



Ethical Foundations of Governance in Classical Indian Texts: A Comparative Study of Kamandaki and Swami Vedanta Desika

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Abstract: The Bhagavad Gita establishes that fulfilling one's responsibilities without attachment to results constitutes dharma for any individual. This concept of dharma, encompassing proper conduct, right action, duty, and ethical thinking, forms the foundational basis for the governance of any land. This paper undertakes a comparative analysis of Kamandakiya Nitisara and selected works of Swami Vedanta Desika, specifically Rahasya Traya Sara and Paramartha Stuti, to examine how each text constructs parallel frameworks between individual morality and systems of political authority. The analysis focuses on prescriptions, exemplars, and institutional norms present in both corpora. In the Nitisara, dharma manifests as public duty, delineating the obligations of kings, ministers, and administrators, while providing guidelines for strategy, counsel, and the maintenance of social order, including the moral boundaries of coercion and deceit in administrative practice. According to Swami Vedanta Desika, dharma represents a systematic philosophical framework that reconceptualises obligation through the lenses of personal responsibility, epistemic integrity, and moral education appropriate for office-holders and civic agents. By contrasting Swami Desika's normative analyses with Nitisara's procedural ethics, this paper maps a complementary architecture in which one text emphasizes institutional roles and stability-promoting expedients. The other highlights the moral dispositions and philosophical justifications that legitimate authority. The conclusion demonstrates how these classical prescriptions for dharma can enrich contemporary governance theory and offers implications for current discussions in political ethics, particularly regarding questions of responsibility, moral leadership, and the ethical architecture of institutions.

Keywords: Dharma, Governance, Nitisara, Swami Vedanta Desika, Political ethics, Classical Indian Philosophy

1. Introduction

“Throughout history, societies have struggled to balance political authority and moral responsibility”(Gautam, 2019; Kauṭilya, 2013). Power is a moral responsibility, a legal principle, a social obligation, an ethical conduct, and a great spiritual commitment, rather than only administrative authority. “This state of balancing all four could be seen in classical India through the idea of dharma,

which became a complete, self-contained framework for governance” (Gautam, 2019; Kauṭilya, 2013). “Different philosophical schools of thought developed and conceptualised the relationship between *dharma* and governance, which offered valuable insights not only into the historical development of Indian political thought but also into contemporary debates about the ethical foundations of political authority” (Parthasarathy, 2016; Kalash, 2023; Sadineni & Shastri, 2024).

This paper examines two distinct yet complementary approaches to the ethical foundations of governance through a comparative analysis of Kamandakiya *Nitisara* and selected works of Swami Vedanta Desika, primarily *Rahasya Traya Sara* and *Paramartha Stuti*. Both the texts reflect contrasting yet complementary thinking on state governance and moral aspects of political authority. The Nitishastra tradition which houses the *Nitisara* composition composed during the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE, speaks about the political and ethical instruction. The *Nitisara* draws substantially from Kautilya’s Arthashastra while developing a distinct ethical perspective.

In Swami Vedanta Desika’s writings during the 13th-14th centuries CE, the Vishishtadvaita philosophy in the Sri Vaishnava tradition was followed and answered questions of duty and authority. According to Swami Desika, power symbolized that duties and responsibilities went hand in hand along with being truly devotional. By that, spiritual principles could be related with worldly governance. The *Nitisara* emphasized standard institutional structures, administrative procedures and mechanisms for political stability. Swami Desika’s works focused on moral character and rational validation for lawful authority. These perspectives showed how ethics and governance were unified by political thought resulting in insightful information on political legitimacy, institutional design and ethical leadership. In spite of the growing body of scholarship on both the *Nitishastra* tradition and Swami Vedanta Desika’s philosophical works individually, a notable gap is observed in comparative scholarship there exists a notable gap in comparative scholarship that bridges these two traditions. Earlier studies have either focused on the procedural dimensions of the *Nitisara* or on the theological and devotional aspects of Swami Desika’s writings, without systematically examining how these two frameworks interact as complementary ethical architectures for governance. Moreover, while scholars such as Narayanan (2007) have explored the practical dimensions of

Swami Desika's philosophy, the political implications of his ethical thought — particularly in dialogue with *Nitishastra* frameworks— remain underexplored. This paper addresses that gap by undertaking a structured comparative analysis of how each text conceptualises the relationship between individual moral formation and systemic political authority.

2. Methodology

In this paper, a primary methodological approach is used which is a qualitative comparative textual analysis of two primary source traditions: Kamandakiya *Nitisara* (translated by Dutt, 1896, and analysed in Gautam, 2019) and selected works of Swami Vedanta Desika, specifically the *Rahasya Traya Sara* (translated by Ayyangar, 1946) and the *Paramartha Stuti*.

The comparative framework is structured along two analytical axes: (1) procedural ethics — how each text prescribes the organisation of political institutions, roles, and decision-making processes; and (2) normative ethics — how each text grounds political authority in moral character, philosophical justification, and virtue formation. These axes are not presented as mutually exclusive but as lenses that reveal how each tradition emphasises different but complementary dimensions of governance.

The texts are compared thematically rather than chronologically, as the purpose is not to establish historical influence but to identify structural parallels and productive tensions in their ethical prescriptions. Where relevant, secondary learning is used to interpret and anchor the analysis in established academic discourse. Contemporary political philosophy, including the work of Rawls (1971) and Habermas (1996), is engaged selectively to establish the continued relevance of these classical frameworks to modern governance theory.

3. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The *Nitishastra* Tradition and Kamandaki's Contribution

“In Sanskrit literature, the core principles of *Nitishastra* (Essence of statecraft) emphasise government, interstate relations, war and diplomacy, and proper conduct in the political, social, and personal spheres. The roots of *Nitishastra* can be traced to the Vedic period, but it developed more systematically in texts of Kautilya's *Arthashastra*” (Trautmann, 2012). “The term '*niti*' is derived from the root word '*ni*,' which means to lead or guide, suggesting that these works function as guides for those occupying positions of authority and also navigate complex social conditions”(Sternbach, 1963). “The *Nitishastra* tradition embraces diverse works ranging from maxim collections to comprehensive treatises on

statecraft” (Sternbach, 1963).

Kautilya’s disciple is Kamandaki. “Kamandakiya *Nitisara* occupies an important position within this tradition as a text that blends *Nitishastra* resources even while stressing its distinctive elements” (Dutt, 1896; Gautam, 2019). “The text is composed in verse form and consists of approximately 1,200 verses organised into twenty chapters”(Dutt, 1896; Gautam, 2019). The work clearly borrows from Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*, at times copying entire passages but with little changes. Many facets of *Nitisara*’s political beliefs and philosophy have been studied in academics in recent years. According to McClish (2009), “Kamandaki represents an attempt to make the complex prose of Kautilya’s *Arthashastra* more accessible through verse composition while simultaneously softening its more ruthlessly pragmatic elements”. “Other scholars have focused on the text’s treatment of specific topics such as warfare, diplomacy, and administrative organization”(Subramanian, 1980). Notably, while scholars like McClish (2009) have framed Kamandaki’s work primarily as an attempt to make Kautilya more accessible, this interpretation understates the *Nitisara*’s independent ethical contribution. The current paper argues that Kamandaki does not merely soften Kautilya’s pragmatism — he systematically reframes institutional conduct within a moral register that Kautilya does not consistently maintain. This distinction is theoretically significant and remains underexplored in the existing literature.

Swami Vedanta Desika's Philosophical Framework

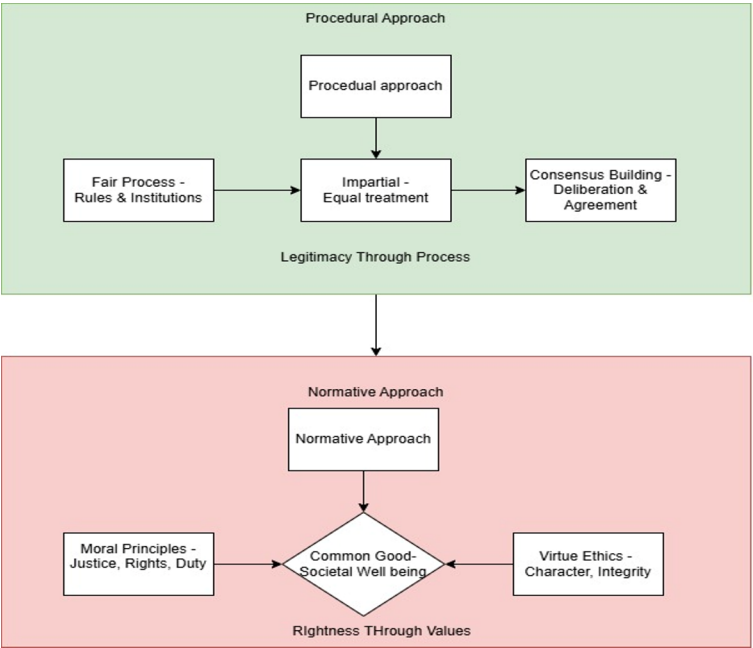
Among the most important philosophers in the Sri Vaishnava tradition, stands tall the name of Swami Vedanta Desika (1268-1369 CE) who was one of the great preceptors following the teachings of Sri Ramanujacharya. “He developed sophisticated refinements to the philosophy of *Vishishtadvaita*” (Narasimhachary, 2004; Narayanan, 2008). “His contribution to metaphysics, epistemology, and devotional theology is well known. Swami Desika’s works also contain substantial reflections on ethics, duty, and the proper conduct of those in positions of authority” (Narayanan, 2007). “His treatment of these themes emerges primarily in texts such as the *Rahasya Traya Sara*, *Paramartha Stuti*, and *Nyasa Vimshati*, though ethical considerations permeate much of his corpus” (Narayanan, 2007).

Swami Desika’s magnum opus is *The Rahasya Traya Sara* which speaks about the theory and practice of total surrender called as *Sharanagathi* or *prapatti* to the lord Sri Mahavishnu. Nonetheless, the text’s thorough treatment of dharma offers detailed examination of the moral duties arising out of the various social and institutional roles, especially in its chapters on prior preparation for spiritual attainment. “Swami Desika commends that proper understanding of one’s duties does not mean mere external compliance with prescribed actions but also cultivation of appropriate dispositions and

epistemic clarity regarding the nature and purpose of those duties” (Ayyangar, 1946; Narasimhachary, 2004).

It may seem highly unthinkable that a devotional hymn such as Paramartha Stuti might be used as a basis for political thinking. However, Swami Desika’s treatment of moral exemplary behavior, his emphasis on justice as a heavenly attribute that must be reflected in governance and his explanation of the connection between supreme governance and human authority give significant insights into his contemplation of the proper legitimate power.

His works demonstrate how theological commitments shape political thought and action, suggesting that the legitimacy of political authority is derived from a reflection of moral order. Swami Vedanta Desika has primarily focused on his philosophical and theological contributions, with relatively less attention to the political implications of his ethical thought. Narayanan (2007) has explored the practical dimensions of Swami Desika’s philosophy. However, little attention has been given to how Swami Desika’s philosophical framework explains issues of ethics, authority, and governance. The current study attempts to fill this gap by linking his views on dharma with questions of political rightfulness and institutional structure.



Source : Self

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework: Procedural and Normative Approaches to Political Ethics

In this paper, the framework analyses and compares ethics in politics through the procedural and normative lenses, even though the two complement each other. Institutional structures, decision-making systems and administrative mechanisms form the procedural ethics. They address questions about how the government should function and how to protect against the abuse of power and authority. In contrast, the normative approach emphasises the moral basis for the execution of power and authority in governance.

This difference aids analysis; it does not imply strict separation but rather intertwining functions. Contemporary political thinkers such as Rawls (1971) and Habermas (1996) have shown that procedural and normative concerns are definitely interlinked in political legitimacy. Procedures need to be ethically sound and moral principles need to be very clear in order to put them into application. The classic Indian texts analyzed in this study recognized this robust relationship even as they were analyzed and discussed from various angles and viewpoints.

Dharma links ethical standards and realistic regulations. It gives advice through its role based forms(*svadharma*). It guides people on their social and institutional roles and duties. Classical Indian political thought tackled both the questions on practical governance and moral authority thus showing a complete understanding of ethical and political life even though different texts emphasized different parts.

4. Comparative Analysis: Dharma In Governance

Having established the theoretical framework and the individual textual traditions, we now turn to a systematic comparative analysis of how dharma functions as a governing principle in each corpus.

Conceptualisations of Dharma: Dharma in the *Nitisara*: Public Duty and Institutional Order

“According to the *Nitisara*, *dharma* represents a code of public responsibility and social stability, whereas it acknowledges political authority only when it operates within the framework of *dharma*” (Dutt, 1896; Gautam, 2019). “According to Kamandaki, circumstances influence moral duty. Effective governance requires practical judgment rather than rigid adherence to abstract rules. Through various examples, the text shows how wise rulers adjusted their actions to changing situations. At the same time, it affirms the existence of fundamental moral limits. Specific actions, regardless of their apparent benefits, are seen as clear violations of *dharma*. Unjustified violence against innocents, breaking sacred obligations, and betraying those who place their trust

in the ruler are some instances” (Gautam, 2019). Critically, this contextual flexibility in Kamandaki's understanding of dharma creates a productive tension within the text itself. On one hand, it demonstrates a sophisticated political realism — acknowledging that governance cannot be reduced to the mechanical application of abstract moral rules. On the other hand, it raises the risk of rationalising ethical compromise under the guise of necessity based on circumstances, a tension that contemporary scholars of political ethics (Walzer, 1973, on “dirty hands”) have recognised as endemic to political authority. The *Nitisara*'s value lies in naming this tension rather than resolving it, which is precisely where Swami Desika's normative framework becomes a necessary complement.

Dharma by Vedanta Desika: Personal Responsibility and Epistemic Integrity

“Swami Vedanta Desika approaches *dharma* primarily through the lens of personal moral responsibility, firmly grounded in proper understanding”(Narasimhachary, 2004; Narayanan, 2008). “In the *Rahasya Traya Sara*, he extols *dharma* as action guided by an awareness of its meaning, purpose, and connection to the ultimate reality, rather than mere outward obedience to prescribed duties”(Ayyangar, 1946; Narayanan, 2008). This view point of Swami Desika differentiates his work from that of the other styles that stress basically on outwards practice of norms.

“There is no dharmic commitment when duties are performed without understanding their ethical and spiritual significance” (Narasimhachary, 2004). “According to Swami Desika, *dharma* is rooted in the individual's dependence on and accountability to the divine, from which moral duties arise” (Narayanan, 2008).

“However, this religious foundation does not separate dharma from the realities of governance. Instead, it provides a stronger basis for political responsibility; those in power are viewed as trustees rather than merely as authority figures” (Narasimhachary, 2004). “They are accountable to both their subjects and the divine source of legitimacy. This perspective sets clear moral limits on political action, limits that cannot be ignored for convenience or quick solutions” (Narayanan, 2008).

In the Paramartha Stuti, Swami Desika portrays the lord as the supreme ruler. He combines perfect justice with boundless compassion. In the same manner, the government or the human rulers need to blend their ethical values and principles of moral values with justice, empathy, compassion in their wielding of power. That means, the human governance should adhere to the moral code of conduct as prescribed in the Paramartha Stuti. Their model of governance becomes the benchmark in the hall of

excellence in governance. Moral values and political power need to be mixed in the right proportion to yield the best result. Not only authority, but the government's skill to showcase basic best virtues such as being wise, fair, sympathetic, empathy along with the lasting assurance to serve the people's welfare.

5. Institutional Roles And Moral Agency

The *Nitisara*'s Procedural Framework

The *Nitisara* provides a clear and detailed explanation of the various roles and duties in the institution's governance. It explains in great detail about the duties of kings, ministers, priests, military commanders and different government officials. *Nitisara* delineates how each role carries specific duties and responsibilities along with the required skills and capabilities. When the roles are clearly defined, then the government finds it easy to ensure proper cooperation and coordination between the various duties thus fixing greater efficiency and accountability

"In Kamandaki's political theory, the king occupies the apex of the institutional hierarchy and bears ultimate responsibility for the welfare of the realm" (Dutt, 1896; Gautam, 2019). But "the ruler cannot govern effectively in isolation; he must rely on wise counsellors for candid advice, capable administrators for implementation, and loyal subordinates who faithfully execute royal directives"(Gautam, 2019). "The text therefore provides detailed criteria for selecting, testing, and supervising officials, recognising that the quality of governance depends largely on the competence and character of those who staff state institutions" (Dutt, 1896). "Comparable administrative principles are also emphasised in the statecraft tradition associated with Kautilya, whose work similarly stresses ministerial integrity and bureaucratic efficiency as pillars of stable rule" (Olivelle, 2013).

The *Nitisara* discusses about the conflict between moral values and loyalty to the institutions. *Nitisara* handles this tension very well. It acknowledges the command/orders of the superiors in the hierarchical institutional structure and what Dharma exactly demands. This leads to ethical confusion and likely conflict between both the superiors and the subordinates. *Nitisara* accepted that sometimes the required action and the actual action required to be performed were in conflict as certain actions violated the basic moral principles and guidelines. During such instances, the proper course of action would be to respectfully protest against the wrong action rather than agreeing with the wrong action mechanically. This shows the text's political but moral values even during demanding situations within hierarchical structures represents a dimension of the moral

agency.

6. Swami Vedanta Desika's Normative Analysis of Office and Responsibility

Swami Vedanta Desika's approach, within the framework of *svadharma*, questions the institutional roles and responsibilities, as well as the duties specific to one's position and station. However, his analysis emphasises that these position-based duties must be universal moral principles that apply to all persons regardless of their particular social position and order. Fundamental moral obligations are a prerequisite for institutional power and prestige. Universal moral values and principles limit the role-specific duties.

In the *Rahasya Traya Sara*, Swami Desika cultivates a sophisticated account of moral education appropriate for those in power. Cultivation of specific virtues: discernment to distinguish between right and wrong courses of action, detachment from purely selfish interests, steadfastness in adhering to proper conduct despite pressures to compromise, and compassion towards their subjects are virtues that represent refinement in character. These are highly required in governance.

"Vedanta Desika's emphasis on the highest standards of integrity is central to understanding his view of institutional ethics" (Narasimhachary, 2004; Narayanan, 2008). "Those who hold authority bear a heightened obligation to ground decisions in accurate knowledge rather than ignorance, prejudice, or self-serving rationalisation, a principle rooted in his broader epistemological and ethical framework" (Narayanan, 2008). "This requires intellectual humility about the limits of one's understanding and an active commitment to seeking reliable knowledge and diverse perspectives" (Narasimhachary, 2004). "His writings suggest that many failures of governance arise not from deliberate malice but from misjudgment caused by incomplete information, unexamined assumptions, or narrow interpretive frameworks that exclude morally relevant considerations" (Narayanan, 2008).

7. Strategy, Counsel, And the Ethics of Statecraft

Expedients and Moral Boundaries in the *Nītisāra*

The *Nitisara* also deals with the difficult choice of deception and hard moral choice in politics. Rulers and governments may face very tough challenging situations when they are required to compromise on their ethical stands. It requires great mental strength to face such situations wherein the rulers decide as to how much to compromise on honesty and bend the rules like control over information, reliance on spies etc., as per the *Artashastra* way of thinking.

The *Nitisara* clearly defines ethical boundaries and does not support harsh political behavior and unrestrained tampering of moral values. When it comes to matters of public and societal interests such as protecting the kingdom or protecting the country from outside perils, or to maintain internal stability, sometimes deception is acceptable. But is is definitely not justified when it is used for individual interests or for personal gain or for power. The *Nitisara* says that certain kind of deceit like breaking holy promises or cheating in genuine relationships are grave misconducts which cannot be pardoned or accepted. “The text’s discussion of advice reflects another key aspect of its ethical approach to governance” (Gautam, 2019). It says that effective leadership depends on discussions and consultations with all knowledgeable and informed advisors. It also acknowledges the difficulties faced by those who give advice. “Advisors should speak honestly, even when their views are unpopular, but they must also be mindful of the ruler’s feelings. Open criticism can lead to hostility and diminish the impact of good advice” (Gautam, 2019).

“Therefore, the *Nitisara* promotes tactful, indirect communication, such as using historical examples or hypothetical situations, to share brutal truths without causing resistance” (Gautam, 2019).

Moral Dispositions and Justified Authority by Swami Vedanta Desika

Swami Vedanta Desika focused primarily on the moral conduct and character of the institutional seats of power rather than on the power itself. This, by itself, became a distinct approach which he adapted. According to Swami Desika, personal integrity and personal discipline matter more than mere seat of authority and position. This kind of perspective has become a benchmark for government officials to maintain a high standard of conduct.

In the *Paramartha Stuti*, Swami Desika says that the divine ruler is the perfect one, having perfect real knowledge, unwavering justice and deep compassion. Although no one can be compared to the Lord, the divine Lord serves as the true leader, leading humanity in ethical leadership. Hence, Swami Desika cautions that governance which justifies ethical compromises by referring to difficult circumstances is weakening the moral foundations of their authority. Swami Desika’s emphasis on moral character is highly relevant to political counsel. What are the qualities required for a proper effective advisory counsel? The answer lies in the *Rahasya Traya Sara*. The *Rahasya Traya Sara* describes the qualities required for a good advisor. The advisors must possess enough wisdom to understand ethical principles and apply them in real life. They must have the courage to stand up for truth even in adverse circumstances. Thus careful judgement and responsible action must be guided by strong moral values.

On the whole, Swami Vedanta Desika's work highlighted the significance of ethical integrity in public and social life.

"By prioritising integrity, discipline, and ethical awareness over mere authority, he offers a lasting framework for responsible leadership" (Narasimhachary, 2004; Narayanan, 2008).

"His approach remains relevant in contemporary discussions of governance, where questions of legitimacy and public trust continue to depend on the moral conduct of those in power" (Narasimhachary, 2004; Narayanan, 2008).

8. Discussion: Complementary Architectures of Political Ethics

Institutional Design and Moral Formation

The works of Kamandakiya Nitisara and the works of Swami Vedanta Desika are comparative yet complementary. Both deal with diverse but related aspects of ethics in political life. The Nitisara mainly concentrates on how political institutions are organized and operate. It provides clear guidance on administrative roles, clear decision making process and ways of coordination. "Good governance cannot depend solely on the personal virtue of rulers and officials" (Dutt, 1896; Gautam, 2019). "Instead, emphasis is placed on creating institutions that can guide behaviour, manage competing interests, and limit the misuse of power" (Gautam, 2019). "Such structures and systems are necessary because governance systems function even when those in authority fall short of ideal moral standards" (Dutt, 1896).

"Swami Vedanta Desika's writings complement this institutional perspective by directing attention to the moral development of those who exercise power" (Narasimhachary, 2004; Narayanan, 2008). Swami Desika says that ethical governance cannot be assured by rules, procedures and guidelines alone. "Institutions may be distorted by individuals who lack integrity, and formal compliance with regulations may coexist with violations of their underlying purpose" (Narayanan, 2008). "It is for this reason that Swami Desika stresses the importance of moral education, self-discipline, and character formation among political leaders and administrators" (Narasimhachary, 2004). "In his view, ethical governance depends not only on external controls but also on internal moral commitment" (Narayanan, 2008).

Taken in total, these viewpoints show that political ethics must combine both institutional and moral dimensions. Good governance depends on well defined procedures, clearly defined roles and strong systems of accountability. But system alone is not enough. They work through people and with the society and in the society. The

way individuals think, behave and act upon determine the strand of moral values in the society and this influences the political environment as well. It is required to have a strong value system, good and ethical habits and a strong sense of moral judgement to strengthen the society and help in character formation. When we look across traditions, mutual dependence of institutional arrangements and strength of ethical character are required to form a collective framework to foster the classical Indian political thought.

Moral Realism and Ethical Idealism

The Nitisara's practical approach and Swami Vedanta Desika's ethical ideals bring out an important issue in political ethics. They show the conflict between how things should actually work and how they really work. Together they address the issue of how to balance real world issues and practices with moral and ethical values. "The *Nitisara* demonstrates clear awareness of the morally compromised nature of actual political practice" (Gautam, 2019; Dutt, 1896).

"The Nitisara does not pretend that rulers always act from pure motives or that governance can be reduced to the simple application of universal principles. Instead, it attempts to provide guidance that remains useful even for imperfect rulers operating in morally complex circumstances" (Gautam, 2019). There is no simple choice in following procedures or ethical ideals in governance. Instead the focus is on working within moral limits while recognizing and balancing the real challenges and ethical dilemmas that governments face.

Dimensions of Ethical Governance

Both Kamandaki and Swami Desika's works address the challenges of governance between what ought to be and what actually is. While Nitisara lays stress on political practice, Swami Desika's works emphasize ethical integrity. The dimensions are different but the goal is the same. The Nitisara says that full and proper information on matters concerning the state are required for efficient and proper governance such as military, neighbouring rulers' intentions and ideas, economic and social conditions of the state etc.

"Swami Vedanta Desika's emphasis on integrity addresses a different but equally important dimension" (Narasimhachary, 2004; Narayanan, 2008). "He emphasises that ethical governance requires a correct understanding of the nature and purpose of authority itself. Those in power must understand that they are trustees accountable to the moral order and that their primary concern is the welfare of their subjects" (Narasimhachary, 2004; Narayanan, 2008). "Failures in this foundational understanding, even among rulers

who gather accurate factual information, lead to corrupted governance” (Narasimhachary, 2004).

From the above discussion, more realization and thought process take place. This leads to more pondering about ethical learning and This knowledge and understanding lead to bigger questions about moral education and the refinement of practical wisdom. Both the works have acknowledged in various ways that political governance needs ethical and practical wisdom which is much more than mere knowledge of rules and regulations. This realistic understanding arises from contemplative analysis coupled with experience and importance given to ethical values and best behavior models.

9. Implications For Contemporary Governance Theory

Responsibility and Accountability in Complex Institutions

“Modern theories of governance grapple with questions of responsibility and accountability in complex institutions” (Max Weber, 1978; Mark Bovens, 2007). “As organisations expand and authority becomes distributed across multiple levels and departments, assigning clear responsibility to individuals becomes increasingly complex”(Bovens, 2007). “Traditional frameworks centred solely on personal accountability often appear insufficient under such conditions” (Weber, 1978). “In this context, classical Indian political texts continue to offer valuable conceptual resources for understanding how ethical responsibility can be maintained within complex administrative systems” (Gautam, 2019).

The Nitisara contemplates how to maintain ethical obligations and at the same time be very effective particularly in bigger and complex organisations. According to the Nitisara, every individual is personally accountable for his actions even though he may be at different stages in the organizational hierarchy. He cannot escape accountability and responsibility by stating that his actions were according to the instructions of his superiors. Unethical actions are always condemned whether done by superior or subordinate.

Swami Vedanta Desika emphasizes this perspective by reinforcing the significance of moral integrity along with individual responsibility. Effective governance relies on the strength of character of those leaders and individuals who serve in the offices and not

merely on the strength of the structures alone.

These classical insights carry concrete relevance in the contemporary context. In cases of large-scale institutional failure — such as the 2008 global financial crisis, where individuals within banks justified unethical lending practices by deferring to systemic pressures and superior authority — the *Nitisara's* insistence on personal accountability at every level of the hierarchy offers a direct corrective. Similarly, in the context of corporate governance scandals such as those at Enron and Satyam Computers, the failure was not merely procedural — auditing structures existed — but a failure of individual moral integrity, precisely the dimension that Swami Vedanta Desika's framework addresses.

In public administration, India's Right to Information Act (2005) and mechanisms such as social audits in the MGNREGA programme reflect, in practice, the *Nitisara's* emphasis on transparency and accountability within institutional hierarchies. Swami Desika's insistence on the trustee model of authority — that those who hold power are accountable not merely to the law but to a higher moral order — finds a parallel in modern conceptions of fiduciary duty in public office, where legal compliance is considered a minimum standard, not an ethical ceiling.

In leadership education, these frameworks together suggest that governance training must address both competence and character — institutional literacy as well as ethical formation. Business schools and public administration programmes that focus solely on procedure and legal compliance, without investing in moral reasoning and virtue development, produce administrators who are technically compliant but ethically vulnerable.

10. Conclusion

To conclude, the comparison of the works of Kamandakiya Nitisara and Swami Vedanta Desika shows that both the works had similar lines of thinking and connecting while laying emphasis on ethics in governance. These ideas are very relevant even today in any kind of an institutional setting. Good and effective governance is not just about the process and systems but also about the people who run them. According to the *Nitisara*, there is a clear need for clarity in roles, teamwork and accountability in institutions. Also, every person in the institution is individually responsible and accountable for his action. The *Nitisara* further explains that they cannot escape responsibility just because they are following orders for doing a job in a particular way.

Swami Vedanta Desika stresses on directing oneself on the inner qualities of the individuals. Virtues like honesty, self-discipline and sense of duty are required for a strong leader. His idea is that real authority stems from good character. All the above analysis and discussions prove that good governance depends on ethical leaders, strong value system and commitment to serve others in addition to rules and processes. Such qualities help build trust amongst all and that makes governance truly good and administration responsible.

11. Directions For Future Research

1. A comparative analysis of Indian political thought and other thoughts like Greek, Roman, Chinese etc will help to understand other traditions' ideas and unique features.
2. This will also help in understanding more about practical issues such as war, economic policy, law, foreign relations etc.
3. Research for application of these classical insights in modern governance, institutional design and leadership training can establish their continued relevance not only in today's world but also for the future.

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