and freedom of self without harming others for it embraced *basudhaiva kutumbakam* (the whole world is one family) not the portrayal of “anarchical international system” portrayed by Hedley Bull where each state competes the other for absolute security and creates security dilemma to the other thus generating vicious cycle of distrust, arms race and conflict (Chakravarty, 2021). To avoid its pitfalls moral unification of the world is essential beyond the actuality of national power. It entails the formulation of a cooperative strategy of long-term rationality of serving shared interests, not only power relations habitually defended by political realists and positivists. Eastern philosophy defines the soul as divine and has ultimate value. The purpose of education is to attain this divinity. In this sense, human beings cannot be reduced to class, caste, age, gender, ethnicity, region, religion, or any profession cultivated by rationalist thinking of modern social science and policy works. Chinese philosopher Confucius (551-479 BCE) also says, “mandate of heaven is linked with human existence but independent of humanity” (Huang, 2020). Nepali society and state are the outgrowth of its own native knowledge, not a foreign transplant, which gave its values endurance, independence, and civilizational imperative, well manifested in “do not kill asylum-seekers” and live within one’s own means (Dahal, 2020).

Confucianism lays stress on education, diligence, and hard work, seeking to create a meritocratic and harmonious society at all the levels of governance—local, national, and global. The current Chinese global initiatives on civilization, security, and development trace back to this legacy. Chinese philosopher Xunzi (Hsun Tzu, 310-230 BCE) argued, “the great threat to society is disorder arising out of poverty. In this sense, the state must ensure sufficient public goods to satisfy the essential needs of everyone (Kim, 2011). To him, rulers’ duty is to govern, not resort to force and conflict. As Astavakra says, “a fool thinks of self-interest and generates fight, while the wise one thinks about others as

oneself and abolishes any source of friction and conflict in human relationships. It helps each other to meet reciprocal needs” (Ashtavakra, 2001).

Cultivation of *jagrit manyshya* (awakened person) is the basic purpose of education in Eastern philosophy, and its stress on *atma gyan* (inner vigilance) for shaping moral character and conduct in private and public life (Mukerjee, 2010). Outer knowledge is essential for the functional specialization of society and the realization of social and economic progress.

Confucius, too, believes in the cultivation of human nature, both inner and outer, for self-realization, acting humanely to others, loyalty to family and authorities, and creation of a harmonious society as the purpose of human life. To him, the government, in a position of authority, should behave ethically and dutifully like parents to their children and set the standards of public life. Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, and Shinto ideas place proper respect and deference to their ancestors and parents as they define the way (Dao or Tao) of life. Buddha, according to Johan Galtung, has defined the goal of human beings is attaining enlightenment, society’s development, nature’s sustainability, religion and culture’s adequacy, and the whole world in peace (Galtung, 1993).

Durable peace can come only with peaceful means, not violence, which breeds a political culture of sadism, brutality, and cruelty and infects the normative order of society and ethics of governance. Many of his doctrines are practiced in society as they are evidence-based and validated by society’s approval. Unlike Karl Marx, who was concerned about the liberation of the oppressed class, Buddha wanted to liberate the whole of humanity. Both upheld the deconstructionist method: Buddha wanted to abolish caste and gender discrimination, while Marx wanted to do away with class hierarchy, to create an egalitarian society for their emancipation (Critchley, 2001), akin to what the Nepali constitution visualizes. Both stressed on need-based economy, deeming human beings as part of nature, not apart from it. This is the fundamental philosophy of sustainable development.

Coherence of Knowledge and Wisdom

Vedic literature is regarded as *shruti*, revealed by many *rishis* (sages) through observation, experience, and meditation in the ancient days and, therefore, considered *apurashya* (impersonal and authorless). Upanishads (800-500 BCE) are the outgrowth of the Vedas and reflections of many sages. One now, however, sees the widening gap between an increase in disciplinary knowledge and a decline of wisdom in society, causing misery and rage of emotions of youth, women, and backward classes

electrified by the knowledge and information revolution. It has led to governance failure to adapt to the zeitgeist. The King of Mithila, Sridhoj Janak, wrote the *Brhad-Aranyaka Upanishad* and achieved the title of ‘*Videha Janak*’ through the teaching of *atma gyan* by *Astavakra*. He was a philosopher king comparable to the Platonic ideal state or *Ram Rajya* who sought to liberate political power from its intoxicating substance and people from the bondage of rituals by availing them the flow of sensible knowledge to nourish their life-world. Governance was based on the laws of dharma and popular consent, not only laws. He says that only by seeing, hearing, and knowing one’s own self, *atma*, the outer world can be revealed (Staal, 2008).

Rajrishi Janak sought the aptness of human life through inner vigilance and abolished the dominating nature of political power. The corruption of political power, says Ved Vyas, leads to violence, war, and erosion of civilization, while the corruption of knowledge leads to avidya, false consciousness (Mukerjee, 2010). Gautam Buddha’s wise saying of *appa dipo bhava* (be a light unto yourself) and don’t follow anyone has an appeal for universal liberation, unlike Marx, who sought to liberate the oppressed through critical knowledge (Bronner, 2011). Unlike the Western Enlightenment, which emerged in the eighteenth century based on scientific reason, which imagines the world as a godless, blind machine, the Eastern versions combine faith, feeling, and reason. This detests the instrumental nature of values that subordinates human beings and nature to others’ will, which Buddha and Immanuel Kant detested.

Rishi (sage) Ved Vyas, born in Tanahu, Nepal and son of sage Parashar, divided the timeless Veda into four — the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sama Veda* and the *Atharva Veda* — and wrote 18 Purans and Mahabharata to suit the four stages in human life *brahmacharya* (student), *Grihastha* (family), *Vanaprastha* (the hermit) and *sannyasa* (ascetic) ones for the order of society through functional specialization. The governance of the life cycle in each stressed dharma, moral rightness of thinking to be learned, practiced, and realized. Life has four goals: dharma (righteousness, moral and ethical values above law), artha (economic statecraft pertaining to production, trade, and livelihood satisfaction), kama (pleasure, love, and the regulation of society), and moksha (enlightenment, non-attachment to any object, and emancipation from bondages) (Mukerjee, 2010). *Dharmo racchati rachhita* still rings in the minds of spiritual persons in the South Asian sub-continent. It upholds a deeper meaning than the idioms of the rule of law and the spirit of constitutionalism. The notion of change was based on moral accounting with the universe’s *karmic chakra*, balancing misdeeds with good actions and formulating apt means to attain public goods. The scientific theory of cause-and-effect rests on this premise.

In the classical period of history, Nepali society was largely knowledge-constitutive, which had established the sovereignty of knowledge over power. *Rishis*, having commanded authority on hermeneutic knowledge, received greater respect than the rulers or king, *Swami* (analytic thinkers), *Pundit* (textual interpreters), *Jogis* (knowers of historical and empirical knowledge), and *Purets* (performing ritual social functions), each having a separate profession and purpose to serve national life's various needs (Ashtavakra, 2001). The decline of the sovereignty of knowledge marked the rise of caste, class, and gender discrimination and the fading of civilization at the hands of orthodox caste politics. The purpose of governance, says Chinese philosopher Mencius (371-289 BCE), "is to nourish the nature of human beings," enabling them to self-cultivate a good life without harming others. He furnishes four virtues: benevolence, righteousness, wisdom, and propriety, of which the latter two should be cultivated by leadership and the state to make people happy and the governance virtuous (Chan, 2014). Commanding the respect of people for statecraft and administration is very important to enforce rules and acquire legitimacy.

Multi-Sided Acculturation

Eastern philosophy talks about the three orders of life governed by *dharma-santan dharma* (the eternal cosmic law or the spirit of the age), *rajdharma* (statecraft or governance), and *barnashram dharma* (social division of labor for the functional specialization of society to fulfil essential human needs and realizing self-worth. The Vedas say that the latter two have to adjust to the former (Hamilton, 2001). This means Eastern philosophy is not structure-bound and static but change-oriented. The purpose of *shastrartha* (rational discourse on knowledge without political correctness) in the public sphere sought to define the validity of knowledge, apply knowledge in public policy matters, and allow the people to serve as the final arbiter, *janata janardan* (policy judgment), like the modern version of popular sovereignty (Dahal, 2022). Participation of all provided them ownership and a stake in governance. Unlike modern education confined to classrooms, the *shastratratha* was then open to all, and its findings were publicly disseminated for socialization. Unlike the West, knowledge was public and not the private property of its producer.

The literatures then written in song, drama, poetry, and formula and chanted publicly by knowers of knowledge were easy to remember. The drama of Ram Leela, Krishna Leela, Bhakta Prahlad, King Harischandra, Shrawan Kumar, etc., demonstrated in the villages of Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia, etc., served as political socialization to realize the ideal potential of human life and idealize the normative

standards of society. *Shastratratha* defined and updated knowledge to liberate politics from its oppressive contents, enthuse inner vigilance, and provide them with relevant ideas, courage, and character for peaceful coexistence. German philosopher Immanuel Kant also defines enlightenment in terms of emancipation of people from three-fold tutelage: domestic tutelage, where people rely on the judgment of parents, teachers, and social leaders; civic tutelage: those who know the laws; and pious tutelage: those who can interpret sacred texts and the conditions of their life and liberty (Saner, 1967).

The Nepali tradition of enlightenment has established the sovereignty of the people. The society was duty-based, not rights-based, like the modern one, which is helpful for only the organized part of the people. Nepali society, economy, and polity are largely informal and unorganized now, and they remain outside the domain of good governance. Buddha claimed that the power of powerlessness springs from associational solidarity, joining the Sangha. The Eastern philosophy inscribed in the Shiva Geeta has laid out three types of human virtues- *satto guna* (truth-seeking knowledge and wisdom), *rajo guna* (proper governance of society and offering leadership), and *tamo guna* (engagement in production, circulation, and distribution of public goods). The business ethics of *shuva lav* (just prices of public goods), like modern corporate social responsibility, governed ideal business practices (Dahal, 2020).

Both Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic religions oblige the wealthy to invest in social development. Islam calls the art of giving for social development *zakat*, while Hinduism calls it *dana*. Eastern philosophy defines human nature as divinely resonating. J. J. Rousseau, not the Hobbesian concept of a nasty, brutish, and solitary character to be disciplined only by an all-powerful Leviathan (Hobbes, 2015). The purpose of enlightenment is to seek this divinity and humanity by performing *punya* (virtuous deeds) and entering into a process of corresponding socialization. This is the reason the nature of the state was not based on “violence-monopolizing agency” described by Max Weber, but a duty-bearing in three realms—security and protection of people and space, livelihoods, and education-for them, aiming to detribalize society and overcome the malaises of post-modern identity politics (Dahal, 2020). In the same way, international order cannot be called anarchic as described by political realists, where each nation seeks absolute power and interests and creates a vicious security dilemma for the other due to a lack of global sovereignty for the governance of global public goods such as security, peace, justice, and mitigation of climate change. Civil society imbued with the virtue of *niskam karma* (selfless service), cross-cultural, civilizational, and normative conversation, convergence, travel, trade, and commerce, and common ecological survival in Asia provided scope for mutual coexistence under the principles

of *Panchasheel* and to ward off the clash of civilization, colonization, and domination of the weak and powerless. Organic intellectuals, businesspersons, and civil society still uphold these virtues animated now in the principles of non-aligned movements and the UN Charter.

Cross-Spheric Scale of Justice and Peace

Classical Hindu-Buddhist treatises seek to protect asylum seekers and set justice at ecological, social, gender, and intergenerational levels. The ethical norm of civil society was *niskam karma* (selfless service) for the promotion of education and the cause of the needy. *Punya* can be earned by giving to others and engaging in public works benefitting all, not just the greatest happiness of the greatest number, as utilitarians defend. This sets a three-fold path-- *gyan marga* (acquiring pure knowledge and wisdom), *bhakti marga* (discipline, security, order, and loyalty to multi-scale governance), and *karma marga* (the path of production, distribution, and virtuous action ensuring survival and wellbeing), and keeping the order and continuity of society (Atmananda, 2002).

Astavakra Geeta talks about *atma gyan*, a way of knowing the self and molding character for decent conduct. Krishna's *Geeta* sets the path to *Karma marga*, a realistic path of governance, production, and distribution. The *Mahabharata* lays out the just conduct of governance where the frame of justice rules the life of society and the removal of vices. The *Ramayana* shows the ways of *bhakti marga*, an ideal path of governance, *Ram Rajya*, where no one suffers from the necessities of life, injustice, and unfreedom (Dahal, 2022). "Go to Gorkha if justice is denied," lingers in the minds of many Nepalis as they find now justice delayed, courts overloaded with cases, legal logic getting primacy over the spirit of justice and morality, and judges are selected in a partisan manner. Hindu philosophy defends just war for a greater cause, where women, children, and the disabled cannot be combatants, and venue and time of war are mutually decided, while Buddha rejects it outright. For him, peace can only be achieved through peaceful means, while the Vedas speak of peace on cross-spheric levels—sky, earth, cosmos, water, medicine, plant, etc. (Dahal, 2018). It is not disciplinary, strategic, or instrumental but value-promoting and systemic.

The Golden Mean

The path of action was based on the doctrine of the *golden mean* (middle path) for right livelihood through a cyclical and need-based economy, control extremist elements of society, and optimize diverse ideas, interests, and identities of various forces of the state,

as the modern ethos of constitutionalism embraces (Dahal, 2018). It was a path adopted by Buddha, Confucius, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Adam Smith, and Immanuel Kant, also for the resolution of all conflicts and problems of society. Confucian system is concerned with maintaining social order through golden rule (Capra, 1983). He spells, “Do not do to others what you would not wish them to do to you” (Capra, 1983). The method of problem resolution is dialogical, not dialectical, imperial, hegemonic, or muscular, which negates the other. It seeks the compatibility of ends and means and a balance of *yin* (soft power) and *yan* (hard power) in governance. Nepali regimes’ deviation from basic values, culture, native knowledge, and the golden mean created a crisis in reformist politics and set the causes of political powerlessness of people, political instability, and dysfunctional operation of institutions and the constitution of the nation, despite the trappings of human rights, democracy, and popular sovereignty.

Culture matters for better governance and development, where the processes of Sankritization play a critical role as a soft power of governance. The development of Western nations is attributed to what Weber calls protestant ethics and liberal expansionism (Tuck, 1999), while China, Singapore, and Vietnam followed Confucianism, Japan followed Shinto Buddhism, India has embraced Hinduism, Israel utilized Judaism and Malaysia and Islamic countries followed Islam for their governance. Each country has harnessed its historical and cultural potential under the social capital of the nation and fertilized its prospective strength through science and technology for effective governance and development, rather than adopting what Karl Marx calls “ideology-based social sciences,” regardless of their contextual relevance and utility. Nepal’s classical treatises also value a balance between self-interest and public goods for perfect governance.

Traditions of Different Paths

Aadi Shankaracharya, who lived around the 8th century BCE, taught *Advaita Vedanta*, a non-dualistic philosophy considering *atma* and *brahma* one and the same, and rejected the Western version of mind-matter dualism (Thiselton, 2006). Yet, the philosophy of *Samkhya* (meaning elaboration), which originated around 350-450 BCE, furnished the reason for dualism. For it, reality comprises *purusha* and *prakriti*. *Prakriti* is pre-existing, given, and uncreated, and manifests in given and, therefore, effects are already existing in the causes, while *Purusha* is conscious energy that governs life and reality of the life-world (Hamilton, 2001). Buddha, therefore, speaks about the transformation of causes of grief, ignorance, and conflict, not just their management and legal quibbling for dispute resolution. For devoted Hindus and Buddhists, material possession matters less than the stoic life of spiritualism.

Charwak, who lived in the 8th century BCE, was a nastic, meaning a non-believer in God, materialist, and an empiricist who denied the existence of God, *atma* (soul), and the afterlife, the transmigration of the soul. He also objected to ritualism, supernaturalism, and superhuman sources of knowledge. Charwak's hedonistic passion, devoid of the moral purpose of life, can plunge the nation and society into dependency and a debt trap, thus losing the right to self-determination of politics, law, and policymaking (Hamilton, 2001). Nepal is also gripping into a similar path where debt servicing consumes a bulk of the public budget and conditionalized aid has stripped off its parliament's policy-making sovereignty. Buddhism is also nastic (atheistic) and soul-negating, but propounded the liberation of humankind through nirvana, liberation from suffering arising out of desire and ignorance through living an ethical life and meditation. But Buddha believed in the *Karamic chakra* that good action yields better outcomes in life and formulated an eight-fold path for it (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999)

Manusmriti, a reflection or memoir of Manu, describes the code of conduct for society, caste groups, and patriarchal leadership. He codified the doctrine of Brahmanism. His ideas originated around 200 BCE, prescribing policy for the statecraft that is adopted in the laws of many South Asian countries (Sharma, 2004). It is subject to change with change in time, technology, context, and demography, and not fatalistic, as the Nepali saying goes, "a bucket does not hold milk even if fate is good." Now Nepal faces not the excruciating curse of *Sati* for its underdevelopment but the curse of natural and human resources and strategic sites where geopolitical tussle of great powers pivots and penetrates, stoking centrifugal forces of society and breeding eternal political instability. Great caution and self-poise of balance is essential for Nepal's politics of the golden mean in the neighborhood and non-alignment in international politics.

Kautilya, born in 300 BCE, was a political realist who said that a nation acts in its economic, political, and diplomatic self-interest. His classical treatise, *Arthashastra*, is a good treatment of statecraft comparable to *The Prince* by Niccolo Machiavelli. It suggests how to conduct inter-state relations and exercise diplomacy to keep peace with neighboring states through diplomatic, trade, and cultural relations. For him, good governance comes with peace, order, and justice, which can be achieved through the collaboration of different actors in a community, like modern governance, which seeks the synergy of the state, market, and civil society (Hale, 1978). Chinese philosopher Mozi (490-403 BCE), however, favored utility-maximizing governance to coordinate human conduct and punish those not conforming to the laws. Mencius, the famous disciple of Confucius, advocated that the people have the right to depose despotic rulers,

as in the lessons of Krishna's Geeta which were utilized by martyrs in the political movement of Nepal in 1950 (Mozi, 2003).

The *Dibya Upadesh* of Nepal's King Prithvi Narayan Shah represents the synthesis of knowledge existing in the Nepali society, which has outlined many elements of governance. He followed a consultative mode of governance and a patrimonial regime, while the Ranas adopted an extractive model, the democratic regime followed a welfare constitutional tradition, the Panchayat advocated a welfare authoritarian regime, and again the democratic regime adopted a neo-liberal minimalist, subsidiary regime, causing the crisis of governance and conflict boom. Modern governance espouses three key pillars: the state, the market, and civil society. Nepal replaced dharma-based governance by the rule of law and the constitutional tradition of politics, thus inverting its classical ideal of what Bhagbad Geeta says, *swodharme nirdhana shreya, paradharmo bhayabaha* (Dahal, 2022). The Vedas also speak of generating national consciousness to protect the state, make it duty bearers to citizens' welfare, and enable them to engage in creative pursuits of life, liberty, and bliss.

Philosophers as Advisors

One common point in Eastern and Western philosophy is that many philosophers were not only truth and knowledge-seekers and producers but also advisors to rulers, as they had comprehensive knowledge of human nature, the nature of society, and the universe. The only exception was Socrates, who confined philosophy to the contemplative domain and became a martyr of philosophy for speaking truth to power. Vishwamitra was the royal sage of Rama, Yagyavalkya and Astavakra were advisors to King Janak, and Krishna and got education from the *gurukul* founded by sage Sandipani. King Chandragupta was trained by Chanakya for the unification of India based on the native system of *dharma*. In the West, Plato served as advisor to the Greek rulers, Aristotle was advisor to King Alexander the Great, and Machiavelli was advisor to the Prince of Medici. Even Thomas Hobbes was an official philosopher. The recent example is Anthony Giddens, who was an advisor to Tony Blair, the former British Prime Minister. They linked human knowledge to the rituals of governance, socialization, policymaking, and problem resolution for the general well-being of the society.

Conclusion

Governance at multi-scale levels is a coordinated regime. It requires fairness of means in the management of private and public affairs, with outcome-oriented distributional consequences for the benefits of all people and the nation-state. The philosophical

insights of the East and the West can inform Nepali policy makers as to how good governance performs. Its interrelated goals are expected to promote justice across ecological, social, gender, and inter-generational spheres rooted in the ethics of dharma-based culture. The Eastern ethical norms can provide wisdom about the correct dispensation of governance affairs and set the normative order of society, the state, market, and civil society institutions. In Nepal, however, the realization of governance goals faces structural and political cultural constraints such as erosion of the lawful power of the Nepali state, persistence of conflict residues, multiple interpretation of constitution, institutionalization of neo-patrimonial regime, wearing of policy sovereignty and weakness in the frontiers of modernization especially in areas of education, economy, technology, institutional culture and transformational leadership. Moreover, the culture of impunity has weakened the criminal law system, thus stacking the backlog of many cases, such as corruption, gold smuggling, fake refugees, illegal land grab, and unsettled transitional justice. As a result, multi-level governance in Nepal seems skewed in matters of the supply of public goods. The production revolution in the real economy, not a revenue-based symbolic one as is practiced now, can resolve the scarcity of public goods, contribute to social cohesion, and steer the path to a sustainable democratic future away from the ferocity of external dependence and predatory geopolitics that cut national leverage in international relations. This, however, requires both contextualization and indigenization of knowledge and public policies to fit the Nepalis' aspirations for good governance.

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