

Kautilya

Kautilya is also known as Chanakya or Vishnu Gupta. He was the teacher of Economics and Political Science at the ancient Takshashila University. He was the Prime Minister of first Maurya Emperor Chandra Gupta Maurya. He lived during 350-275 BC. He was born in the 'Kutil' gotra. His father's name was Chankya and he was born at a place called Chankya. Therefore, he came to be known as Chanakya. He was educated in Takshashila University and became a Professor of Political Economy. He studied architecture and medicine also. He became the Prime Minister to the Mauryan Emperor Chandragupta Maurya. He saw the defeat of some parts of India by Alexander the Great. He realised that it is because of the Republican system that existed in the sub-continent. Therefore, he was of the opinion that a centralised power is very much essential for the survival of a large state.

Kautilya's 'Arthashastra' is a great book on Political Science and Economics. The term 'Arthashastra' can be translated as "science of political economy". It contains the ancient Indian Political thought. It explains the Hindu concept of Law and Justice. It also contains the Hindu ideas of Kingship and the State. It deals with mode of autocracy, framework of administration, and economies and welfare of the people. The Mahabharata refers to many Arthashastras. But the oldest Arthashastra was discovered in Mysore in 1909 by Prof. Shamasastri. According to popular conviction, it is believed to have written by Chanakya. In the opening lines of Arthashastra, Kautilya (Book 1, Ch. 1) notes that "this Arthashastra is made as a compendium of almost all the Arthashastras, which, in view of acquisition and maintenance of earth, have been composed by ancient teachers".

Kautilya says that the science of politics is supreme. For him it is the supreme art also. However, he did not say that the science of politics is the only science. He wanted to keep the science of political economy more secular and devoid of any religious influence. Nevertheless, it is influenced by the current philosophy and religious edicts. Arthashastra is

divided into sixteen books concerning almost all aspects of government of a state. It deals with law, economics, military, taxation, diplomacy etc. According to Arthashastra, the foundation of good governance is nothing but knowledge which can be classified into four namely Anvikasi or philosophy, Trayi or three vedas, the four classes or varnas and the four orders or ashrams. The text of Arthashastra has 32 divisions, 15 books or parts and 150 chapters. Book I is concerned with kingship. Book II is concerned with civil administration. Books III and IV deal with civil criminal and personal law. Book V deal with the duties and responsibilities of the courtiers. Book VI deals with the nature and functions of the seven elements of the state. The last books are concerned with the problems connected with foreign policy, warfare etc.

Arthashastra does not give a clear picture of various department of the state. However, goldsmith, storehouse, commerce, forest, weights and measures, tolls weaving, agriculture, pasturelands, cows, slaughter houses, ships, passport and liquor are the various departments.

Arthashastra is a detailed work on the administration of Hindu polity. It deals with ancient philosophy, set of laws(canon), economics and polity (dandaniti). Strict administration or 'danda' is the fundamental principle of the state. It deals with the practical issues of administration. In fact, it is a compendium of the existing Indian knowledge on the state craft. Chanakya put them into words in a systematic manner.

According to Arthashastra, the King is the embodiment of all the virtues. He is the protector of Dharma. He derived his power from mainly three sources namely Prabhushakthi (power of treasury and the army), Mantrashakthi (advice of ministers), and Utsaahashakthi (Power of motivation). In the performance of his duties, the king is helped by the Council of Ministers or Mantri Parishad. Interestingly, the council of ministers had a cabinet consisting of the king, the Chief Minister, the Chief Priest and the Commander of Armed Forces. It included the Crown Prince also. Arthashastra contains many geo-political ideas regarding the territory of the state. According to Kautilya, the following are the qualities of a territory of janapada:-

- (1) It should have enough space for the construction of forts.
- (2) It should have enough provisions for those inside and those who come from outside.
- (3) It should have enough defence
- (4) It should hate the enemy
- (5) It should not have no hostile association of people
- (6) It should have agricultural lands, mines and forests
- (7) It should not depend upon rain for water supply
- (8) The people should be faithful and pure at heart.

Kautilya proposed a very systematic scheme for town planning also. He said there are four different types of forts that could be built along the four sides of a city. In the midst of villages, there shall be a town. It will act as a centre of administration including tax collection. It will also act as a centre of economy. It must have all civil amenities like roads, bridges and sewages. The capital city is of utmost importance. It must be a planned city. The centre point of the city should be the palace of the king. There shall be separate areas for business, residences, trade administration, entertainment etc. The source of revenue of the country also is important. There shall be constant supply of finance to the king. He must be diligent and imaginative in his methods. He must reward rich contributors. He must take more from the wicked and spare the righteous. He must plant pseudo contributors among the people and make them contribute large sums so that those who contribute less will be ashamed. During the times of any financial emergency, the king should not hesitate to take the help of people and receive contributions. He can also resort to increase in the taxes from traders, merchants etc.

Foreign policy is another important aspect of the state policy of Kautilya. According to him, the state system has mainly three aspects: classes of aliens and enemies, powers and successes. The powers are as follows: power of advice, power of his material resources, and power of his energy. The successes are achieved by means of his

powers. The basis of foreign policy is the denial of his power and successes to his enemies. The fundamental of foreign policy is pure expediency. It should be purely based on practical aspects and not principles. If progress can be achieved by means of peace or by war, the king must resort to peaceful means. War involves suffering in the hands of the enemy in the enemy land. If it is a question of choice between war and neutrality, the latter is the best choice. In case if the enemy is strong, it is vice to make peace. It is also good to make peace with an enemy who is equal to him to avoid destruction, calamities, and miseries. In case if the enemy is weak, war can be avoided in case of complete submission of the enemy.

As far as the policy on religion and ethics is concerned, Kautilya is a mix of theological and brahminical traditions. Kautilya placed high importance to the caste system and the duties of each caste in the state. He was for special provisions for Brahmins in the form of tax free lands and forest resorts for the brahmins for meditation and yagas. He accepted the disabilities of the sudras. According to Kautilya, religious faith of the people can be used for the protection of the state. Spies can take the form of hermits, sages and priests. The priests of temples can even make use of the superstition of the people to make them contribute to raise finance for the state in times of emergencies. Religious occasions can be used to move against the enemy, if necessary. Kautilya supported varna system. He was of the opinion that there should be different sets of people who perform different types of duties. Each class of people have their own rights and duties. By ensuring this, the King ensures happiness in the country. The Brahmin must engage in intellectual pursuit and spiritual matters. The Kshatriya is involved in the protection of the land. The Vaishya is involved in trade. The job of the Sudra is the service of all the people.

Kautilya also proposes certain stages for the life of a person. They are called Brahmacharya, Grahasthya, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa. Kautilya's theory of Law and Justice is such that the legal issues should be settled according to the canon of the land. In the event of a conflict between canon and reason, it is the reason which must prevail. The King is not above law. The king is subject to the civil and criminal laws. According to the system of justice, there shall criminal

courts as well as civil courts. Canon, contract custom and royal decrees were the four sources of law. The King or Raja is an autocrat. Such an autocratic King should have the following qualities:

- Self-control.
- Takes advice from elders.
- Keeps his eyes open through spies
- Promotes the security & welfare of the people
- Ensures that people follow their dharma in life.
- Continue his studies in all branches of knowledge
- Enrich the people and do good to the people.
- The Raja also should: Not covet another's property
- Practice ahimsa (non-violence towards all living things)
- Avoid day dreaming
- Avoid falsehood
- Avoid extravagance
- Avoid association with harmful persons
- Avoid indulging in harmful activities.

The duties of the King also are detailed. The King must manage the economy well. There is a method to settle quarrels between people. The King must remove the cause of quarrel. When there is a quarrel among the people, it helps the king. Because, the King can involve and increase his control and power over people. But when there is a quarrel between the King and his family members, it is not good. Because, the King will not be able to concentrate on his job. The country will be in great distress. Gambling, addiction to drinking and women are the worst vices. A peaceful atmosphere is necessary for the economy. Therefore, there should be strict laws with fines and strict punishments. The science of law and punishment is called Dandaniti. It is the art of punishment. It is very essential to maintain the state system. Kautilya recognised the need for the *niti of danda* because, punishments should be as deserved. Otherwise, it will lead to discontentment. They only it will be able to protect dharma. In the ancient Indian texts, there were classifications of danda also. The highest danda is a punishment equal to 1080 panas. The middle danda or madhyama danda is half that amount or 540 panas. Adhama danda or the lowest danda is half that of madhyama danda and was 270

panas. The pana was wither gold or copper(tamra). Danda could have been in other forms also like long term punishment, verbal humiliation, fines or even killing.

According to Kautilya, there is a concept called Matsyanyaya. It means that, in the absence of a ruler, the strong person will destroy the weak; but under the protection of the ruler, the weak resist the strong. In 'Arthasastra, there is a concept called rájatva also. It means Sovereignty of a country. There shall be protection for the forests and wild life. The forests and wild life should be protected by guards. Protector of animals shall also protect citizens from animals. There shall be separate forests for timber and raring lion and tiger for skins. Elephants are important for the army.

Practically, King is the head of the Kautilya's state. He appoints the heads of administration. When the king is good, the country is benefitted. When the king is bad, the country suffers. According to Kautilya, a new king is better than a diseased king. Rule by a father and son or two brothers is not good. It is worse than the rule of a conqueror. Kautilya proposed many methods to deal with a situation arising out of the death of a king. The minister must ensure peaceful succession. He must be able to make use of all sorts of diplomacy. He can even go out of legal means to ensure peaceful taking over of power. The minister must also be able to predict any sort of untoward event in case of the death of a king. He must take all precautionary measures to prevent such an eventuality. Security and stability of the country is of utmost importance. Kautilya suggested many systematic methods to maintain peace and stability.

According to Kautilya, the king should be educated. His education must continue after the age of 16 when he shaves off his head. He must be good in all sciences. On reaching the proper age, the king must start his studies under able teachers. The king should be disciplined also. Atma Vrata or self control is of utmost importance for the King. To acquire this, the king should abandon the six enemies in him namely kama (lust), Krodha (anger) Lobha (greed), maana (vanity), mada (haughtiness) and harsha (overjoy).

Kautilya emphasized the 'Doctrine of Trivarga' (three goals). According to him "Every man was required to strive to satisfy his

spiritual needs by fulfilling his religious and moral duties (Dharma); his material needs by acquiring the necessities of life, property, wealth and power (Artha); his instinctive desires by following the dictates of love (Kama). In later times, Moksha (deliverance from the cycle of death - rebirth) was added as a fourth and highest aim of life " A king shall never select a indisciplined prince as crown-prince.

According to Kautilya, there are two types of disciplines. One is natural and the other one is acquired. The king must acquire the second kind of discipline. With the help of the knowledge of science, he must ensure self control. All the six personal vices or 'enemies' should be under control. If he does not control his sense organs, it is not good for the state. Upon becoming the king, he must learn the meaning of arthashastra from his ministers through examples and lessons from history. However, the king must control revenue and army directly. Kautilya presented a list of the qualifications of the king. They are classified into four heads:

- qualities of an inviting nature
- qualities of intellect
- qualities of the will
- qualities of a real king

The officials (amatyas) is very important in the administration of government (rajatva). A rath or chariot cannot move with only a single wheel. Therefore, the king must appoint able ministers (sachiva). He must listen to the advice of the ministers. There is a long procedure for the selection and appointment of amatyas. The king must constantly observe the administrators. Virtue, wealth, desire and fear are the four factors for the selection of amatyas. All the administrative functions of the janapada is looked after by the amatya. It involves protection from the enemies, protecting from natural calamities, improvement of waste land for use, collection of taxes and fines etc.

According to Kautilya, when the king is alert, his servants become alert. When the king is lazy, his servants becomes lazy. It will lead to his inefficiency and the enemies will overpower him. The king must act like a father to his people. The king must take care of destitute, children, women and the elderly. He must also ensure that the slaves will

perform his duties with his masters. No one can go for the monastery life without providing for his wife and children. When the king is powerful, he is also like a servant of the state. It is the duty of the king to maintain the state. The king is like a constitutional slave of the state. If required, he is supposed to give up even his family for the sake of the state. This is the ideal of Ramayana. That means, the king cannot always follow his personal likes and dislikes. The people of the kingdom should be loyal to the king. It is the duty of the king to ensure that there is enough propaganda to ensure the loyalty of the people. The king must be able to control any dissent against the king. One important assumption of Kautilya is that masses are moved by passion and not reason. They are moved by slogans and popular words and phrases than reasoned convictions. The king must be able to make use of this situation.

According to Kautilya, it is the duty of the king to maintain law and order. Danda is important in maintaining law and order. Danda maintains the canon. Danda maintains philosophy and knowledge. Danda maintains the economy also. In his administration of justice, the principle of 'matsyanyaya' works. It means that in the absence of rule, the strong will destroy the weak. In the event of theft, the stolen property should be restored to the owner. It should be made even from his treasury. If the king happens to punish an innocent man, the king must offer 30 times of the fine to God.

Kautilya proposes detailed methods of acquisition and preservation of a country. He proposed five methods towards acquisition. The first method is to create disaffection among the friends of the enemy. The second method is to get rid of the enemy through secret operations. The third method is to set up spies against the enemy kingdom. Another method is to seize the enemy territory. The final method is to attack the enemy territory straight. To create disaffection among the friends of the king, they must be secretly approached. They must be presented with all critical views on the administration. They must be told about the virtues they might acquire if there is a change. To get rid of the enemy, all types of methods can be used. The assassins can even pose as horse traders and

take the opportunity to kill the enemy. The kingdom must give refuge to dissatisfied officers so that the information from them can be freely used against the enemy. The enemy can also be destroyed by blocking the sources of supply of provision like food and water. The enemy can also be attacked and killed when he is in a position of disadvantage. Preservation of a dominion is as important as acquiring a dominion. If a dominion cannot be preserved, there is no point in acquiring the dominion. Therefore, Kautilya proposed many methods to preserve a dominion. Security of the king is the most important. There shall be personal security for the king. He must be guarded from his very birth. All his subordinates should be under constant watch. There shall be spies to collect information about any move against the king. Even minor issues should not be left unattended. There shall be spies to keep an eye over eighteen different classes of officials close to him. At the same time, the officials should be guarded against move from enemies also. The king must be aware of disaffection against the enemy. There may be four reasons for disaffection. Anger, fear, greed and pride can cause disaffection. With the help of spies, the king must be able to win over the enemies of the enemy. The king must be able to find out the reason for the discontentment. It will help him to win over them against the enemy.

Kautilya presented a detailed time table for the daily chores of king in the Arthashastra. The day of a King starts at sunrise and ends at 1.30 in the night. His time is divided into eight equal parts. The first engagement of the king is to plan for the protection of his subjects. Secondly, he must look after the protection of the capital city. In the third part, he can look after his personal issues like bath and breakfast. In the fourth part, he will receive his officers. In the fifth part, he will see the intelligence department. Between 1.30 and 3 pm, he will have some recreation. In the seventh part, he will supervise the army. In the eighth part of the day between 4 pm and 6 pm, he will meet the commander in chief and plan for war and protection.

Sapthanga Theory

The Saptanga Theory of Kautilya, is given in his book, 'Arthashastra'. According to the theory, the State consists of seven elements. They were as follows: The King, the Minister, the Country,

the fortified City, the Treasury, the Army and the Ally. The 'King' means constitution and proper administration. The 'Minister' means proper scientific advice. The 'Country' means the Population and its Sovereignty. The 'fortified City' means territory. The 'treasury' means finance and economy. The 'army' means protection and defence. 'Ally' means good friendly countries and foreign relations.

Kautilya was one who even defeated Alexander the Great. His statecraft was perfect and fool proof. It was based on philosophy as well as practical wisdom. When compared with the contemporary political thinkers elsewhere in the world, Kautilya was way ahead of all of them in almost all aspects of state craft. He was realistic, systematic and practical. He was able to convert idealism into practical realms with a touch of realism. For Kautilya, it was not just philosophy to create an utopian state. For him it was the question of running a great empire. That made him all the more different from contemporary political thinkers or those who were to follow him for centuries. Kautilya was also able to blend the ancient religious traditions also into the art of government while keeping the subtle difference from affecting the secular environment of state craft. On any account, it can be stated that a meaningful appreciation of Kautilya as a political thinker will definitely place him at the zenith of the art and science of political thinking. In spite of the superiority of Kautilya's philosophy and practice, his system of administration did not last for more than two centuries. May be because, the later kings could not practice the system properly. It could be also because of the fact that a system based on the concept of Dharma deteriorated because the later kings were not able to preserve dharma. There could have been quite a number of internal conflicts also like the transformation of varna system into caste system based on exploitation.

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