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## **Ancient India's Environmental Thought: Insights from the *Arthaśāstra***

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**Abstract:** The *Arthaśāstra*, an ancient Indian text, showcases a remarkably forward-thinking approach to environmental management. It highlights the importance of preserving forests, protecting wildlife, and managing water resources sustainably. The text also emphasizes the need for responsible governance, civic cleanliness, and environmental hygiene. The *Arthaśāstra*'s guidelines on forest conservation, wildlife protection, and water management demonstrate a clear understanding of the importance of preserving natural resources. Its emphasis on sustainable practices and punishments for polluters shows a commitment to environmental protection. The text's focus on urban planning and civic cleanliness is also noteworthy, with guidelines for city planning, waste management, and public health. Overall, the *Arthaśāstra* presents a holistic approach to environmental management, recognizing the interconnectedness of human and natural systems. Its wisdom on sustainable living remains relevant today, offering valuable insights for addressing modern environmental challenges.

**Keywords:** Environmental Management, Sustainability, Conservation, Wildlife Protection, Water Management, Urban Planning, Civic Cleanliness, *Arthaśāstra*, Kautilya, Ancient India, Natural Resources, Responsible Governance.

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### **1. Introduction**

The current awareness of environmental issues has arisen from the consequences of excessive pollution, prompting global research and study. Ancient India's perspective on the environment differed from modern thinking, as environmental problems were largely absent then. The *Arthaśāstra*, written by *Kauṭīliya*, is a vital text offering insights into ancient India's politics, society, economy, and governance. Notably, it contains implicit and explicit elements of environmental thought that remain relevant today, reflecting ancient India's unique perspective.

To understand the environmental concept in the *Arthaśāstra*, it's essential to know that ancient Indian philosophy prioritized four categories: *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma*, and *Mokṣa*. Kautilya focused on *Artha* or