

Kautilya's Saptang Theory of State

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Topic: Kautilya Saptang Theory
Subject: Political Science
Course: B.A II
Paper: IV

The Mauryan era of ancient India gave the world a significant treatise, the Arthashastra of Kautilya. It offers deep insights into political statecraft. Kautilya is known as the Indian Machiavelli because of his ruthless and shrewd tactics and policies reflecting an approach to statecraft including warfare.

Nature of State

The state of 'nature' is imagined to be one of total anarchy, in which 'might was right'. When people were oppressed by **Matyanyaya**, the law of the fish, according to which the bigger fish swallows the smaller ones they selected Manu— son of Vivasvat the king.

It was settled that the king should receive one-sixth of the grain and one-tenth of merchandise and gold, as his due. It was the revenue which made it possible for the king to ensure the security and prosperity of his subjects. People agreed to pay taxes and he ruled by one person in order that they might be able to enjoy well-being and security. In Kautilya's Arthashastra, there is no explicit theory of social contract as laid down by the contractualist. Neither does Kautilya use the contract to make the king all powerful.

Elements of State

Kautilya enumerated seven prakritis or essential organs of the state. They are as follow

- (i) Swami (The Ruler)
- (ii) Amatya (The Minister)
- (iii) Janapada (The Population)
- (iv) Durga (The Fortified Capital)
- (v) Kosha (The Treasury)
- (vi) Danda (The Army)
- (vii) Mitra (Ally and Friend)

Swami(The Ruler)

It is the first and the most important element. Swami means the monarch. He should be a native of the soil and born in a noble family. He should be brave and well learned. He makes all the important appointments and supervises the government. He has to be virtuous and should treat his subjects like his own children. Kautilya has given extensive powers to the monarch but those powers are meant for the welfare of them subjects. In the welfare and happiness of his subjects, lies his own happiness.

Amatya (The Minister)

It refers to the council of ministers as well as the supporting officials and subordinate staffs. They are meant for assisting the monarch in day to day affairs of the state. Amatya gives suggestions to king, collects taxes, develops new villages and cities, ensures defense of the state and all other tasks as assigned by the king.

Janpada (The Population)

It refers to territory and people of the state. The territory of the state should be fertile and should have abundance of forest, rivers, mountains, minerals, wild life etc. It should have good climate. People should be loyal to their king, hard working, disciplined, religious, ready to fight for their motherland, should pay taxes regularly and happily.

Durga (The Fortified Capital)

It refers to forts. The state should have sufficient number of forts across its territory at strategic locations for ensuring defense against foreign invasions. Forts should be built near hills/mountains, deserts, dense forests and big water bodies. They garrison soldiers, store food grains for emergency and also serve as a hideout for the king when his life in danger.

Kosha(The Treasury)

This means treasury of the state. Finance is life blood of any state without which it is almost impossible to run it. Money is needed for paying salaries, building new infrastructure, etc. The treasury should be full of money and valuable metals and gems. It can be increased through taxation and plundering enemy states in war.

Danda(The Army)

It refers to military. The state should have a regular, large, disciplined and well trained military. It is crucial for the security of the state. The soldiers should be recruited from those families which are traditionally associated with military. The soldiers should be paid well and their families should be taken

care of in most suitable way. Proper training and equipment should be made available. Well fed and well trained soldiers can win any battle. The king should take care of the soldiers and the soldiers will be ready to sacrifice even their life for him.

Mitra (Ally and Friend)

It refers to friends of the king. The monarch should maintain friendly relationship with traditional friends of his forefathers. He should also make new friendships. He should send gifts and other pleasantries for his friends. They should be helped in times of emergency. They should be loyal. Friends add to the power of the state. They are also important from foreign trade view point.

Role of king

Kautilya gives extensive powers to the kings and attaches an element of divinity. His foremost duty is protection of the subjects and their property. King's sources of power revolving around three sources— **Prabhu Shakti**(the power of the army and the treasury), **Manta Shakti** (advice of wise men, specially the council of ministers) and **Utsah Shakti** (charisma). Duties of Kings Kautilya's Arthashastra does not believe in the '**Theory of Divine**' origin of the Monarch. According to him, state is a human institution and it should be manned by a human being. So, the king should be the protector of the dharma of whole society. Arthashastra pointed out duties of kings are :

- Should follow his rajya dharma.
- Should exhibit attributes, i.e. Atma Vrata (self-control) | Should ease the six enemies— Kama (lust), Krodha (anger), Lobh (greed), Mana (vanity), Mada (haughtiness), and Harsh (overjoy).

System of Law

Although, Kautilya's state theory states the monarchical democracy, but the sole authority vested under the king to make law and that it derived from four sources **Dharma** (sacred law), **Vyavhara** (evidence), **Charita** (history and custom) and **Rajasasana** (edicts of the king). Arthashastra represents a system of civil, criminal and mercantile law. For instance, the following were codified a procedure for interrogation, torture, trial, the rights of the accused, Constitution of permissible evidence, a procedure for autopsy in case of death in suspicious circumstances, Constitution of (deformation) and procedure for claiming damages, invalid and invalid contract.

Machinery of Government

The Arthashastra catalogues a phalanx of officers called superintendents, lower in importance than the ministerial officers and much below them, belonging to the sixth order, according to remuneration. They are not heads of departments. The superintendents might be as chiefs of sections dealing with various economic and other activities of the government. Most of these sections are the modern business departments. A dual control is exercised over the

superintendents. As far as control of the services of the personal and collection of revenue are concerned, they are under the Collector-General.

Conclusion

The Arthashastra is a textbook of practical politics and statecraft. One of the outstanding contributions of Kautilya's Arthashastra to statecraft and governance in a monarchical state. Hence, Kautilya's theory of state envisages a rational approach to governance and state craft which conceptualizes the state and the office of the kingship to be human artifacts.