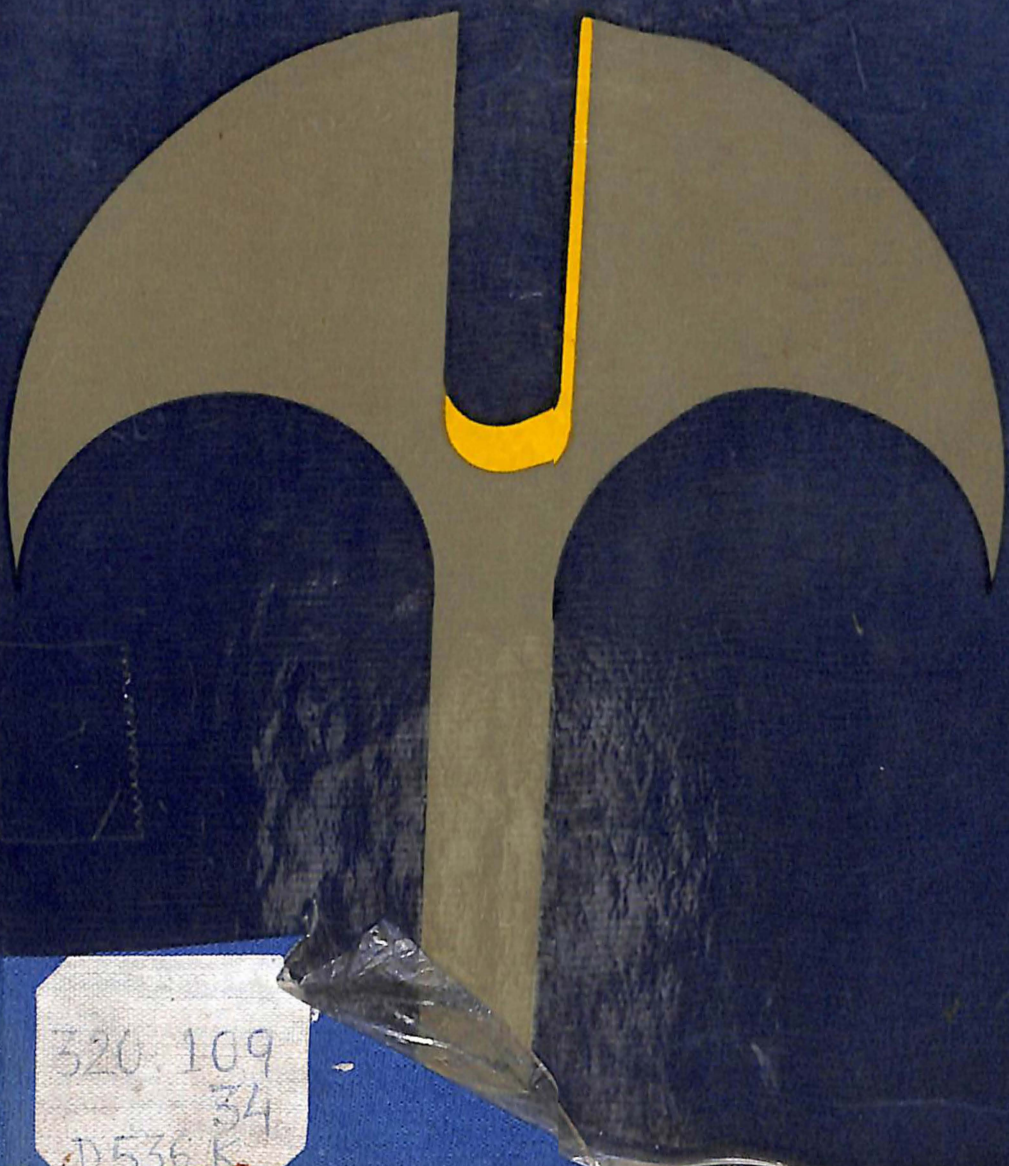
KAUTILYA AND THE ARTHASASTRA

SOM NATH DHAR



About The Book

A unique treatise on the science of polity, the *Arthasastra* by Kautilya (or Chanakya) throws more light on the actual details of life in ancient India than any other text in the whole range of Indian literature. Dealing primarily with the actual art of government an diplomacy, it is also an important sour of information about various aspects economics and administration of t great Maurya era. Ever since Dr. Shamasastry's publication of the tra lation of the manuscript — soon afte was found in 1909 — the work engaged the attention of Indolog and other scholars, in India and abro There has been controversy about authorship.

The present volume deals ancient Indian political theory be and after the *Arthasastra* (321-296 B and gives the historical backgroun Emperor Chandragupte Maurya Kautilya, his minister and arch-p tioner of the art of diplomacy. follow chapters dealing with *Swami* and *Dharma*, Kautilya's c bution to 'Mandala' inter-State tions, and to war and peace, as al diplomacy and *Dandaniti*. Kautilya' pensation of law and administ is discussed in the following ch Since the *Arthasastra* has been pared with Machiavelli's *The Princ* world's most celebrated book c art of kingship), a chapter is devo Kautilya, Machiavelli and Aristot teresting vignettes of the 'Artha society are presented, Mauryan and manners coming alive in th cess.

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Kautilya and the Arthasastra

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Kashmir—Eden of the East; 1945.
Kashmir in Stories; 1947.
Kashmir Folk Tales; 1948.
Folklore of Kashmir; 1952.
Kalhana: Poet-Historian of Kashmir; 1956.
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Kautilya and the Arthasastra

Somnath Dhar

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Preface

AMONG the research papers I read in London at the branch of Indian Institute of World Culture, Bangalore, one was on *Chanakya and the Arthasastra* (February 1, 1957), when Dr. A.L. Basham, the renowned Indologist, was in the chair. Later, the Institute published the paper as a transaction, which was well received in the British and Indian press. Happy at this response, I wanted to do a longer work on the subject, but my diplomatic career taking me from the U.K. to Malaysia, Pakistan, the U.S.A., and finally to Turkey, I could not sit down to the job in right earnest. It was only after a long sojourn abroad and following my retirement from the Foreign Service, that I met Mr. Jaspal Singh Marwah at Marwah Publications, who enthused me to undertake the work.

The project looked fairly easy at first but, stretched over the months, it appeared cumbersome and light, depending upon the mood and the other assignments that I had. Mr. Jaspal Singh, the soft-spoken publisher, graciously put up with the inevitable delays, until one morning when I telephoned him the news that the manuscript was ready, to his specifications. He lost no time to see it through the press and the credit for the quality production and neat format of the book goes to him. I feel gratified with the end result of my efforts, and present the book, in all humility, to the concerned scholars, students of Indology and esteemed historians, and I shall profit from their comments to improve the subsequent editions.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Gyan Chand, Librarian, Central Secretariat Library, New Delhi, for the excellent cooperation extended to me by him and his helpful staff. And, I must add that without the constant encouragement of Asha, my wife, this work would not have been completed in time.

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New Delhi-110048

SOMNATH DHAR

Contents

Foreword

EVER since its discovery in the early years of this century, the text and subject-matter of the *Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra* have been the subject of much research and controversy. When it was first published it was universally accepted as the work of the legendary minister of Chandragupta Maurya, and it was believed that it formed a blue-print for the building of the Mauryan state. Later on, certain scholars cast doubt on its authenticity and suggested that it was composed long after the Mauryas had ceased to rule. One of the most recent theories holds that it is a conflation of at least three earlier texts, composed by different hands. Nowadays few European and American Indologists would maintain the authenticity of the *Arthaśāstra* as the genuine work of Kauṭilya, though many Indian scholars still hold to this view.

It is not my purpose, in the Foreword to a friend's book, to discuss the pros and cons of this controverial issue. Here, I can only give my own view, which is as follows :

Statistical analysis of the text has proved with virtual certainty that the *Arthaśāstra* is a compilation. That it contains a reference to China, and does not use the standard Mauryan official terminology, indicates that in its present form it is post-Mauryan. From the fact that it does not use the standard Gupta terminology either, we may assume that the material was brought together and edited as a single text before the Gupta period. In general, on comparing the *Arthaśāstra* with the account of Megasthenes and the Aśokan inscriptions, the *Arthaśāstra* agrees with what we know of the Mauryan state-system better than with that of any other Indian dynasty. I believe that the compiler of the *Arthaśāstra* made use of a document which was composed early in the Mauryan period,

or possibly just before it, suggesting the guidelines on which that state should be run. Kauṭilya himself, on analysis, appears as a rather shadowy figure, and it has even been suggested that he is a mere legend, and never really existed. But to my mind the tradition that he was the mentor of Chandragupta—and the power behind Chandragupta's throne is so strong that it must have some residuum of fact, though no doubt many of the stories told about him have no historical basis. It is not impossible that Kauṭilya composed a document of some kind, giving his views on the running of the state, and this came into the hands of the anonymous compiler of the text as we know it, and was incorporated into the finished *Arthaśāstra* as the second book, the *Adhyakṣapracāra*. In any case, this part of the text, giving detailed instructions on the organization of government departments, seems so closely to correspond with what we know of the Mauryan Empire from other sources, and to be so different in its prescriptions from what we know of later Indian states, that it must surely look back to an original composed around the Mauryan period.

Perhaps some scholars have overemphasized the importance of the *Arthaśāstra*. It has survived only in a very few manuscripts, nearly all of them found in South India, and in this it contrasts strikingly with the *Kāmandaka-nītisāra* and with certain other texts of a mainly religious nature which contain instructions on kingship and the state, notably the seventh book of the *Mānava-dharmaśāstra* and parts of the *Śānti-parvan* of the *Mahābhārta*. The obvious conclusion is that the latter texts were much more influential in the shaping of later Indian polity than the *Arthaśāstra* was. Bāṇa, early in the 7th century, decries it as an immoral work. After that it is hardly mentioned and there is little evidence that it was widely known in political circles. References to the work of Cāṇakya or Kauṭilya in later literature almost certainly refer to the *Cāṇakya-nīti*, the collection of aphorisms on morals and politics also ascribed to the great minister of Chandragupta Maurya, which exists in numerous recensions and of which many manuscripts have survived from all over India.

It would be wrong, therefore, to overestimate the influence of *Arthaśāstra*. In short, it is not a work of political philosophy, in the sense of Plato's *Republic*, and it is not a manual for the

guidance of ministers and officials. Rather it is a book of practical advice to kings, on the best method of governing their kingdoms and building up their power. As such, it seems to reflect Mauryan or pre-Mauryan models. Its influence was always limited and it is only in recent decades that it has become widely known in India and elsewhere

Though I have read the manuscript of his work in part, and though some of his conclusions may differ from my own, which are outlined above, I have no hesitation in recommending the work of my old friend Professor Somnath Dhar, whom I have known for over twenty years, since he served with the Indian High Commission in London. Long ago, in 1957, he published a brief study of the *Arthaśāstra*, based on a lecture he gave in London under my chairmanship, and I wrote a few lines of introduction to this work. I am very pleased and honoured to be invited, so much later, to write a foreword to this longer study on the same theme. Professor Dhar's writing is always marked by scholarship and originality, and he has a graceful and lucid English style which makes everything he writes a pleasure to read. So I confidently recommend this book to both the scholar and the general reader.

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Canberra, 1980

Introduction

THAT ancient Indians left their impress upon the pages of history as the founders of original systems of political thought was conceded on all hands even before the discovery of Kautilya's *Arthasastra* in 1905. The indigenous origin of these concepts has been established by the very period of history when these took shape, and the areas of their origin of evolution. The single most important factor that contributed to this phenomenon was the essential genius of the people of ancient India. The characteristic traits of this genius were spirituality, intellectuality and a prolific creativity that elaborated all facets of life into a science and an art.

In the field of ancient political theory, the Vedic *Samhitas* were the oldest literary works, that manifested a far-seeing outlook. The Indian political concepts and ideas pervade nearly the entire field of our extensive ancient literature. The *Vedas*, the *Smritis*, the *Puranas*, the *Mimansa* and other works are replete with these, and are complemented by the Buddhist and Jaina canonical as well as non-canonical treatises. Then there are the many authors of technical science of polity, the great Sanskrit writers of epic, drama, poetry as well as the authors of the Tamil classical literature. Following each line of thought to its rational extremity, the dauntless, ever probing Indian spirit upheld on the one hand the *Vedas* as the inestimable source of the immanent, sacred law, and yet, on the other, it, via some extreme schools of the technical *Arthasastra*, fearlessly expatiated on the utter lack of utility of the *Vedas* for the attainment of worldly success. Thus it was that the claim of politics and economics to be treated as a science was established.

To substantiate the claim, one can point to Bhishma's words of wisdom in the *Mahabharata* defining *Rajadharma*

(the whole duty of the King), the other (Brahmanical) epic. *Ramayana*, deriding *Kshatravidya* ('the Kshatriya science') as a dismal science, and advocating in the *Smritis* and later works the king's prerogative as the ultimate safeguard of the stability and security of the individual and society. Whereas the *Manusmriti* and later writings stressed the divine right of the king, there were works at the other end of the scale like Buddhist philosopher Aryadeva's *Chatuhsataka*, the Hindu work on polity, *Sukranitisara* and even Kautilya in *Arthasastra*, holding the view that the king was a servant of the people who subsisted on their tithe. Then, in ancient India, we had, over a long stretch of time (from the fifth or sixth centuries B.C., down the early Gupta kings in the fourth century A.D.) such a form of polity as the republic. The manifold problems of the republics were set forth and analysed—both from the theoretical and practical point of view—in such disparate works as the early Buddhist canon, Kautilya's *Arthasastra* and the *Mahabharata*.

The schools and authors of the *Arthasastra* comprised a new science, professedly dealing with the acquisition and preservation of the king's territory. Unfortunately, no work of this category has survived in its complete form except Kautilya's *Arthasastra*. Other *Arthasastras* have survived in bits and pieces in the form of quotations and references by the later authors. The most authentic—and important—extracts are to be found in Kautilya's work. He quotes his *Arthasastra* predecessors singly, or in continuous succession, in support of his views.

The *Arthasastra* actually bristles with quotations from the authors, who were known and studied in Kautilya's time. These are: Bharadjāve, Vaiśālaksha, Parāsara, Piśuna, Kaunapadanta, Vatavyadhi, Bahudantiputra, Katyayana, Kaninka Bharadyaja, Dirgha-Chārāyana, Ghotamukha, Kinjalka and Piśunaputra.[1] The schools, referred to by Kautilya, and framed by a critical study of his work, are: Mānavāh, Brāhaspatyah, Ausanasāh, Parasarah and Ambhiyāh. Some of the names occur in the *Santi-Parvan* of the *Mahabharata*,[2] Chapter 58[3] of the *Santi-*

[1] *Arthasastra* : Bk. VI, Chap. 5.
[2] *Mahabharata* : XII, 57 and 58.
[3] Bhandarkar, D.R. : *Lectures on the Ancient History of India*; 1977.

Parvan contains as many as seven names of the writers on polity, specifying regal duties and prerogatives. They are Visalaksha, Kavya, Mahendra, Brihaspati, Prachetasu Manu and Gaurasiras. Except Gaurasiras, all of these can be placed in Kautilya's *Arthasastra*. Brihaspati has been identified as the founder of the Brahaspatya School and Kavya (synonym of Sukra), as the founder of the Ausansa School. Manu, the founder of the Manava School, has been termed as Prachetasu Manu, to distinguish him from Svayambhuva Manu, the author of *Charmasastra*, as well as from Vaivasvata Manu, the first king of men of the earth. Bharadavaja of the *Santi-Parvan* is identified with Bharadjava of Kautilya, and Mahendra, with Bahudantiputra.

The mentioned chapter 58 of the *Santi-Parvan* has the names of the writers on *Rajyasastra*; these mostly agree with the ones given by Kautilya. In the next chapter, it is mentioned how *Dandaniti* (science of polity) was first authored by Brahma, and it dealt with aims and objects of worldly life, (*Dharma*, performance of the allotted religious duties, *Artha*, the pursuit of wealth, and *Kama*, the indulgence of sensual desires) as well as *Moksha*, the final release (beatitude) from human bondage. This colossal work consisted of one hundred thousand chapters, too cumbersome by any standards. Since the span of human life was getting shortened in the course of evolution, god Siva took it upon himself to abridge the time, bringing it down to one hundred thousand chapters and naming it *Vaisalaksha*, after himself (Vaisalaksha being another name for Siva). Another god—this time, Indra—came on the scene, to shorten it further to five thousand chapters, and giving it a title after himself, *Bahudantaka*. Further abridgement (to three thousand chapters) was the work of Brihaspati, who likewise named it after himself: *Brahaspatya*. The last abridgement was done by Kavi (or Usanas) whose work had one thousand chapters only. As a caveat, it must be added here that painters, sculptors and other artists, writers too, chose to remain anonymous in ancient India. Even the celebrated works like the *Manusmriti*, the *Yajnavalkyasmriti*, the *Parasarasmriti* and *Sukraniti*, show that the authors preferred to be incognito, ascribing their work to divine or semidivine beings. There is little reason to doubt that work on the science of polity attributed to Indra or Siva or Manu actually

existed, as vouched by Kautilya, or the authors of the *Mahabharata.*

All relationships, says Usanas, are rooted in the *Dandaniti*; he adopted this title for the first time. The works on the science of politics written by Usanas and Prajapati were hence known as *Dandaniti.* The *Arthasastra* of Kautilya was also known by that term. In ancient India, actually, political science was also known by terms like *Rajadharma, Rajyasastra* and *Nitisastra.* Since monarchy was the normal form of government, the concerned science was automatically called *Rajyasastra* or *Rajyadharma.*

The expression *Dandaniti* is much more than the science of polity, the term *Danda* being comprehensive and self-explanatory, at the same time. That the ultimate sanction behind the State is *Danda* (force) was realised long ago by our ancient writers on polity, including Manu. By all accounts, it is a modern concept, still holding water. *Danda* as physical force or physical punishment is supreme over all the ruled, for the alternative is *Matsyanyaya,* the law of the jungle, as our ancient writers put it. Expressively phrased by them, *Danda* is law itself; it protects the subjects; "when all else are sleeping, *Danda* keeps awake." But *Danda* has *ipso facto* to be used with discretion; practised too harshly, the subjects would suffer, and if it is used sparingly, the king's authority will diminish. When *Danda* is rightly used, people are happy and prosperous and the domain is on the path of progress.

Kautilya, an arch rationolist amongst the writers on polity, does not view *Danda* in a restricted sense. Along with likeminded writers, Kautilya holds that punishment (or, the threat of punishment) should not be assessed in its punitive or prohibitive form only. It has to be considered in the positive, constructive aspect, for it is instrumental in bringing about law and order in society, creating in the average subject a spontaneous urge to obey the law of the land, which renders the continual use of *Danda* (force) a needless exercise. In the ultimate analysis, *Danda* obtains proper progress in religion, philosophy and economic stability. The entire social fabric is dependent on *Danda,* as it enables the individual and society, on the one hand, and the State on the other, to achieve new gains, and to evenly spread between the individual and the state the usufruct

of the achievements. *Danda* is the real king, the real leader and the real protector, declared Manu.[4] Thus, the sum total of rules and regulations covering the functions and duties of the king and the well-being of the State came to be called *Dandaniti*.

In the context of the genesis of the term *Arthasastra*, we have explained the related though generic term *Nitisastra*. Derived from the word *ni* (the lead), *Niti* means proper guidance, that is, following the ethical course of conduct. Implying wisdom and prudence, *Nitisastra*, besides being the science of ethics, also was the science of wisdom and the right course. The utmost wisdom and propriety being the hallmark of the internal and foreign policy of the state, the science of government came to be called *Nitisastra*, from the fifth century A.D., as popularised by Kamandaka and Shukra, who used this term (rather than *Dandaniti* or *Arthasastra*) for their books on the science of government. In this age, the scope *Nitisastra* covered the all-round progress of society under the State. To Sukra, hence, *Nitisastra* was the *sine qua non* for the security, stability and progress of the society and it was the means towards the accomplishment of the four-fold aims connected with *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*.

Arthasastra is the more comprehensive term that was used for the science of politics, and can be better understood in this context. To the layman, *Artha* means 'money' or 'wealth'; ordinarily, the word *Arthasastra* should mean the science of economics, or the science of wealth—not the science of government. But Kautilya, the celebrated writer on the subject, while conceding that the term denotes the avocations of men, holds that it can also stand for the territory where the people live together. Thus, avers Kautilya, *Arthasastra* is the science which deals with the acquisition and protection or governance of territory. He puts it in these words in the beginning of the last book: "The substance of mankind is termed *Artha*, wealth; the earth which contains mankind is termed *Artha*, wealth; that sciecne which treats the means of acquiring and maintaining the earth is the *Arthasastra*, Science of Polity." Redefining the scope of his *Arthasastra*, Kautilya adds in the

[4] *Manusmriti*, VII, 17.

same chapter: "This *Arthasastra*, or Science of Polity, has been made as a compendium of all those *Arthasastras* which, as a guidance to kings in acquiring and maintaining the earth, have been written by ancient teachers."

This definition by Kautilya somewhat stretches the content of *Arthasastra* to the point of a semblance of being far-fetched, but it, having stood the test of time, has attained credibility at the hands of posterity. The prestige of Kautilya for having written the most authoritative work on the science of politics in ancient India carries the day, though other terms held the ground at one stage or the other. He (as we can see in Book I) wanted to entitle the book *Dandaniti* but on second thoughts opted for the title *Arthasastra* which has stayed put since his time.

As mentioned earlier, the explanation of the term *Arthasastra* occurs in the last chapter of the work. It is, however, described only as *Sastra* in the colophon of this chapter, which could well be an abbreviation of the term *Dandanitisastra* or *Arthasastra*. That Dandin referred to Kautilya's work as *Dandiniti* (not as *Arthasastra*) is interesting. The *Amarakosha* also treats *Dandaniti* and *Arthasastra* as synonyms.

The etymology of the science of polity in India had thus an interesting development. In the early stages, it was known as *Rajadharma*. It was replaced by *Dandaniti*, which became a more popular term. The suggested alternative was *Arthasastra*, which term held sway for some time. But the term that became most popular was *Rajanitisastra*; in course of time, it replaced the other terminology.

The genesis of *Arthasastra* (or *Nitisastra*) in ancient India throws light on the important sources available for forming a picture of ancient Indian polity and administration. It has been well nigh established that the science of polity came to have an independent existence only round about the sixth century B.C. This is hardly surprising when we consider that grammar, etymology and astronomy (semi-secular disciplines) started evolving around the eighth century B.C. Prior to this period, in the so-called Age of the *Vedas* and the *Brahmanas*, the Vedic literature throws up occasional references to the theory and practice of government. Among the *Vedas* the *Atharvaveda* has more and meaningful references to the institution of kingship than the *Rigveda*. Ceremonies (coronation, etc,) and sacrifices

performed by the king, graphically described in the *Samhitas* of the *Yajurveda*; as well as in the *Brahmana* literature, provide useful clues to the status and life of the king, how and what taxes he collected, etc. Considerable light is also thrown on the evolution of the castes, particularly the position of the Kshatriyas and the Brahmanas, furnishing the key to the polity of the time.

Following the age of specialisation (in the eighth century B.C.) a school of politics evolved gradually as a distinct entity presumably contemporaneous with the school of the *Dharmasastra* (around seventh century B.C.). In the west, a couple of centuries earlier, the science of politics (as an independent discipline) had been developed already, particularly with the appearance of Aristotle's *Politics*. In India, the seventh-sixth century B.C. appeared the historically opportune time for the evolution of the science of politics. Petty kingdoms were strewn all over the place. Each king had his sage-adviser with whom he would confer on problems of the State. There would be references to dialogues between kings and their counsellors (some historical, mostly semi-historical and semi-legendary) as were extant at the time in oral traditions, or, some, maybe, written down already in treatises on political science.

Thus it was that Bhishma, replying to questions by Yudhishthira on matters of polity, refers to the dialogues of olden times that had taken place between rulers and their saintly advisers. These dialogues, occurring in the *Santi-Parvan* of the *Mahabharata* lead us to the conclusion that apart from oral traditions, compilations or books on science of polity may have already existed at the time.

We have to fall back upon the *Arthasastra* and the *Mahabharata* for a resume (or direct quotes, as already mentioned in the case of the former work) of the works in the incipient field of the science of politics. However disparate these two works may have been in regard to their sources and traditions, there is an appreciable amount of agreement between them as to the names of the early writers on polity and politics. Amongst these, as in other branches of extant knowledge, there were several schools, some claiming Manu (the legendary father of the human race) or, Indra, Siva and Brahma, respectively, as their founder. Others accorded this honour to Brihaspati, the precep-

tor of the gods, and still others, to Sukra, or to Usanas (the rival teacher of the Asuras). The literature on the science of polity most probably started with handbooks or similar compendiums for the use of novices which progressively evolved into standard, comprehensive works. It is rather unfortunate that none of these works (penned by humans but attributed to divine authorship) has survived.

The position was somewhat retrieved by the appearance of some of the material in the *Rajadharma* section of *Santi-Parvan* of the Mahabharata. The great work of Kautilya naturally threw the others into the background, though that was not exactly his intent. In the *Arthasastra*, he gives vent to their views, fairly and squarely. Many of them expatiated on the relative importance of the science of polity—a novelty at that time amongst the fields of learning—and one stalwart among them, Usunas, flew off at a tangent to hold the (untenable) view that this was the only science worthy of attention by scholars. Monarchy was the polity they knew and, naturally, they discussed at length the upbringing of the potential king, what qualities he should have and cultivate, and the close attention he should devote to the army, the forts and the treasury. Other subjects dealt with were the number and functions of various ministries, the civil and criminal law, etc. The *Arthasastra* extracts of these writers evince their interest in defining the broad framework of foreign policy, Bharadvaja, on the one hand, advising the king to yield to the stronger, aggressor monarch in an extreme emergency, and Visalaksha advocating a fight to the last ditch. Judging from these quotations, as featured in the *Arthasastra*,[5] one can say, with a fair amount of certainty, that there was a viable school of politics in ancient India from 500 B.C. The one lacuna among these writers was the system of taxation though they dealt with the administrative control over revenue and provincial officers. It was left to Kautilya's *Arthasastra* to tackle the problems of taxation comprehensively.

Before we consider *Arthasastra* itself as an important source of the science of polity in ancient India, we have to give the conclusive assessment of the place of the *Mahabharata* in this

[5]Books I, II, III, IV, VI and VIII.

regard. The mentioned *Santi-Parvan* part of the epic has a comprehensive section discussing *Rajadharma*—that is, the duties of the king and the government. The importance of the science of politics is discussed in chapters 63-64, the king's duties and obligations (Chaps. 55-57, 70, 76, 94, 96 and 120); the ministers' duties (Chaps. 73, 82, 83, 85, 115 and 118); taxation (Chaps. 71, 76, 87, 88, 120 and 130); internal administration (Chaps. 87); foreign policy and peace and war issues: (Chaps. 80, 87, 99, 100-103, 110 and 113). All told, the *Rajadharma* section in its scope and analysis establishes its superiority over the works of the writers mentioned in it and in its compass, it even excels the *Arthasastra*.

The problems of government are discussed in other sections too, apart from the *Santi-Parvan*. How and when Machiavellian (or extremely unscrupulous measures as advocated by Kautilya) tactics may be pursued by the king, form the content of the *Adi-Parvan* section (Chap. 142). What can be the ideal administration is very well set out in the *Sabha-Parvan* section (Chap. 32) and *Vana-Parvan* (Chaps. 25, 32, 33 and 150) sections. In view of the recensions to which the *Mahabharata* has been subjected, it is not feasible to determine the precise time when these chapters were written. The scholars can at best deduce the time from the internal evidence of the chapters (that is, the content, their style and treatment) and from this standpoint, these have been placed in a period earlier than that of the *Manusmriti*—about the fourth century B.C.

The celebarated *Arthasastra* of Kautilya—our main subject of study—is categorised with the above-mentioned work but excels them all in the exhaustiveness with which the known topics of policy were discussed. Fairly quoting the earlier writers, Kautilya then ventilates his own theories cogently, in a completely secular setting. The main topic is the study of the state, unlike in *Dharamsutra* works where *Rajadharma* forms but one section of each work. Book I deals with the upbringing and education of the king. He is expected to study philosophy and various arts and sciences and associate with the learned. He is to lead a strenuous, strictly regulated life. His ministers and counsellors are described and he is told how by placing temptations in their path he should test their trustworthiness. All kinds of spies, including envoys abroad, who are secret agents as well

as ambassadors, are detailed. The king's harem receives elaborate attention. He is warned, how to "avoid lurking dangers" there, and in public places, and how to ward off palace intrigues.

The formation of village units and construction of forts are described, inter alia, in the Book II, which actually presents a comprehensive survey of the civil administration. Revenue-raising—entailing comprehensive inspection and a well-organised system of collecting taxes and customs—is meticulously described. The duties of a veritable army of government inspectors controlling and superintending various branches of the administration are enumerated in detail. The king is especially instructed how he can exact the maximum work out of the superintendents and keep them from mischief.

In Book III to V, Kautilya deals with civil law, legal procedures and the award of punishments. The duties of the courtiers (as advisers to the king) and ministers are described in detail. The legal system seems to have been extremely elaborate. The legal processes described are of four kinds, dealing with sacred law, customs, contracts and statutory (royal) enactments. Punishments, too, have a wide range and are usually drastic. Whippings, mutilations and executions are dealt with as their normal features, along with fines and imprisonments.

In Book VI, the seven elements of politics are described —the King, Ministers, Land, Fort, Treasury, Army and Ally—followed by a formal analysis of inter-State relations. Book VII deals with the six possible causes of action: Peace, War, Neutrality, Marching out, Alliance and "Division of Forces" (or, making peace with one enemy and war with another). An important sub-section is devoted to the conduct of a *Madhyama* (mediatory) king, a neutral king and a 'Circle of States.'

The 'trouble' of the king arising from the temptations of hunting, gambling, wine and women, and misfortunes which fire, flood or other natural disasters may bring on the land, comprise the subject-matter of Book VIII. Various phases of war and fighting are considered in the Books IX and X. In Book XI, we are told how the king can sow dissension among his enemies and forestall the grouping of hostile warriors. The machinations of spies and an amazing variety of the means to injure an enemy are discussed at great length in the three books that

follow. Book XIV is the *Aupanisadika*, or secret part, consisting of recipes to eliminate or incapacitate the opponent. The final Book, XV, appends a plan of the work and illustrates 32 remarkable methodological principles used in the discussion.

The *Arthasastra* is less of a theoretical work on polity—on concepts and fundamentals of political science or administration—but it certainly is more of a manual for the king and the administrator. Taking in its stride the practical problems of government, it describes the machinery and functions in peace and war. This exhaustiveness of treatment is missing from any previous work, or any later work on the science of government or politics, except the *Sukraniti*.

Keen controversy has, however, raged about the date of the *Arthasastra*. A number of authorities like Messrs R. Shamasastry (the first translator of the *Arthasastra*), N.N. Law, Vincent Smith, J.F. Fleet, Ganapathi Shastri and K.P. Jayaswal are of the opinion that the work was authored by Chanakya or Kautilya, the celebrated minister of Chandragupta Maurya. On the other hand, Messrs J. Jolly, M. Winternitz, D.R. Bhandarkar and A.B. Keith are of the view that the *Arthasastra* is a much later work, penned in the early years of the Christian era, between the first and third centuries A.D.

Jolly (in his work) has gone to the extent of characterising it as a piece of literary forgery of third century A.D.

According to Dr. J. Jolly, the real writer of the *Arthasastra* was a theoretician, and not a minister. He adds that Kautilya was a fictitious name, since the traditional accounts of Kautilya do not refer to him. Credence is given to what Greek sources had to say about Chandragupta, specially because Greeks were not masters of any part of India in his time and the omission of the name of Kautilya (or Chanakya) by Megasthenes is held to be noteworthy. Other authorities have mentioned Patanjali's *Mahabashya*, where there is reference to Chandragupta and the other Mauryas but none whatsoever to Kautilya.

Ramachandra Jain[6] has quoted Dr. J. Jolly to the effect that the *Arthasastra* has a close alliance with the *Nitisara* of

[6]Appendix to *McCrindle's Ancient India—as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, edited by Ramachandra Jain; 1972.

Kamandaka which was composed in the fourth century A.D.—and hence the former is placed in the third century A.D. An analysis of the contents of the *Arthasastra* leads to the assumption that it is the work of a learned Pundit, not that of a statesman—and at that the composition not of a single scholar but of a school. Jain disagrees with D.R. Bhandarkar, furnishing proof that Kautilya was the contemporary of Chandragupta. He holds that the Jaina *Nandisutra*, redacted in the fifth century A.D., throws a new revealing light on the problem: "Kautilya[7] is not the name of a person but is that of a science, the science discovered or taught by 'Kutila' ('Mr. Wicked') . . . We cannot hold on the authority of the *Nandisutra* that Chanakya authored the Kautilya science".

There is no mention of "Chanakya or Kautilya or Vishnugupta or any *Arthasastra* or the Kautilya," in the Buddhist *Tripitakas* (or *Jatakas*), adds Ramchandra Jain in the said Appendix. Pointing out that "the *Mahabharata* does not at all mention Kautilya or Kautilya *Arthasastra*," Jain "holds safely" that "the *Arthasastra* was definitely collated after the redaction of the Greek epic." He refers to the enumeration in the *Arthasastra* of "famous personages such as Bhoja or Dandakya, Karala, Janamejana, Talajangha, Aila, Ajabindu, Ravana, Duryodhana, Dambodbhana, Arjuna of Haihaya dynasty, Vatapi, Agastya, Dvaipayana, Ambarisha, and Babhaga." And, since these are *Mahabharatic* figures, the *Arthasastra* gets placed after second century A.D.

That no evidence is available to identify *Kutila*, the author of *Kautilya*, with Chanakya, is a further point made by Ramachandra Jain. He adds: "The *Arthasastra* itself refers to a prior *Kautilya*, the science of *Kutila*. It does not at all mention Vishnugupta in the main body." The discussion leads Jain to the conclusion that "the *Arthasastra* has no relationship with any of the three alleged authors"—Kautilya, Chanakya or Vishnugupta. He feels "fairly certain" that "the *Arthasastra*, as

[7]The name *Kautilya* may not be complimentary. There appears little reason to doubt his authenticity or historicity. A number of his predecessors had equally, if not worse, uncomplimentary nomenclatures.

we today have it, was collated in the middle of the first millennium A.D."

Making a resume of his findings, Ramachandra Jain conceded that Chanakya was "a historical person," but "a minor associate of Chandragupta Maurya in his political hostilities against the Nanda rule." He goes on: "Kautilya is no human being. It signifies the science of an anonymous teacher, designated *Kutila*." Chanakya was neither a philosopher nor a statesman, nor is he the author of the *Arthasastra*. And yet, earlier on in the same Appendix, Jain characterises Chanakya as an "influential Brahmana", who, along with Panini, "passed much of the information to Megasthenes."

We have to take cognisance of the evidence (internal—in Kautilya's work and historical, of Kautilya's time) that is almost incontrovertible. When Kautilya says that domain of a Chakravartin extends from the Himalayas to the high seas, it is clear that he was acquainted with a big empire, which could be the Maurya empire. The reason why he does not discuss the organisation of a big empire apparently is that it was a solitary phenomenon. He deals with the machinery of a normal state, and refers amply to the superintendents of various departments.

On the other hand, the lack of mention of Kautilya by Megasthenes would have some validity in case the entire work of the Greek ambassador-historian had survived. That Patanjali does not mention Kautilya cannot be similarly adduced to prove the non-existence of such a character; there was no plausible occasion for Patanjali to refer to Kautilya, just as there was none for him to refer to Ashoka or Bindusara. The latter historical figure did exist all right though Patanjali did not mention them.

Those holding the view that the *Arthasastra* is a post-Christian era work point out the lacuna in it about the Mauryan empire; for there are practically no reference to it and its administrative machinery, so well known to us from the Greek sources like Megasthenes, Arrian, Strabo, etc. There is no mention of boards of town officials or of the rules that governed the immigration and security of foreigners.

Kautilya, like Yaska, who was a predecessor of Panini, refers to only four parts of speech. Panini referred to eight

parts of speech. It is therefore apparent that Panini's grammar had not become dominatingly authoritative in the time of Kautilya. This is yet another pointer to the conclusion that Kautilya lived in the fourth century B.C.—not fourth century A.D.

The internal evidence of the *Arthasastra* itself points to the likely time when it was written. Little respect is shown to Buddhists which would indicate that it was written at a time when the new reformist sect had not yet entrenched itself in the society. The injunction that a householder should not renounce the world without making a suitable provision for his family leads to the same conclusion. As K.P. Jayaswal has pointed out the use of *Yukta* can refer only to the Mauryan times; *Yuga* means five years, and the rainy seasons are mentioned as starting in *Shravana* rather than in *Ashada*.

The reference to the Kambojas, the Lichchavis, the Mallas and the Madras in Book XI (Chap. I) of the *Arthasastra* also supports the view that the work was written in the early Mauryan times, because it was in this period that these republics were thriving. The reference in the work to *Mahavisi* or *Mahavrisha* of the *Veda*, for imports and exports, of wines from Afghanistan, of weights and measures of Sibi, constitute further proof that it is a Mauryan work, not post-Christian era.

That the views ascribed to Kautilya himself appear in the third person ("*Iti Kautilyah*") has provided the handle to scholars to hold that the real writer of the work was different from him. Dr. Shamasastry avers (in the Preface to his Translation of the *Arthasastra*) that this was the common practice with the writers in those days, and, to support his interpretation, cites in the original Sanskrit what Yashodhara, the commentator on the *Kamasutra* of Vatsyayana, says in his commentary on one of the *Sutras* wherein Vatsyayana introduces his own name for the first time. As a matter of fact, it was habitual with Indian authors—like Narada, Brahaspati, Patanjali, Jaimini and Badarajana—to refer to themselves by their own name in the third person singular in their literary works, rather than in the first person plural. Patanjali, the author of the *Mahabhashya*, also followed this practice. Hence, Kautilya's reference to himself in the third person should not lead to the conclusion that he was not himself the author of the *Arthasastra*.

Both Jayaswal and Shamasastry point out the colophon of the work specifically stating that the work was written by Kautilya, who had rescued the country from the Nandas: "This *Sastra* has been made by him who from intolerance (of misrule) quickly rescued the scriptures and the science of weapons and the earth which had passed to the Nanda king."

Characterising the *Arthasastra* as "one of the most important documents on ancient statecraft of the world", the well-known Indologist, Dr. A. L. Basham said in a foreword to the present writer's Transaction (*Chanakya and the Arthasastra*)[8] that "there is still room for much more detailed work on the *Arthasastra*." The interest of Indologists and political scientists in the *Arthasastra*, as we have noticed has been sustained. One of the recent scholarly publications, by Thomas R. Trautman[9], is "a statistical investigation of the authorship and evolution of the text." Using complex mathematical formulae, Dr. Trautman has attempted to prove "with something approaching certainty that the *Arthasastra* is a compilation containing the work of at least three hands." Out of the 15 sections. Dr. Trautman goes on to suggest the Books II, III, and VII may represent a fourth hand in the *Arthasastra*. He observes: "To judge the *Arthasastra* the less for being the work of many, however, would be to weigh it in the scales of our own notions of individualism, creativity and genius, themselves creatures of Romanticism." Be that as it may, this new interpretation, along with previously stated notes of dissent, reinforces the view that the authenticity of Kautilya and date of the *Arthasastra* are moot points, not yet finally resolved, and are open to research and critical analysis.

A number of interesting resemblances between the extant fragments of the writings of Megasthenes and the *Arthasastra* reinforce the same conclusion. The hierarchy of officials looking after cities, the arts and crafts, the rivers and markets, referred to by Megasthenes recall some of the *Adhyakshas* in the *Arthasastra*.[10] The officers in charge of the measurement of

[8]Based on a paper read (Feb. 1, 1957) at the London Branch of the Indian Institute of World Culture, Bangalore, and later (1958) published by the Institute.

[9]*Kautilya and the Arthasastra*, 1975.

[10]Book II.

land remind us of the *Gopa* of the *Arthasastra*. Both works refer to the women security guards of the king and the way he is shampooed by female servants. In the same part[11] there is reference to the processions of the king taken out from the palace on religious ceremonies and when going out hunting. These occur also in Megasthenes's account along with the description of how the roads and thoroughfares were guarded on such occasions. The graphic description of sluice gates and irrigation canals by Megasthenes is complemented by what Kautilya has to say on the Setubandha[12]. The description by Megasthenes of overseers all over the place is complemented by the many references to spies—their categories and styles of functioning—in the *Arthasastra*.

A realistic purview of the then prevailing city states and republics is secured via the accounts left by the Greek historians. These furnish a graphic picture of the polity prevailing at the time of the invasion of Alexander the Great. The *Indika* of Megasthenes—despite the fact that it has survived in fragments—is invaluable to the student of the Mauryan administration, excelled only by Kautilya's *Arthasastra*.

There is a close resemblance in the portrayal of the administrative system and the social milieu of Mauryan India by Megasthenes and Kautilya. Wherever there are discrepancies, it has been established that the Greek historian is apt to be wrong. For instance, the sweeping statement of Megasthenes that Indians were not acquainted with writing and that laws were committed to memory and then administered, has since been proved to be manifestly wrong.

It is intriguing how Megasthenes portrays a romantically rosy picture of the Indian society when he states that social evils or vices like theft, drinking and slavery, did not exist at the time. This is offset by Kautilya whose *Arthasastra* states rules regarding slaves and state-owned liquor saloons, besides prescribing punishments for thefts and allied offences. Megasthenes strays from fact, again, when he states that elephants and horses were the monopoly of the king. Arrian and Strabo concur with Kautilya in stating that these animals

[11]Book I.
[12]Book VII, Chap. 14.

were also privately owned. Both Patanjali and Kautilya agree that arable land was privately owned. Megasthenes was obviously referring to crown lands when he recorded that the state was the owner.

Most of the evidence purported above supports the view that the *Arthasastra* was the product of the Mauryan Age, and contained the views of the renowned minister of Chandragupta. Kautilya was a great statesman of the age, albeit the founder of a school of politics. These factors led to the esteem in which he and his work were held in posterity. Dandin and Bana referred to the study of the *Arthasastra* by princes as the most important handbook of statecraft. Contrariwise, the Jain work, *Nandisutra*, mentions it among "the heretical books", alongside the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The work and its known, celebrated author continued to be respected down the ages. The skilled statecraft of Kautilya (or Vishnugupta) was recalled in south Indian epigraphs, when ninth century king Durvintta and Narashimha (tenth century) of the Ganga dynasty, accomplished diplomats and administrators, were characterised as "incarnations of Vishnugupta".

Just as Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* reigns supreme in the field of grammar, similar is the outstanding position of the *Arthasastra* in the domain of the literature on the science of politics. Panini's great work rose above that of all his predecessors and in the process superseded them; the *Arthasastra* was a similar phenomenon in the realm of political science. Hence, there were fewer works on the subject after Kautilya. Another reason for the dearth of literature on the subject was that the *Smritis*—*Manu* (Chaps. 7-9), *Vishnu* (Chap. 3) and *Yajnavalkya* (Chap. 1, 304-67)—dealt with subjects like the duties of the king as well as those of officers, the administration of the civil and criminal law and matters of foreign policy. Manu and other writers did not expatiate on these subjects comprehensively in the manner of Kautilya but their treatment, it appeared, was good enough for the age in which they were recorded. Single-minded attention was not devoted, in the scientific manner of the *Arthasastra*, to the political theories of the day, nor did the *Smriti* works treat the problems of administration exhaustively.

Since there was not any appreciable activity in the domain

of political thought, the *Smriti* works fared well with their readers, who were preoccupied with religious and moral issues of the day. The utmost concern evinced with the office of his king was in ethical terms, that he should be good and virtuous, and if he were not so, the wrath of the gods would befall him. The secular remedies that would be open to the people, if and when a king belied their expectations, were not spelled out, as a little too much was expected, idealistically, of the gods, who would surely destroy a vicious king. Hindu philosophy and poetics rose to their nadir at this stage of our history, but, alas, the same was not true of political science, which practically remained static. The functioning of the government, particularly the administrative machinery, underwent many changes but even these were not recorded.

This phenomenon was apparent also during the post-Kautilya period. One explanation adduced is that foreign domination (of some parts of the country) and attacks by foreigners during 200 B.C and 300 A.D., were directly responsible for the lack of literature on the subject of the science of polity. This plea cannot hold water for the simple reason that the territories of the Greeks, the Parthians the Scythians and the Kushanas never lay across the boundaries of the Punjab for a segment of time that could be telling by its impact. Bihar and Madyadesa, which held the pre-eminent position of the centre of Aryan culture, were the least affected by foreign invasions.

That the first millenium of the Christian era did not produce any appreciable political literature has been partly ascribed to the great classical work of Kautilya which eclipsed other creations in the field. Another factor responsible for this lacuna was that there was no appreciable development in the field of political thought or administrative machinery. Some manuals on political science were written during the period but lacked any originality, and as such did not further the knowledge of the subject beyond the *Arthasastra.*

Kautilya's incomparable influence on his successors was shown well in *Kamandakiya Nitisara.* Its date of composition has been placed in the Gupta Age (around 500 A.D. or at the outside, between 500 and 700 A.D.), which illustrates how far, down the centuries, the impact of *Arthasastra* lasted. This is all the more clear from the fact that the *Nitisara* by Kamandaka is

simply a metrical summary of the work by Kautilya on politics and the art of government. Its writer chose to be anonymous but he was apparently persuaded that his best contribution lay in presenting a summary of the standard work on political science that was still extant at the time. The work is dominated by an enumeration of the duties and obligations of the king and his courtiers but there is no mention of the administrative apparatus, presumably covered in the *Smriti* writings of this era. In the summary of Kautilya's work, where even his words and phrases are repeated, the chapter on republics is missing. In fact, the second, third, fourth and fourteenth chapters are omitted entirely. It is probable that these were not existing any more. Besides the *Arthasastra*, the preceding political thought is summarised, in a somewhat haphazard manner, in the *Nitivakyamrita*. Its author is known, and is interestingly, a Jain, namely, Samadevasuri (the date of the work having been determined at 960 A.D.).

The outstanding work that presents the most detailed perspective of the administrative machinery in the post-Kautilya era is *Sukraniti*. Though its date is not certain, there is little doubt about its importance for students of ancient Indian polity. Hardly dealing with the theoretical aspects of polity, it discusses the role of the king and functions of ministers and officers as well as the problems of foreign policy and ways of warfare. Civil administration (including judicial, popular courts, *et al*) is dealt with at length, along with the welfare measures undertaken by the State—like developing mines, forests and trade, executing irrigation projects and controlling gambling and sale of liquor.

Though steering clear of theoretical themes, *Sukraniti* has some original features like description[13] of allocation of portfolios of ministers so that we have a precise idea of each ministry, the minister aided by the secretaries, under the overall supervision of the king. Such interesting minutae as the seating protocol[14] in the king's court on royal occasions and the income[15] of various feudatories occur in the work. How the

[13]II, 109-110.
[14]II, 70-71.
[15]I, 282-83.

state revenues[16] are to be spent on different items of government expenditure, percentagewise, was also given in the *Sukraniti*—a unique feature of the work. The organisation of the army is described most comprehensively—more so than in Kautilya's *Arthasastra*—from the recruitment and training of the soldiery to the selection of war elephants and horses to the manufacture and purchase of weapons.

The date of *Sukraniti* (like the *Arthasastra*) has been the subject to much controversy. Whereas one authority (G. Oppert) went so far as to locate it in the pre-Christian time, historians R.L. Mitra and Dr. U.N. Ghoshal placed it between 1200 and 1600 A.D. The consensus, however, is that the major part of the past is located somewhere between the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and, as it has come down to us as a composite work, it was subjected to accretions and alterations right up to fourteenth century A.D. This has been deduced from internal evidence, for example, reference to the *Advaita Vedanta* of Sri Sankara.[17] There is a reference to the state dictum that the treasury must have a reserve that equals the revenue of twenty years.[18] This observation can only belong to the eleventh century as is borne out by the accounts of the loot of Hindu kingdoms by Muslim invaders. The interpolations in the work, specially those relating to gunpowder and firearms,[19] could, again, relate to the fourteenth century, when the army of Vijayanagar did use gunpowder.

We may as well mention other later works on the science of polity which hardly evince any inspiration from Kautilya's *Arthasastra* or, for that matter, from *Sukraniti*. Belonging to the post-Sukraniti period is *Brahaspatya Arthasastra*, a mediocre work subjectwise, that brings little credit to its author. The same is the case with the *Puranas* of the Gupta and the post-Gupta era; their treatment of matters of polity, vis-a-vis State and Administration, is also mediocre. Actually, none is to blame, the fact of the matter, or the malaise being that many branches of learning, including the science of polity, had

[16] I, 316-17.
[17] IV, 3.50.
[18] *Ibid*, IV, 2-23.
[19] *Ibid*, I, 231; II 95 and 195; IV 7. 195-213.

deteriorated in theme and treatment from about 1000 A.D. Detailed consideration was given to various aspects of *Dharma* in a number of works, which were in the nature of compendiums and were written between 1000 and 1700 A.D. The point that the *Arthasastra* tradition of the science of polity set by Kautilya was a thing of the past, and these works concerned themselves more with theological aspects than political. One of the last works, *Rajanitiprakasa* of Mitramisra (1650 A.D.) describes the king's coronation ceremony at length, setting out the rituals in hundred odd pages. The routine of the king's morning bath and toilet and purification and other rituals to ward off misfortune are also elaborated. In this and other works, there are portions about the duties of kings and functions of ministers, the management of forts, the treasury, the conduct of foreign policy in times of peace and war, and so on, but these are not original contributions at all, being merely compendiums of quotations from preceding writers on the same subjects.

A representative work of this class, *Manasollasa* (author, Somesvara, the Chalukya king, 1125-1138 A.D.), is equally deficient as a book on polity. Sixty out of its hundred chapters describe the sports and luxurious pastimes of the ruler, the rest are concerned with the affairs and security of the kingdom, but, again, are viewed more from the religious than the political standpoint. There is mention of the duties and role of the king, the functions and the needed background of his ministers, the treasurer, the royal chamberlain, etc., but it is dull and pedestrian, covering the much-trodden ground and contributing nothing new to the science of polity that had practically reached its zenith with the Kautilya *Arthasastra* and suffered a decline thereafter. How the theoretical level of political science had gone low in this age is clear from the fact that this work contains such inane details as the multiplication tables (for the treasurer), the meaning of the cries of crows, dogs and jackals as bad omens for the royalty, veterinary treatment for war elephants and horses, the kinds of pearls, diamonds, that were current, etc. Thus the book falls below any standard for a manual on the science of politics, the main reason being that the writers did not know any better so far as the branch of knowledge was concerned, their sycophantic preoccupation being pandering to the luxuries of the ruler.

In the larger socio-political sense, the preponderant sense of isolation that the country developed from the sixth century until the advent of Islam, was responsible for the lack of original thinking, in the field of the science of polity and other spheres. There were few external contacts or none, after the great Gupta Age, and, what was worse than the constraint of self-imposed isolation, the Indian society appeared to have lost its admirable absorptive capacity. There was a falling off in the perception and appreciation of the higher things of life, and this remained broadly true, despite the meteoric rise of the reformers in the south from the eighth century downwards. The essence of their reforms was intellectual and lacked popular appeal. When the popular movements did start in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it was too late in the day to mend matters, for the disintegration was an accomplished fact, and the movement left the mass of the people as stale as ever. Surveying the society at the end of the Mughal era—after the rise and fall of the Mughals—the critical historians are unanimous in their finding that it was bereft of ideas and creativity as it was about a thousand years earlier, in point of time. The decline that had set in the works on the science of polity was not apparent in Sanskrit works only, but the same kind of lustreless manuals on the science continued to appear in the vernacular languages also. A minister of the great Maratha ruler, Shivaji, namely, Ramchandra Pant Amatya, wrote (1680 A.D.) a manual for the sovereign's son and heir, but, apart from generalities, it lacked original thinking.

There are, however, works in Sanskrit, Prakrita and Pali which deal with the science of polity one way or the other. A number of portions in the *Brahamanas* (the *Satapatha*, the *Aitareya*, the *Taittiriya* and the *Panchvimsa*) throw considerable light on the state of polity in ancient India when the literature on these affairs had not yet been conceived. The functions of kings and the day-to-day administration are featured in the *Dharmasutras* and the *Smritis*, even though these records evince a preference for the religious duties. The *Puranas* cover the self-same topics in some chapters but being summaries of the *Smritis*, these become redundant for students of ancient polity.

Among other original sources—quite important and

dependable are stone and copper inscriptions. Their credibility may sometimes suffer from the quirk that these were composed by sycophantic court poets, who penned these with an eye to pleasing their masters rather than authentically record their achievements or the lack of them, but the perspicacious scholar can tell the dross from the down-to-earth facts. However courtly the renderings, the inscriptions present a good idea of the inter-state relations as well as what happened between the king and his feudatories. Many telling, prevalent axioms defining the functions of the monarch and his ministers as well as the set aims and objectives of the government, are recorded.

The student of ancient polity of India is also aided by numismatics (the science of coins). A number of city states, that would have remained shrouded in mystery, have been revealed through the deciphering of the legends on coins recently discovered The valuable coin legends have proved the existence of the republican constitution of the Lichchavis, the Sibis, the Yaudhayas, the Arjunayanas, the Malavas and the Kunods. These diverse sources, along with the *Arthasastra* of Kautilya have enabled the persevering student of ancient polity to form a fairly realistic picture of it.

Chandragupta and Kautilya

THE year 326 B.C. was not the best of times for India, then reeling under the after-effects of the invasion of Alexander. Magadha and the contiguous provinces were ruled by a monarch who was "detested and held cheep" by his own subjects. Alexander, the conqueror-general, had retreated to the city of Babylon in Mesopotamia, where he died in 323 B.C. at a young age. The commanders who survived him did not want to quit the borderland of India. When they met in 321 B.C., after a lapse of two years, to thrash the issue, they decided to retain the Macedonian governors in the trans-Indus satrapies, to quell the disaffection against foreign rule. Eudemos, a commandant governor, was designated to head the garrison in the western Punjab, after the murder of Philippos.

Disaffection against the foreign rulers was rampant, even though Indian princes had been left in charge of the civil government. The first rebellion against the invaders, fomented by the Brahmanas, had broken out in 326 B.C. when the great Macedonian conqueror was in the Punjab. This and other similar risings had been suppressed with a heavy hand, but the popular resentment against the foreigners persisted. It was in this socio-political context that a new star rose on the political firmament of India that eclipsed all else by its brilliance. The leader, the great avenger to whose mighty arms "the earth, long harassed by outlanders, now turned for protection and refuge", was none other than Chandragupta Maurya, destined as he was—in Justin's phrase—to "shake the yoke of servitude from the neck" of his fatherland.

Birth of Chandragupta

There are different traditions about the family and background of Chandragupta. The Greek writer, Justin, describes him as born in "humble life", that is, a commoner, who aspired to royal power after his brush with Alexander which was followed by a good augury. Another tradition presents him as the son of the last Nanda monarch, from Mura, his Shudra concubine—whence was derived the dynasty name, Maurya. There are different traditions as to whether Mura was a Shudra or of other extraction. And, that is the peg of a tale—rather, several of them.

The *Mudrarakshasa* (Act II, Verse 6) call Chandragupta not only *Mauryaputra* but also *Nandanvaya* (Act IV). Somadeva and Kshemendra refer to him as *Purvananda-Suta*, son of the genuine Nanda, as opposed to *Yoga-Nanda*. According to these sources, Chandragupta was the son of Mura, the concubine of a Nanda king. The Nanda brothers had refused to support her claim for queenship. Dr. Spoonar has upheld the view that Mura (the name does not appear to be Indian and is perhaps derived from Persian *Meru* or *Maru*) was of Persian origin. Most probably she was the daughter of a Persian merchant of fortune, who lived in Pataliputra. Seeing the beautiful Persian maiden, a Nanda king, past his prime, took Mura to bed, but she stayed on at the palace as a concubine. In this context, it has to be remembered that the Nandas themselves are said to have had low and immoral origin.[1] Thus it could be that Chandragupta started his career with a mighty grouse against the Nandas who denied the royal prerogative to his mother, because of her foreign extraction. He vindicated her honour, when he became the first 'universal monarch' of India, by naming the dynasty after her. A.K. Mazumdar[2] has observed: "After careful enquiry, I am now convinced that Mura was a Persian woman."

Still another tradition has it that Chandragupta was the scion of the celebrated Moriya clan, who had descended

[1]As Professor Radhakumud Mukerji has pointed out, the Brahmana *Puranas* and other works speak despisingly of the Nandas and Chandragupta as low-born.

[2]*The Hindu History*, 1979.

from the Sakyas of Pali; according to this interpretation the word *Maurya* would be a tribal appellation. The *Divyavadana* holds that the appellation MAURYA belongs to erring Kshatriyas—the ones who transgressed from rules laid down by Brahmanas. According to this work, Bindusara, the son of Chandragupta, lays claim to be an 'anointed Kshatriya' (*Kshatriya Murdhabhishikta*). Ashoka, the son of Bindusara, also calls himself a Kshatriya in the same work. The Mauryas (Moris) are described as a Rajput clan in the *Rajputana Gazetteer*. Kautilya's preference of an *abhijata* king also seems to suggest that the sovereign of the celebrated statesman-minister-author was born of a noble family.

Maurya Clan

The Maurya family—so hold the medieval traditions, as recorded in inscriptions—descended from the solar race. The Maurya dynasty sprang from Mandhatri, a prince of that race. Contrariwise, the Jaina tradition (recorded in the *Parisishtaparvan*) has it that Chandragupta was the son of a daughter of the chief of a village of peacock-tamers (*Mayurposhaka*). This tradition agrees with Justin's description of Chandragupta as a man of humble origin. Similar is the characterisation of Chandragupta in the *Mahavamsa* as a descendant of the Khattiya clan which was called *Moriya* (*Maurya*). The mooted link between the nomenclatures *Moriya* and (*Maurya*) and *Mora* (or *Mayura*—peacock) recurs in the Buddhist tradition. This links with the fact that tame peacocks constituted an attraction in the gradens of the Maurya Palace at Pataliputra. Tradition has it that Pataliputra—the city that the Mauryas founded—had buildings of blue stone like the neck of the peacock.[3] All the evidence thus points to the conclusion that Chandragupta belonged to the Kshatriya caste, that is, the Moriya (Maurya) clan.

Mahaparirinibhana Sutta (belonging to the early Buddhist canon) represents the Moriyas as the ruling clan of the Pipplialivama in the sixth century B.C. and hailing from the Kshatriya caste. These people lived in the territory lying between Rummindel in the Nepalese Terai and Kasia in the Gorakhpur

[3]*Mahavamsa Tika*, P 180.

District. It appears that they formed part of the Magadhan empire like other states of eastern India, but by the fourth century B.C., it is said, they were greatly impoverished. It was in this hapless context that Chandragupta spent his childhood amongst these impecenuous peacock-tamers, cowherds and huntsmen in the secluded Vindhyan forest. The Moriyas must have suffered from the financial extortions that were the order of the day and accounted for the enormous amount of wealth accumulated by the Nanda kings. We have the Greek account that Agramines (the Nanda contemporary of Alexander) "was detested and held cheap by his subjects as he rather took after his father than conducted himself as the occupant of a throne."[4] Sensitive and virile as he was, Chandragupta must have been fired with ambition, fairly early in his career, to change the course of events.

The last quarter of the fourth century B.C. thus found northern India in a state of flux. The rule of the Nanda dynasty was tottering and the monarch, Dhanananda, was led to forcing exactions which increased the resentment of the subjects against his tyrannical regime. The people of the Punjab, divided as ever, had not yet recovered from the humiliating blows of Alexander on the body politic. Disaffection being the order of the day, the time was ripe for the rise of a bold adventurer like Chandragupta to put the house in order. His own people, the Mauryan clan, had been reduced—as mentioned—to dire straits in the political holocaust that had overtaken the country as a result of foreign invasions.

Kautilya's Vow

It appears that the Maurya youth started his meteoric career as a *Senapati* (a kind of general or commander) in the Nanda army. He broke off his relations with the Nanda ruler on some misunderstanding and raised the standard of revolt against him. He was actively aided—and abetted—by a Brahman personage, Kautilya (or Vishnugupta or Chanakya). The latter had his own score to settle with the Nanda king, for he (Kautilya) had been dishonoured by the Raja at a feast in the palace, and Kautilya had taken the vow of ruining the royal

[4]McCrindle ; *The Invasion of India by Alexander*, P. 222.

family. The revolt misfired and Chandragupta and Kautilya fled the scene to save themselves.

An interesting legend occurs in *Mahavamsa Tika* (also in *Sthaviravali Charita*) to the effect that during this escapade Chandragupta was hiding himself in an old woman's humble dwelling. He overheard her rebuking a child who had burnt his fingers while handling a cake fresh from the oven. She had admonished the child to begin gingerly with the corners, rather than with the middle, when the cake is very hot. Chandragupta learnt his lesson and started his adventurist career with the north-western part of the country, rather than from the centre.

There is another, more important anecdote—testified to by Plutarch[5] and Justin—that Chandragupta met Alexander the Great in the Punjab. The boldness of his rather presumptous speech, it is said, offended the great conqueror, and Chandragupta did not succeed in persuading Alexander to attack the hated Nanda king. According to Justin, the Macedonian issued orders that the youth be put to death, but Chandragupta managed to escape from the clutches of the Greek soldiers. So, once again, Chandragupta had to flee for his life to some obscure place. The ambitious youthful Maurya had probably entertained the hope that by making the Greek fight the Nanda, he would rid his country of both the invader and the oppressor of Magadha. But that was not to be. Maybe, it was at this point that he met Kautilya, who, hurt by a breach of etiquette at the Nanda king's palace, had left his home in Taxila to bide his time for revenge.

After Alexander's departure, Chandragupta rallied the disgruntled tribes of the Punjab. It was clear from the assassination of Philippos that they had not taken kindly to the Greek domination. It did not take Chandragupta long to overthrow the garrisons. The Greek Satrap of the north-western provinces,

[5]As Plutarch put it (*Life of Alexander*): "Androkottus himself who was then a lad, saw Alexander himself and afterwards used to declare that Alexander might easily have conquered the whole country, as the then king was hated by his subjects on account of his mean and wicked disposition." The clear conclusion has been drawn from this that Chandragupta met the Greek general to persuade him to tackle and eliminate the much-hated tyrant of Magadh.

who lorded it over western Punjab, left the country in 317 B.C.

Nandas Conquered

Guided by the "Machiavellian Brahman", Kautilya,[6] the young ambitious adventurer rallied a big army to finally settle the score (his as well as Kautilya's) with the Nandas of Magadha. The celebrated drama, *Mudrarakshasa* (Act II) presents a picture of the allies of Chandragupta in the hostilities that ensued. In the prevailing atmosphere of intrigue and mutual suspicion, each party involved in the fighting was differently motivated. Be that as it might, what mattered was that Chandragupta emerged triumphant, and all accounts—Buddhist, Jain or Puranic—concur that the Nanda army was utterly routed by Chandragupta. Besides *Mudrarakshasa*, the descriptions of this conclusive battle are to be found in the *Puranas*, the *Mahavamsa Tika* the *Milindapanho* and the Jaina *Parisishtapartam*. According to the *Milindapanho*, Bhaddasala was at the head of the Nanda forces, which suffered an ignominous defeat, accompanied by a lot of slaughter.

According to another tradition, also in *Mahavamsa Tika*, Chandragupta, aided by Kautilya, had actually to make several attempts to overthrow the entrenched might of the Nandas. When Chandragupta and Kautilya lost the battle in one such foray,Kautilya repaired his way to Himavantakuda and had an agreement with the king Pavvaya, to the effect that he would be given half of the Nanda kingdom in lieu of his aid against

[6]Professor Radhakumud Mukerji in his Introductory Essay on "the Age and Authenticity of the *Arthasastra* of Kautilya", to *Studies in Ancient India Polity* by Narendra Nath Law. writes:

"In the *Nandisutra*, which is a Jaina religious work in Prakrit language, Chanakya is extolled for the signal success which he achieved as Finance Minister of Chandra Gupta. In the Jaina work *Rishimandal aprakaranavritti* there is a reference to the alliance of Chanakya with Chandra Gupta, who seized the kingdom by slaying Nanda. We may refer to the evidence of the *Arthasastra* itself, as set forth in one of its concluding verses, where it is stated that the *Arthasastra* is composed by him who with angry determination rescued (the Brahmana's) learning and (the Kshatriya's) art, as also the mother-country, from the clutches of the Nanda kings?"

the Nandas. In the subsequent war, the Nanda king was defeated this time.

The vanquished monarch was permitted to leave the country and take with him whatever he could carry in one horse chariot. Loading the chariot with the palace valuables, the Nanda also had his two senior queens and a daughter with him. As they were leaving the capital, the daughter espied Chandragupta and fell instantly in love with him. The Nanda king was too glad to give her the permission to marry the conqueror. It so happened that nine spokes of a wheel of the chariot of Chandragupta broke down when she was getting into it. Taking it as a bad omen, Chandragupta was about to shoo her off, when Kautilya intervened. He interpreted the omen that the new Maurya dynasty would thrive for nine generations.

In accordance with the alliance, the kingdom of Nandas was divided between Chandragupta and Pavvaya. The Machiavellian minister, Kautilya, saw to it that Pavvaya also received a *Vishakanya* (a 'poisonous' girl) as part of the bargain. Infatuated by the charms of the girl, Pavvaya succumbed to the poison that was in her system. Thus, thanks to Kautilya's diplomacy, Chandragupta came in possession of the whole of the Nanda kingdom.

But—as the tradition goes on—Kautilya was not satisfied with this, for his aim was the extermination of all the surviving members of the Nanda dynasty. As chance would have it, he came across a weaver, namely, Nalandama, whom he found assiduously burning out ant-holes. Asked by Kautilya why he was engaged in this operation, the weaver replied jauntily, "My son was bitten by one ant, and so I am destroying them all." This was the kind of man that Kautilya was looking for. He assigned him to slay the remaining members of the Nanda family. Then he saw to the enthronement of Chandragupta, amidst pomp and show.

Empire expanded

Even as Chandragupta ascended the throne amidst the fanfare, some Kshatriyes refused his commands, because "he was the son of a peacock-tamer", not highborn like them. Disguising himself as a *Karpatika*, Kautilya put on fire the village of the dissenting Kshatriyas, a dire punishment that

silenced such hostile voices.

Chandragupta had to contend with other opponents too, starting with Ugradhanva (Greek: *Agrames*), whom he defeated with the help of the king of Nepal.[7] Thereupon, Rakshasa, frustrated with the defeat of his overlord, teamed up with Malayaketu, the king of a hilly principality, the kings of Kashmir, Chedi, Gandhara,Khasa, Hoona and Saka, as well as the Greek Satraps, to attack Magadha. The kings were promised by Rakshasa a goodly share of the great kingdom of Magadh and the loot, but, unknown to him,Chandragupta had got to know all his plans through spies set in motion by Kautilya.

Kautilya caused a division in the enemy ranks by the despatch of a false letter, purported to have been written by Rakshasa to Chandragupta, and as if detected by Malayeketu. Thus, the latter suspected Rakshasa and assassinated five of his allies even before the much-vaunted march on Magadha. The armies got demoralised and the soldiers fled the scene, including the other allies. Kautilya's officers made Malayaketu prisoner. A saddened Rakshasa, frustrated and woebegone, wended his way back to Pataliputra to live as a private citizen. Chandragupta and Kautilya called on him and invited him to take up the office of the Prime Minister. Malayketu was set free, heaped with honours by Chandragupta, and permitted to go back to his kingdom. The throne was thus rendered secure for Chandragupta by Kautilya's diplomacy and statesmanship. On the death of Rakshasa, he became the Prime Minister (*Mudra-Rakshasam*) again.

Though some historians hold that Chandragupta's victory over Magadha preceded the exit of the *Yavana* (Greek) garrisons, the date of Chandragupta's accession has been agreed at round about 321 B.C.[8] After becoming the sovereign of

[7]*Asiatic Researches*, Vol. V.

[8]Apart from the Indian sources, this accords with the Ceylonese evidence that the Saisunaga dynasty ceased in 343 B.C., and the rule of the Nandas lasted only for 22 years. The Buddhist tradition of Sri Lanka mentions the date of Chandragupta's enthronement as 162 years after the Buddha's *Parinirvana*, which is 486 B.C. according to the Cantonese calendar. The year thus works out as 324 B.C.

Magadha, Chandragupta attacked the generals (prefects) of Alexander, and vanquished them. Despite the various extant accounts, precise details of Chandragupta's campaigns are not available. Plutarch and Justin, the Greek writers, have recorded that he conquered and became the ruler of the whole of India", but this appears to be an exaggeration. The meteoric rise of Chandragupta is best covered in the account of Justin. He uses such expressions as "mercenary soldier" and "robber" for Chandragupta; out of these, the Jaina descriptions agree with the former. There is ample, extraneous evidence to establish that over and above Magadha and the Punjab, Chandragupta's territories extended to a number of remote regions of India. The Junagarh rock inscriptions of the Mahakshatrapar Rudradaman, specially mentioning Chandragupta's irrigation projects in Saurashtra, (as well as the appointment of a governor, or, *Rashtriya*, namely, Pushyagupta Vaisya, who constructed the famous Sudarshana Lake), establishes the fact that this territory too was contained in Chandragupta's empire.

Some late inscriptions and Jaina traditions reveal Chandragupta's connection with north Mysore. Tamil tradtion refers to the advance of "Maurya upstarts" as far south as the Podiyil Hill in the Tinnevelly district. The first Maurya is recorded to have become the master of Malwa and Kathiawar. All such available evidence taken together supports the belief that Chandragupta did conquer a large part of India and, in fact, his India did extend from Afghanistan to Deccan and from Bengal to Kathiawar. Only Kalinga, Chera, Chola, Pandya and Kerala, were permitted to exist as free provinces, outside the Empire.

Seleukos humbled

We have mentioned the infighting among the Greek generals following the premature demise of Alexander. Seleukos emerged triumphant in this struggle and by 305 B.C. he counted himself powerful enough to recover the lost territories east of Indus, as he had already made himself the master of Babylon and extended his empire from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indus. The great Greek general overlooked the fact that the socio-political situation in India had undergone a sea change since the invasion of Alexander. It was not an easy task to take

on the mighty army of Chandragupta who had built up a well-knit powerful empire, with the active help of his statesman-minister, Kautilya. And, having since crushed the might of the Greek generals, he was well acquainted with the tactics of Greek warfare.

The extant texts do not give a description of the hostilities that took place between Seleukos and Chandragupta, nor is it clear whether the great combatants merely made a show of their forces without coming to grips. This much is clear that Seleukos failed in his attempt to advance beyond the Indus and had perforce to conclude a treaty by which the Maurya extracted the most favourable terms for himself. By dint of the treaty, Seleukos surrendered a large slice of his territory including the satrapies of Paropanisadai (Kabul Valley),[9] Arachosia (Kandahar), Aria (Herat) and Gedrosia (Baluchistan), and in return he received 500 elephants. A matrimonial alliance was contracted, Seleukos most probably giving the hand of his daughter in marriage to Chandragupta, though some authorities aver that it could have been a Greek princess. What mattered in geopolitical terms was that thus the boundaries of the Mauryan empire were extended to the Hindukush mountain range, "the scientific frontier of India." A Greek envoy of Seleukos, namely, Megasthenes, was deputed to the Mauryan court.

The writings of Megasthenes and Kautilya constitute our best sources for information of the people, the government, the social and political institutions of the time of Chandragupta Maurya. The *Indika* by Megasthenes is not available in its original form but it has been preserved for posterity in the writings—mostly in the form of quotations—of Strabo, Arrian, Diodoras and other later Greek and Latin authors. The work of Kautilya (the *Arthasastra*)—the minister of Chandragupta—is a comprehensive compendium on the science of polity, a unique treatise which has enduring value not only for what it lays down on statecraft but as a work of early Indian literature.

Army and Administration

Thanks to these writers, and other sources, we have a good

[9]That a part of the Kabul Valley was included in the Maurya empire is also attested by the evidence of the inscriptions of Ashoka.

idea of the administration of Chandragupta Maurya. Though he acquired a big army from his Nanda predecessors, he made impressive accretions to its strength, so that it stood at six lakh infantry, 30,000 horses, 9,000 elephants and 8,000 chariots. An efficient war office supervised this powerful army. Its thirty members were divided into six 5-member boards. The six boards were: Admiralty, Transport, Commissariat and Army Service Infantry, Cavalry, Chariots and Elephants. According to Kautilya, *Patti* or *Padati* (Infantry), *Asva* (Cavalry), *Ratha* (Chariots) and *Hast* (Elephants), were the traditional divisions of an Indian army, headed by their respective *Adhyakshas* or Superintendents.

The king headed the administration and was the final arbiter—the authority—in all matters, whether civil or military. In cases involving justice, he was at the beck and call of the populace all the time. Kautilya[10] forbids the king that "petitioners wait at the door" and exhorts that "urgent calls" be heard "at once and never put off." He was primarily responsible for making high appointments, giving audience to ambassadors and securing secret information from spies. He led the *Mantri-Parishad* (advisory body of Ministers, also called *Sachivas*) and tne people in peace and war, though in the latter contingency, the advice of *Senapati* (Commander-in-chief) was paramount. Kautilya lays down the devious and often unconventional methods through which the integrity and devotion to duty of the ministers would be tested by the monarch before he reposed any trust in each one of them.

Kautilya's *Arthasastra* mentions the high officials (*Amatyas, Mahamatras* and *Adyakshas*) who controlled the various branches of the administration. For purposes of administration viability, the huge empire was divided into provinces, the important ones governed by viceroy princes whose existence (e.g., the viceroyalties at Taxila, Tosali, Suvarnagiri and Ujjain) was later confirmed in the inscriptions of Ashoka. There were also the feudatory vassals who owed allegiance to the emperor, and placed their army and other resources at his disposal when-

[10] *Arthasastra*, Bk. I, Ch. 19. Likewise, Megasthenes recorded that Chandragupta was reached by his subjects even when his body was being "massaged by ebony rollers."

ever the need arose. The system of espionage and counter-intelligence was perfected—to exercise a foolproof check on the far-flung bureaucracy—so that the king was posted with even the treatment meted out to the subjects in remote areas.

The municipal administration of the capital, Pataliptra, and other towns, was a comprehensive affair. The account of Megasthenes details the activities of the six boards that ran the local affairs of Pataliputra. The boards controlled the industrial arts, the movements and needs of foreigners, the registration of births and deaths, the trade and commerce, the regulation of manufactures, and the payment of tithes on goods sold. Though Kautilya does not specifically mention these boards, he mentions a *Nagaraka* as the Prefect of the town who oversaw the work of *Gopas* and *Sthanikas*, who had limited jurisdiction in town affairs—*Gopa*, five to ten villages and *sthanika*, overseeing one-fourth of a district (*Janapada*).

Land revenue was the main source of income of the State, its traditional share being one-sixth of the gross produce. Other heads of income were the revenues from forests, customs at the borders, ferry duties and tolls, mines, taxes, tithes and fines, etc. These are extensively dealt with by Kautilya who also details the expenditures incurred on the king and his court, the army and other defences, the salaries of ministers and other officers, religious endowments and public works like roads, buildings and irrigation. The problems connected with irrigation specially interested Chandragupta. According to Megasthenes, officers had to ensure that farmers received "fair share of the benefit" of the branch canals.

Kautilya details the many rigorous measures taken to check crime. (Megasthenes also mentions the severity of the penal laws). Penalties of fines, varying according to the megnitude of the offence, alternated with the most terrible—and exemplary—punishments. Capital punishment was awarded for such deviations as a petty theft by a government official, non-payment of tithes on sales, or even causing an injury to an artisan. Whipping and other torture during judicial custody was permitted to extract confessions.

Glory of Pataliputra

The cynosure of Chandragupta's domain—one of the biggest

empires known to the contemporary times—was the imperial metropolis, Pataliputra. Megasthenes calls it "Palimbothra", which capital, "situated in the country of Prasians" was the "largest city in India", in length 80 *stadia* (9½ miles) and breadth, 15 *stadia* (1¾ miles), and strategically situated on the land that had formed between the two rivers, "Erannoboas" (Hiranyayaka or Sone) and the Ganga. A moat, six "plethra" (over 600 feet) and 30 cubits deep, surrounding the city, further strengthened its defences. The outer walls, fortified with 570 towers—the entry regulated via 64 well-guarded gates—constituted another defence, and it is to be assumed that other cities had similar protection against invaders. About other cities, Arrian says (in *Indika*): "It would not be possible to record with accuracy the number of the cities on account of their multiplicity." The feudatory kingdoms, forming part of the empire of Chandragupta, were well protected, their well-being and security looked after by the viceroys.

Pomp and splendour characterised the flamboyant style of living of Chandragupta, once he became emperor. His huge, beautiful palace was impressively situated in the midst of a spacious park in Pataliputra, and shady avenues. The audience hall (150' by 120') was embellished by artistic, gilded pillars and surrounded by well-stocked fish ponds. Since, according to the architectural style of the day, the palace was chiefly a wood construction, it did not survive the onslaughts of time and seasons. A 100-pillared hall, among other ruins, has been spotted at Kumrahar, near Patna by Dr. Spooner.

Characteristically enough, Chandragupta was protected by female body-guards in and outside his palace. The tradition has it that he was always haunted by fear of assassination and would not sleep in the same room in the palace for two successive nights. This could be an exaggeration but is a pointer to the preventive steps that were taken constantly to protect the life of Emperor inside the well-guarded palace. The palace had a number of secret and subterraneous passages as a precaution against a sudden attack or a revolt by the army. Chandragupta left the palace on four occasions: when he had to head the forces on a military expedition; when he had to offer a sacrifice; when he had to administer justice; and, when he had to go on a royal hunt. On the last occasion, the royal road to the venue of the hunt was

marked off by ropes on either side and the penalty for anyone trespassing the limits was capital punishment.

Chandragupta's Achievements

The king was protected by a platoon of 24 elephants when out a-hunting or on inspection. Sports and pastimes that the king witnessed were gladiatorial contests, ox-racing as well as fights of elephants, rams, bulls and rhinoceroses—the events enlivened by the court and people turning out in large numbers and oftentimes betting on the lively performances. The king, arrayed in embroidered and resplendent muslin apparel, was carried in a golden palanquin on such occasions. The other mounts for royal journeys were gaily-caprisoned elephants and horses. The procession was a majestic spectacle. Attendants, colourfully dressed, carried censors in their hands, and with these they perfumed the roads with incense.

Chandragupta ruled for about 24 years. His meteoric rise from an impecenuous, hapless, hunted exile to the historic rank of the greatest emperor that the country had known, was indeed phenomenal, an unprecedented political happening. Itemised, his record of achievements reads like a saga: (1) the expulsion of the Greek garrisons; (2) the conclusive defeat of Seleukus; (3) the creation, for the first time, of the biggest empire in the country; (4) the organisation of the civil administration of a far-flung empire; (5) the organisation of the biggest army that India had known; and (6) whereas the Greek monarchs sought his alliance and Seleucus exchanged presents with him, the Greek Satraps, content to maintain diplomatic and commercial relations with the Mauryas for three generations, dared not invade the frontiers of the Mauryan empire. Chandragupta's empire was so well established that succession disputes did not bother his son, Bindusara, or, his grandson, Ashoka. Chandragupta's diplomacy and administration, thanks to his mentor-adviser, Kautilya, had imbibed the best of the ancient Indian traditions, and left a great, imperial legacy for his successors.

Kautilya's Last Days

Towards the latter part of the reign of Chandragupta, Kautilya had a quarrel with him. He, the tradition goes on, left

Pataliputra to do penance.[11]

Jaina traditions have it that Chandragupta was a Jaina—or that he became a Jaina in the autumn of his life. It is said that he retired to a town in Mysore, known as Shravana Belgola, with Bhadrabahu, the great Jaina patriarch of his time. It appears that a socio-economic factor in the shape of a great famine in Magadha, towards the end of his rule, played a part in the king's decision. The hill where Chandragupta lived as a mendicant, with Bhadrabahu, is still called '*Chandragiri.*' A temple said to be erected by him is known as '*Chandraguptabasti.*'

His son, Bindusara, succeeded Chandragupta. According to Hemachandra (in *Parisishtaparvan*), Bindusara was born of Lurdhara, the queen of Chandragupta. (The snag, however, is that there is little corroborative evidence to authenticate the name of the queen.) He was called 'Amitrachates' by Arthenaios, the Greek writer, and 'Allitrochades' by Strabo, another Greek historian. (These appear to be corruptions of the Sanskrit name. 'Amritaghata' or 'Amritkhada'.) Bindusara had Kautilya as Prime Minister for a few years. This is testified to by Hemachandra and Taranatha,[12] authors of *Arya-Manjusri* and *Mula Kalpa*, respectively. Taranatha adds that Bindusara "made himself master of all territory between the eastern and western

[11]A tradition gives the unhappy antecedents of the quarrel. Subandhu, a courtier who was jealous of the immense influence of Kautilya over Chandragupta's son, Bindusara, told the latter that Kautilya had killed his (the king's) mother. The allegation went back in the birth of Bindusara himself. Durdhara, the queen of Chandragupta (then pregnant with Bindusara) was once dining with the king. Unknown to the royal couple, Kautilya had had Chandragupta's food mixed with very minute doses of poison, so as to ensure that the king would gradually have immunity from poison. As mischance would have it, Durdhara tasted the food and died almost instantaneously. Kautilya had her womb ripped open and the child extracted. Bindusara checked the charge levelled against Kautilya with an old maid-servant who had known his mother; she confirmed the story as true. On the following day, when Kautilya called on the king he was a little indifferent to the ageing minister. Kautilya felt that his best days were behind him. He renounced his worldly possessions to which in any case he was always indifferent, and "he retired to the jungle to starve himself to death, and was consumed in the flames."

[12]*Political History, Ancient India*: As recorded in the *Divyavadana*, Kautilya was succeeded by Khallataka as Bindusara's Prime Minister.

seas." Other scholars also concur that the southern regions were conquered by Bindusara.

Chandragupta's Successors

The even tenure of Bindusara's reign was disturbed by general revolts and other strains. When his eldest son, Susima (who was also the viceroy), could not control the uprising in Taxila, Bindusara sent his other son, Ashoka, to check the disturbance, and the latter succeeded. Following the farsighted foreign policy of his father, Bindusara preserved excellent relations with the Greek rulers of his time. Among the foreign envoys at his court was Deimachos, representing the Syrian monarch, Antiochos I Soter.

Historians have underlined the non-Aryan character of the Maurya empire. Justin's description of Chandragupta as a man of "mean origin" was, on the Indian side, complemented by the Puranic texts holding forth that after Mahapadma there will be king of the Shudra origin. The decline of the Mauryas was, to a considerable degree, due to the popular reaction started by the Brahmanas against a Shudra sovereign. That Chandragupta, the founder of the Maurya empire, was a Jaina and so was his successor, Bindusara, and that the greatest emperor of the dynasty, Ashoka, was a convert to Buddhism, further testify to the non-Aryan character of the Maurya empire.

Be that as it may, Ashoka's persists as a pre-eminent nomenclature in the history of ancient India. This is so not because of the political events connected with his reign but what he did and achieved, for propagating Buddhism outside India, and raising it to the status of a world religion. But in this very triumph lay the seed of the decline of the Mauryan empire, for it militated against the very security and continuity of the empire. The only war that Ashoka fought was at Kalinga, and then he became a professed pacifist. Chandragupta's triumph over Seleukus had removed any apprehension of a border uprising or attack, and thus, in effect, the Mauryan arms just got rusted for over quarter of a century for lack of use or exercise. The Mauryan empire was exhausted by pacifism just as, in a later age, the Muslim rulers, towards the end of the Mughal era, were annihilated by moral weaknesses.

The Swami and Dharma

DHARMA (or *Dharman*) is the all-powerful custom that runs throughout the *Rigveda* and the *Atharvaveda-Samhitas*. The *Satapatha Brahmana*[1] holds that "the waters are the law (*Dharma.*") Hence, "whenever the waters come down to this (*terrestrial*) world, everything here comes to have been accorded with *Dharma.*" It follows that law is the foundation of individual and collective security. The supplement of the same work, *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* had it how *Brahman* (the first cause) made itself manifest in the form of Brahmanas and afterwards (through the responsive divine prototypes of these classes) in the form of Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. The author adds: "He (the Brahman)[2] was not strong enough; he created still further the most excellent *Dharma*; *Dharma* is the *Khastra* of the *Kshatra*; thenceforth even a weak man rules the stronger with the help of the *Dharma* as with the help of a king; thus the *Dharma* is called the True. . ." This was probably the first time that the principle of law was interpreted in terms of social order.

The ordained principle matches the Divine creation of the four classes of the Hindu society with that of law (*Dharma*), besides identifying law with the abstract principle of truth. In another place, in the same work, law (*Dharma*) and truth (*Satya*) are included in a straight sequence as the honey of all beings and all beings are described as the honey of these qualities.

Origin of Dharma

After declaring usage (*Achara*) to be the highest duty of all men, Vasishtha observes, on the authority of Manu (Manu's

[1] V 4.47.
[2] I 4.11-15.

lost *Dharmasutra*?), that usages (*Dharma*) of castes, families and regions are authoritative in the absence of the rules of the *Veda*. The consensus, however, was that the three sources of *Dharma* in the descending order of their authority are the *Vedas* (*Shruti*), the Sacred Tradition (*Smriti*) and good custom or usage or convention.[3] But the Sacred Canon remains the primary source of *Dharma*.

Whatever the origin of the concept of *Dharma*, it exercised a great influence on kingship. In ancient India, *Dharma* included both law and custom. Law was supreme—its supremacy an axiom in all Hindu political speculation. *Dharma* was defined in the *Jaiminiya Sutras* as something that is commanded. *Dharma* denoted the property of a thing in *Vaiseshika*, in *Nyaya* and in the Jaina metaphysics. A harmony—an order, divine and eternal—pervaded the universal law. Every part of the natural law embraced the world of human beings, and covered the ruler and the subjects alike. The principles that *Dharma* represented were the principles of a universal nature, and the mightiest of kings had to respect these. *Dharma* postulated the highest sacrifices on the part of the king, and in Bhisma's words, "of all Dharmas, rulership is the highest in society, for all times."

Kautilya is a confirmed believer in the moral order of the universe. According to Kautilya, there is a close relation between kingship and *Dharma* (religious duties). The king (*Swami*) is the fount of justice—*Dharmapravartaka*. It is the Swami's ordained responsibility to maintain *Dharma*—and to protect his subjects with justice. The observance of *Dharma* will lead the king to heaven.[4] To Kautilya, *Dharma* is supreme over *Artha*. For the State has been created by divine ordination to preserve *Dharma*. The State has a moral purpose to fulfil, the prime purpose being to bring about order. Politics may appear to be divorced from ethics in parts of the *Arthasastra* but such deviations are incidental, rather than belonging to the system of polity propounded by Kautilya.

Castes and Duties

In Kautilya's system, the Swami's duty is to maintain *Dharma*

[3] *A History of Indian Political Ideas*: U.N. Ghoshal; 1959.
[4] *Svadharmassvargava Prajadharmina rakshitah.*

in the higher conception, as the unattached life of active, dynamic duty. In the conventional sense, he also has to do his duty which is prescribed to an individual according to his standing in the social order. There is an unmistakable acknowledgement of the principles of *Varnashram Dharma* and the manifestation of a desire to apply it in the field of politics. The king is also required to stop activities prejudicial to the interests of the state or the performance of his regal functions. He is to acquiesce in local usages and customs which do not run contrary to his interests.

Long before the time of Kautilya, *Varna* was the basis of the social order. Like many other Indian philosophers before his time, Kautilya subscribed to the doctrine of *Trivarga*, that is, each individual doing his *Dharma* and following the postulates of *Artha* and *Kama*. In other words, each individual was to satisfy his spiritual needs by attending to his religious and moral duties (*Dharma*), to satisfy his material needs (*Artha*) by acquiring the necessities of life (property, wealth and power), and to satisfy his instinctive desires by following the dictates of love (*Kama*). *Moksha* (the attainment of liberation from human bondage), was accreted as the highest (and the fourth) objective of a complete life.

The social organisation had almost solidified with the dominating purposes of life associated with the first three castes, which vouchsafed the Brahmana a preordained sanctity. This was already an established tradition in the time of Kautilya. In fact, a man's station in life was preordained, though it is probable that the difference between the castes was functional rather than racial. The highest caste, the Brahmana, was to devote itself to the pursuit of intellectual, religious and philosophic activities. Consequently, *Satya*, *Ahimsa*, *Brahamacharya* and *Aparigraha* were prescribed for him as aids in his line of evolution. The development of power was the main pursuit of the *Ranjanya*. The king (*Swami*), the chosen representative of this caste, was allowed sometimes, under the aegis of his *Rajadharma*, to commit breaches of *Satya* and *Ahimsa*, as enjoined by the social and military obligations of the king to preserve his domain from foreign danger.

Specialisation in trade and commerce was the preordained duty of the Vaishya. Hence, Kautilya crystallised the defined

paths of *Varnas* in these words: "The king shall never allow the people to swerve from their appointed duties, *Dharma*, for whoever upholds his own duty, adheres to the usages of the Aryas, and follows the duties of the castes and orders—*Varnashram Dharma*—will attain happiness in this world as well as in the next."[5] The precedence of the Brahmana and the Kshatriya over the Vaishya and the Shudra was the symbol and guarantee of the moral order.[6] The Brahmana and the Kshatriya precede but never follow the Vaishya and the Shudra, "for otherwise there would be confusion between the good and the bad."

Kautilya and Plato on Rulers

There is a close resemblance between Kautilya and Plato in assigning to each individual a ranking in the social hierarchy, with corresponding duties and responsibilities. Plato, visualising his Ideal State, provides for three classes of people—the statesman, the warriors and the artisan class, each assigned its duties. Governing the state in accordance with the law of the land, the statesman was to make laws and codify them. The warrior's role was to protect the people from internal chaos and every external danger. The artisan labourers were to cater to the economic needs of the society. The principle of harmony permeating the social fabric, each class was to confine itself to the performance of its own duties, without meddling in the affairs of the other two classes. Each individual fulfilled the role assigned to him in his class, without considering himself an isolated self. Prescribing a rigorous training for the philosopher-guardians, Plato held that "unless political power and philosophy meet together. . ., there can be no rest from troubles for State or for all mankind." To him democracy was the very negation of moral government for it reduces simply to government by force of the majority.

Kautilya takes an apposite stand, and yet he is more liberal than Plato. The individual, according to Kautilya, enjoys unlimited freedom within the limitations set by the *Dharma* of the State. The stated objectives of the caste could be pursued

[5]Kautilya; *Arthasastra*: Book I, VIII, Ch. 2.
[6]*Satapatha Brahmana*: (VI. 4.4. 13).

by the individual. So far as the king was concerned, he was to provide the individual with every amenity of life so that the latter can attain the highest objective within his reach. If the king failed to provide these amenities to the individuals to carry on their avocations, he forfeited the right to be the king and had the option to quit the country.[7] The "saintly king"—similar to the one envisaged by Plato—should acquire wisdom by keeping company with the elders; see through his spies and establish safety and security by being ever active; maintain his subjects in the observance of their respective duties by exercising authority; keep up his personal discipline by receiving lessons in the sciences; and endear himself to the people by bringing them in contact with wealth and doing good to them. The king's responsibility for the welfare of the people was a heavy one. At his coronation he had to take the oath: "May I be deprived of Heaven, or life and of off-spring if I oppress you!"

Before we go into the rights and duties of the king, and how and why he was to regard himself as the agent of the people—and had to abide by law as laid down in the *Shastras*—it would be pertinent to go into the origin of kingship. This would also involve discussion on the origin and necessity of government. The rationalistic school—permeating the entire gamut of our ancient literature—assumes a state of nature which necessitates the rise of kingship. This is expressed in the concept of *Matsya Nyaya* (means 'the logic of the fish') or, as we may call it ('the law of the jungle'), whose operating principle is "might is right"—the bigger fish devouring the smaller ones. This anarchic state is described in the Kautilya *Arthasastra* and other *Arthasastras*, including epics or political works, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Smritis*, etc. People overwhelmed by the state of anarchy (*Matsya Nyaya*), accepted Manu, son of the Sun, as their king. His due was fixed as one-sixth of the crops in kind, one-tenth of the merchandise and a share of other crops in cash (*Hiranya*). Depending on these shares for his subsistence, the king's *Dharma* is to provide welfare and security to his subjects.

Reverting to the state of anarchy, it has to be mentioned

[7]Kautilya: *Arthasastra*; Book I, Ch. 13.

that it was not the original state of nature. In the beginning, according to the *Arthasastra* and the *Itihasas*, the state of society was one of ideal bliss, when people, mindful of humanity in general, showed ample regard for other members of the society, and led a natural moral life, unbounded by restricting conventions or hidebound customs. "Men ruled themselves by *Dharma* (law of nature) and respected each other's rights, though there was no king, no punishment or chastiser."[8] Unfortunately, this ideal state did not last long and was overtaken by a time of insecurity—chaos and even savagery, shattering the erstwhile Garden of Eden idyllic state. The divine order was quashed by the people to whom might became the order of the day. In the *Matsya Nyaya* (state of anarchy), people devoured each other like fishes. Destruction loomed large and the end of the world appeared close in this social state, described as *Arajaka* in the *Santi Parvan* of the *Mahabharata* and in the *Matsya Purana*. Such a state of society was manifestly unbearable. The only way to the harried people to retrieve the normalcy of social existence was to elect a brave individual who would protect them and their property and would be acceptable to all.

Origin of Kingship

Aitareya Brahmana, however, has another story about the origin of kingship: "The Devas and Asuras were fighting. The Asuras defeated the Devas. The Devas said, 'It is on account of our having no king that the Asuras defeat us. Let us select a king'. All consented".[9] The apocryphal story is of course a myth. It leads to the conclusion that in hoary times the institution of kingship was found indispensable in a state of war, which posited the necessity of a leader, designated as king. Once it was realised that regal authority was of paramount importance, the office of the king and royalty came to be glorified—but not necessarily divinised. That kingship was the normal polity of the early Aryans appears to be a credible, historical fact.[10] The word *Rajan*[11] is fairly current in the

[8] *Mahabharata*, Ch. 59.
[9] *Aitareya Brahmana*, I, 14.
[10] P. Basu: *Indo-Aryan Polity*; 1925; P. 54.
[11] *Ibid*, p. 55.

literature of the time; it means a king or an individual who rules. That the family unit was of the patriarchal type has been established, and the nation, being the family writ large, was ruled by the king. The hierarchy of gods and goddesses of the Aryans was also patriarchal which too supported the concept of kingship.

Two concepts are associated with the human origin of kingship. These are election and contract. And, these are more prominent in the Buddhist theory of the origin of kingship. Buddhism being an agnostic religion, kingship is a human institution to it—with the attendant concepts of the state of nature and contract. According to Buddhist canonical theory, the original State of Nature was synonymous with anarchy and led to the institution of kingship by popular election. The *Jataka* tales express in the popular style of folk stories the conception of kingship as a universal institution arising from popular election in the earliest times. Many of the tales end with morals bringing out the king's obligations to his subjects. The contribution of early Buddhist canonists to our ancient political thought is matched by that of the parallel *Smriti* conception of a fundamental law of the social order, indicated by the term *Dharma*.

The Hindu or the Brahmanic concept of the origin of kingship traces it to the gods. According to the myth, god Brahma composed a compendious treatise, consisting of one thousand chapters, and dealing with *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*. This was still the state of ideal society but a time could be visualised when men may not be so good and pious deeds will cease. God Brahma, the lord of the three worlds, was seized of the problem. The assembled gods then addressed Vishnu (*Prajapati*—the god of creation), "Please tell us, Almighty God, who is the mortal that deserves superiority over the rest of mankind." By a fiat, the god created a son, conceived of his *Tejasur* lustre, and named him Virajas.

The seventh descendent from this line, namely, Prithu Vainya, was crowned king. He ruled in accordance with the principles of *Danda-niti* composed by the god Brahma. It was *Danda-niti* (political science) that was deified along with *Raja Dharma*, not the kings. The coronation of Prithu Vainya was a grand event. Besides Brahmanas and Rishis, god Vishnu, god

Indra and other regents of the world, graced the occasion. Lord Vishnu blessed Prithu, "No one, O king, shall transcend thee!"

Having thus confirmed the power of the king for all time, Vishnu "entered the personality of that monarch, and, for this reason, the entire universe offered divine worship to Prithu."[12] Professor Bhandarkar adds: "Since that time there has been no difference between a *Deva* and *Nar-deva*, between a god and a human god, that is, between a god and a king." The king, the myth goes on, is actually a god who descended from the heaven to the earth, because his accumulated merit was exhausted, and he, a part of god Vishnu on the earth, took birth as a king fully conversant with *Danda-niti*. Thus, secure in his office with the help of the gods, no one can transcend the king, even though he is as mortal as any other human being. Thus the king, in Hindu mythology and belief, came to be called *Nara-deva* (that is, god in human form).

The king was originally regarded as a descendent of the sun, as we have noted already with regard to Manu, etc. That symbolism provides the key to the etymological meaning of the word *Chakravartin*, used for the 'universal monarch', which recurs in Kautilya's *Arthasastra*. Other Brahmanical treatises as well as Jaina and Buddhist works concur that preceded by the miraculous *Chakra*, a great ruler goes forth on his expedition of conquest of the world, and reduces to subjection all the other kings, princes and princelings. The supreme armour that he has is the *Chakra* of god Vishnu whose discus provides him absolute immunity against attacks from all enemy princes.[13]

A difference has to be drawn between the divine origin of kingship as applied in actual practice in India and in the west. Those who upheld the theory in India never defended or tolerated the misrule or oppression of any king. But the theory of the Divine Right of Kings "on its political side was little more than the popular form of expression for the theory of sovereignty." Blessed by Christian Apostles and Fathers in the west, it was stretched to such a pernicious extent that James II of

[12]D.R. Bhandarkar: *Lectures on the Ancient History of India.*

[13]The Pharaohs of Egypt were styled *Si-re* (or sons of Sun-god). They are depicted in sculptures as being protected by the rays emanating from the orb of the Sun.

England declared in Parliament that kings "make and unmake their subjects" and are "accountable to none but God." In India, on the contrary, even such a late work as the *Sukra-niti* says: "The king, who is virtuous, is a part of the gods. He who is otherwise is a part of the demons."

Righteous Path

The *Arthasastras* of India (Kautilya's included) never evince any partiality of the king to condone any misconduct or rationalise his acts of repression. According to Kautilya (and the writers of the other *Arthasastras*), the king must realise the paramount necessity of controlling his passions, such as *Kama, Krodha, Lobha.* He must fight ceaselessly *Shatru-shadvarga*—against the six enemies[14] of the king—lust, avarice, pride, anger, drunkenness and insolence. And, more, Kautilya enjoins on him to conquer the four special temptations: hunting, gambling, drinking and women. Instances are given of misguided rulers who fell prey to one or the other of these passions, and invited destruction on themselves, their kith and kin and their kingdoms. If the king fails—through these weaknesses or otherwise—to afford due protection to his subjects, he may well be taken to task—and punished for the neglect of people's welfare. Buddhist *Jatakas*[15] have stories of kings having been put to death by their subjects for transgressing the righteous path set for them. Megasthenes[16] quotes a stern custom which ordained that if the king becomes intoxicated, any of his women, who killed him, received special honour. A "king of unrighteous character and vicious habits" has obviously strayed from the path of his *Dharma.* "Though he is an emperor", says Kautilya, such a king will "fall a prey either to the fury of his own subjects or that of his enemies.[17] Elsewhere,[18] Kautilya defines "a king of righteous character" as "one who does what one has promised to do irrespective of good or bad results."

The king was warned that he should not re-enact in his own

[14]Kautilya, *Arthasastra,* Book I, 16.
[15]*Jataka* Nos. 73 and 432.
[16]McCrindle, *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian.*
[17]Kautilya, *Arthasastra.* Bk. VI, Ch. I.
[18]*Ibid.* VII. 5.

person the tragedies of the lives of Bhoja, Karala, Ravana, Duryodhana and other kings who failed to exercise self-control and perished together with their kingdoms and relations. As for the stories of kings who were taken to task for their misdeeds, the ones given by Kautilya belong to the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas* and did not belong to history. But Kautilya does take a definite stand on his position and quotes a number of previous authors. One of these quotes is: "When a people are impoverished, they become greedy; when they are greedy, they become disaffected; when they are disaffected, they voluntarily go to the side of the enemy or destroy their own master."[19] It is, however, probable that within Kautilya's ken were instances of disaffected people rising in revolt against a bad king and making a common cause with his enemy, or killing him. Thus Kautilya did not attach much importance to the theory of the divine origin of kingship. To him kingship was essentially a human and not a divine institution. The Swami was the embodiment of the principles of unity and social solidarity. It was his primary duty to see that each caste and each *Ashrama* scrupulously observed the duties assigned to it and that the customs of the Aryans were vigorously adhered to. From the vast abundance of his authority power passed to various associations and guilds within the State. Village communities enjoyed a considerable degree of self-government. These in fact constituted a number of little republics with whose administrative systems there was the least interference from the State.

Theories of Kingship

To Kautilya, the realist statesman, kingship is a human and not a divine institution. This recalls the early Vedic view as reflected in the extant literature, in which the monarch was a human and not divine. The king, as described in the *Rig Veda*, is not clothed with divinity. He is the sacrificer—as described in the *Yajurveda* and the *Brahmanas*—and becomes identified with *Prajapati* and other deities during the performance. This identification is a temporary investiture but the point to bear in mind is that everybody entitled to the sacrifice (along with the royal sacrificer himself) became elevated to a divine status. It

[19] *Ibid.* Bk VII. Ch. 5.

may, however, have constituted a factor in the ultimate foundation of the conception of the divine origin of kingship—as conceptualised in the epics and related works. Thus the king became identified with a host of divinities—like Surya, Brihaspati, Babhru (Vishnu), Vaisravana, Yana, etc. As the personification of *Dharma* (right and law) and *Danda* (good government), he is likened to a *Prajapati*. The king's divinity in all such cases was subjected to the limitations imposed by the *Smritis*.

A king, again, is an assorted incarnation of the eight guardian deities of the world—the Sun, Moon, Fire, Wind, Indra, Kubera, Varuna and Yama.[20] Seized with the urgent problem of affording protection to the universe, Lord Almighty picked eternal particles from the aforesaid deities—and thus the king was born. The king came to be blessed with the supernatural power of god Indra, the dazzle and lustre of the sun—can burn eyes and hearts of mortals.[21] Seated as he is on the throne of great Indra, no vestige of impurity can taint him.

The ancient Indian view about the origin of kingship shifted expediently from favouring the divine origin to the mundane one of human origin. Both the concepts stand out in Manu's writings. The limitations on the divine ruler consisted of the law of the king (or the Kshatriya's) order, the State law making it obligatory for the Swami to project the life and property of the subjects (and making the offenders accountable for their crimes against the society), as well as the implicit right of the ruled to oppose the delinquent ruler. The *Jataka* stories stretch the human origin conception to an extreme. Then there is the conception of Prithu—the eighth descendant from Vishnu—who like the Pharoah (regarded in Egypt as 'a god incarnate') is entitled to universal, passive obedience. This concept, enunciated by Narada, represents the other end of the scale. Hence the life of king is no bed of roses. It is circumscribed by a hard and exacting routine.

No distinction is made between the king's private and public duties. The "saintly king" who "overthrows the aggregate of the six enemies" is an ideal person in his private life. "Thus

[20] *Manu*. VII; 3, 4; V; 96 and *Sukraniti*. I. 72.
[21] *Manu*. VII. 5, 6.

with his organs of sense under control, he shall keep away from hurting women and property of others; avoid not only lustfulness, even in dream, but also falsehood, haughtiness and evil proclivities; and keep away from unrighteous and uneconomical transactions."[22]

The coronation oath[23]—using the modern phrase—constrained the king, by its very contractual nature, to be good and just. It read: "Let the Kshatriya be sworn through the great coronation of the Indra ritual. He is to repeat with faith, 'Between the night I am born and the night I die, whatever good I might have done, my heaven, my life and my progeny may be deprived of, if I oppress you." He further pledged himself, "I will see to the growth of the country, regarding it as God himself. I will never be arbitrary." The populace said, "Amen", following the royal pledge. *There obviously was no reference to any divine agency or power.* To Kautilya, therefore, the king is ever a public person who by virtue of his high office is dedicated ever to the service of the state. The Swami is the architect of Dharma and is a *Dharma-pravartaka* (fountain of justice) engaged constantly in protecting the subjects with justice and in the performance of acts of righteousness, which observances, as mentioned at the beginning, will lead him to heaven.

These concepts spring from the fact that the king is a confirmed believer in the moral order of the Universe, that he consistently holds *Dharma* to be supreme over *Artha*—the deep belief looming large in his consciousness that the state has been created by divine ordination to preserve Dharma. Hence, kingship represented the highest ideal of sacrifice on the part of the individual whose privilege it was to be the king. Ministers came and went but the king remained. To Kautilya[24] he was the Symbol of the State, even when he was powerless.

Jayaswal has traced the theory of contract to the Vedic hymns. The rituals of royal consecretion were based on elective principles.[25] The transition from elective to divine monarchy was brought about by the struggle between the Brahmanas and

[22]Arthasastra: Book I, Ch. 7.
[23]*Aitaryea Brahmana*, VIII, 18.
[24]*Arthasastra*: Book V, Ch. 6.
[25]*Raghuvamsa* and the *Arthasastra* support the theory of compact.

the Kshatriyas, which, according to a number of scholars, took place in the Vedic period. The Kshatriya (the ruler-warrior) dominated the society in the Vedic period. The proud, profligate Kshatriyas, having established hereditary monarchies, hated the Brahmanas, whom they considered wily and scheming, and just to spite them, the Kshatriyas would renounce the *Vedas* and become Jains or Buddhists. Gradually, the position changed in the post-Vedic period, when the Brahmana's (the priest's) vocation became lucrative, with corresponding sustained accretion in their power. The warring classes closed their ranks and the evolving classes stratified into castes, buttressed with hereditary succession.

Role of Brahmanas...

The theoretician-politician of the Kautilya brand knew too well as to which form of the government suited him to protect the traditional rights of the Brahmanas, the class to which he himself belonged. Kingship, not being divinely ordained to him, Kautilya did not hesitate to give preference to a chief of the fourth caste, (Shudra), like Chandragupta to heretical Kshatriyas.[26] In the *Mudrarakshasa*, Kautilya is quoted as calling him Vrishala. There is an exaggerated anti-climax to this elevation of a Shudra, at the cost of the acknowledged warriors, Kshatriyas. It is said in the *Vishnu Purana* (and some other *Puranas*) that the Kshatriya race ceased to exist with Mahapadma and "after him the 'kings of the earth' were of Shudra origin". This is hardly tenable in the face of historical facts, though it can be conceded that in the terrible conflict between the Brahamanas and the Kshatriyas, the numbers of the latter may have dwindled somewhat.

One cogent reason for the portrayal of a king as a mere mortal in the *Vedas* and the *Arthasastra* may probably have been the need to hide the low birth of restored and recognised kings of the Buddhistic period. Thus their royal power and prerogative were strengthened so that they protect better the interests of the Brahmanas.

[26]The *Puranas* and other works may differ as to the descent of Chandragupta Maurya but all of them seem to agree that he was a Shudra.

Consistent with their theistic conceptions and keeping in view their own privileges, the Brahmanas divinized royalty, irrespective of its birth and race. Such theistic notions were, of course, anathema to Jains or Buddhists, for their kingdom of righteousness was based on equality, a prince or mendicant being endowed with the same rights. The Brahmanas saw to it that they made their position vis-a-vis the king secure and invulnerable. The king was held answerable to God Varuna for any unrighteous conduct. According to the Brahmanic conception of political justice, the king was made to pay a fine to god Varuna—to be distributed among Brahmanas—each time he committed an unjust deed.

Manu put the fear of God in the mind of the king. The king was enjoined by the celebrated law-maker to be lenient to Brahmanas—he must never provoke them to anger, for the backlash could destroy him along with his army.

By and large, the Brahmanas presented no systematic theory, down the ages, of their role vis-a-vis the king and the State. It is no wonder that critical historians have characterised them as unscrupulous opportunists, some going as far as to call them mendacious and deceitful. To alleviate the sting of this allegation, it can be said that they had perforce to adjust themselves to changing events, and throughout, their driving force was the sum total of their social and political ambitions. Their inestimable qualities of adaptability and resilience were evinced in the manner they were instrumental in absorbing diverse social elements into the Hindu fold. In this process, they made concessions ever and anon while seeing to it that they (as well as the select Purohitas) retained their power over the king and his domain.

The influence of the Brahmanas was most potently exercised through the Purohitas—the priestly class—who saw to the final success of the sacerdotal order. Over and above the Brahmanas, the institution of Purohita exercised a powerful limitation on the powers of a king. Acting as adviser in religious matters, the Purohita encroached on the secular affairs as well, thus securing an ascendancy in the palace hierarchy that was hardly challenged, though it did not necessarily redound to the stability and security of the kingdom.

. . . and Purohitas

Directly or indirectly, in tune and out of tune, the importance of the Purohita (and impliedly, that of the Brahmanas) was brought home to the king and laity alike. Hence, Kautilya[27] while describing the qualities and creation of the councillors and priests, holds: "That Kshatriya breed which is brought up by Brahmanas. . .and faithfully knows the precepts of the *Shastras* became invincible. . ." The implication about the king's dependence on the Brahmanas and the Purohitas (for the performance of rituals, in accordance with the Shastras) is obvious. Following the *Smriti* authority, Kautilya maintains the social and legal privileges of the Brahmanas as well as the disabilities of the Shudras, the depressed classes and the heretics.

The shining example of Vashishtha—the Purohits of Iksvaku kings) was quoted again and again,[28] for it was due to him that they attained power, eminence and celebrity. Aphorisms, duly coined, redefined the indispensability of the Purohita to the king. A king bolstered by the Purohita was likened to the fire which is coupled with the wind, and a king without one, an elephant without the mahout. Following the Vedic tradition, Kautilya asks[29] the king to appoint a domestic Purohita and to obey his injunctions "like a disciple following his preceptor, a son following his father and a servant his master." The Purohita's good offices[30] are to be used by the king for recruitment of officials and for bolstering the morale of the army in the battlefield. In Kautilya's protocol[31] the royal Purohita (as well as the *rtving*, the Purohita conducting the sacrificial ceremony) occupies the first rank along with the Crown Prince, the Queen Mother, the Chief Queen and the Chief Minister. (These Purohitas[32] are to receive the same salary—48,000 *panas* per annum—as the Queen Mother and others mentioned in the hierarchy).

[27]Kautilya: *Arthasastra* I, Ch. 9.
[28]*Mahabharta: Adi Parvan* Ch. CL XXXVI, 11-16.
[29]*Arthasastra*, Book I, Ch. 9.
[30]*Ibid* I, 10 and X, 3.
[31]*Ibid* V, 3.
[32]*Ibid* V, 3.

Dharma and Danda

Dharma is synonymous with the statehood and with the *Dandadhara*. The king is the protector of *Dharma*, laws, justice, *Varna-ashramadharma*, order, *Svadharma* and duty. By dint of a judicious administration of *Danda* (coercive authority), the king can induce the subjects to be followers of *Dharma*. For Dharma is the foundation of all civic life, the veritable prop of virtue and the motivating force for men towards the fulfilment of righteousness. *Danda* is similarly instrumental in bringing about a well-regulated society, through constraining an individual to mind his own duty. *Dharma* is not conceivable in the *Arajaka* state of anarchy and, in the predetermined form of Danda, established what is good and righteous for all time for all members of the society. In simple terms, *Dharma* is *Danda*, for the latter as duty is the obverse of *Dharma* as law. According to Kautilya, each and every member of *Praja* is kept within his proper sphere of activities through an exemplary, even terrible exercise of the weapon of sovereignty.

It is relevant at this point to compare *Rajadharma* (the king's duties), as pronounced in the canonical *Dharmasastras* with the concept of *Arthasastra*, specially that of Kautilya, the most distinguished exponent of the technical *Arthasastra*. The art of government in a monarchic State figured in both *Arthasastra* and *Rajadharma*. Whereas the canonical writers of the latter merely mention the basic structure of the public administration, the political writers describe the institutions of the State in all aspects. Whereas *Rajdharma*—its sources going back to the eternal *Vedas*—may embrace the whole Duty of the Swami, *Arthasastra* details the rules of royal conduct primarily with reference to the interests of the State.

The Swami, however, has to rely on *Danda* to maintain the State as a going concern. Again and again, Kautilya reiterates that a state is what it is because it can coerce, compel or restrain the subjects. Once *Danda* is removed from the scene, the state loses its *raison d'etre* and practically vanishes. The Swami (the king as *Dandadharabhave*) is the concrete embodiment of the principle of omnipotence. With jurisdiction over all and sundry, the Swami is virtually uncontrolled by any power except by his self-imposed laws. Keeping all beings in *Svadharma* strait jacket and ensuring that they cooperate with each other

to realise happiness for all is the prime duty of the Swami, the protector of mankind. Towards this end, Kautilya—unlike the political writers who preceded or followed him—exalted the power of the king above all other constituents of the State. Kautilya was aware of the beneficent role of the king as defined in the *Yajurveda*. The priest addresses the king, according to this scripture, before the inauguration, "O Lord, here is thy kingdom, be thou its ruler and guide; remain steadfast in thy position, thou art here to see that agriculture may flourish and prosperity of the country may remain unbounded, that the people may be wealthy and that there may be proper nourishment of the people.[33] Categorically asserting the transcendental character of *Nyaya* (edicts of kings) and the enacted law,[34] Kautilya places the king as the fountain of justice.

As he puts it[35] explicitly: "Sacred law (*Dharma*), evidence (*Vyavahara*), history (*Charitra*) and edicts of kings (*Rajasana*), are the four legs of law. Of these four in order, the latter is superior to the one previously named. Thus Kautilya holds *rajasana* as identical with the king's decree (*Ajna*). The king could make laws and these were largely regulatory laws—not laws substantive that would make him a despot. By superseding the *Shastras*, the king could promulgate new laws, but their basic principles would be rooted in the *Shastras*. Dr. U.N. Ghoshal[36] observes: "In the history of our justice and political ideas this reference to the overriding authority of the king's decree over all other judicial process is of high significance, for it clearly and unequivocally enumerates for the first time the principle of the king's judicial sovereignty."

Expatiating on the theme, Kautilya observes, "*Dharma* as eternal truth holds its sway over the world", and explains *Sashana* as "the order of kings." The Swami exercises *Danda* (power) with impartiality, thus "maintaining both this world and the next."

[33] *Shukla Yajur Samhita*; IX, 22.
[34] *Arthasastra*, Book III, Ch. 1.
[35] *Ibid*, Book III, Ch. 1.
[36] *A History of Indian Political Ideas*, Oxford University Press, 1959.

Kautilya adds: "The king who administers justice in accordance with sacred law (*Dharma*), evidences (*Vyavahara*) history (*Samstha*) and edict of kings (*Nyaya*), which is the fourth, will be able to conquer the whole world bounded by the four quarters (*Chaturantam Mahim*)".

Kautilya, however, held[37] reason to be supreme, when the king's law ran into conflict with sacred law: "But whenever sacred law (*Shastra*) is in conflict with rational law (*Dharmanyaya*—king's law), then reason shall be held authoritative. . ." Having dealt with the ordained and other prerogatives of the Swami and the traditions and usages in regard to his *Dharma* we are inclined to agree with Kautilya so far as the supremacy of reason is concerned.

[37] *Arthasastra*, Book III, Ch. 1.

'Mandala' : Inter-State Relations and Diplomacy

THE art of diplomacy—the system of developing and preserving contacts between states—was fairly advanced in ancient India. Some of the principles of the diplomacy as then practised were excellent, even by modern standards. Though we do not have much information about inter-State relations during the Vedic period, the later development of diplomacy (in the sense of "the management of international relations by negotiatians") was remarkable, and theories and principles were evolved, which hold the field even today.

Despite lack of reference to *Rajamandala* or, simply, *Mandala*, (the Circle of States) in the *Rig Veda*, there are some indirect references that reveal that the Vedic Aryans were acquainted with some elementary principles of diplomacy. *Agni* is described as an itinerant messenger "serving in secret" as "an envoy to mankind." A somewhat advanced concept of diplomatic relations emerges in the *Atharvaveda Samhita* where Agni's role has a definitely political bias. A developed concept of *Rajamandala* was yet to emerge because the states were still tribal groupings, internally engrossed with keeping the non-Aryans under check. Besides, the relations between the various tribal organisations were largely peaceful.

Genesis of 'Mandala'

The concept of *Mandala* was laid down for the first time by Manu, the celebrated Hindu law-maker—and it was destined to become the foundation of the foreign policy of the State in ancient India. He clearly stated in the *Manusmriti*:[1]

[1]*Manu*, VII, 155-58.

"On the conduct of the middlemost (prince), on the doings of him who seeks conquest, on the behaviour of the neutral (king), and (on that) of the foe (let him) sedulously (mediate). These constituents (*Prakrtis* or form), briefly (speaking), the foundation of the Circle (of neighbours), besides eight others are enumerated (in the Institutes of Polity), and thus the total is declared to twelve."

The minister, the kingdom, the fortress, the treasury and the army are the five (other constituents of the Circle); for, these are mentioned in connection with each (of the first twelve, and thus the whole Circle consists), briefly (speaking of) seventy-two constituent parts. "Let (the king) consider as hostile his immediate neighbour and the partisans of (such a) foe, as friendly the immediate neighbour of his foe, and as neutral (the king) beyond these two." The relation of theory of *Mandala*, as clearly enunciated by Manu, with the elements of the State was apparent with the inclusion of the ministers, the kingdoms, the treasury, the fortress and the army as the five elements in the whole Circle of States.[2]

There is little internal evidence, in the *Ramayana* or the *Mahabharata* to support the view that the kings attached any importance to the *Mandala* theory in their inter-State relations. That war was an unavoidable, recurring contingency was well realised by the ancient Indian writers on polity, and they endeavoured to keep it in check by suggesting an expedient balance of power among the number of states. The *Mandala* theory of the *Smriti* and *Niti* writers was based on this premise.

A much more comprehensive picture of the *Mandala* theory —than that of Manu and its relative importance for the security and survival of the State—was presented for the first time by Kautilya in the *Arthasastra*. Candidly and realistically stated according to the needs of his day, Kautilya's theory of inter-State relationship was perfected to such an extent that it can be applicable in all ages.

Elucidating the basic premise, Kautilya observes: "The *Vijigishu* (conqueror), his and his friend's friend, are the three

[2]Upendra Thakur: *Some Aspects of Ancient History and Culture*; 1974.

primary kings constituting a Circle of States. As each of these three kings possesses the five elements of sovereignty, such as the minister, the country, the fort the treasury and the army, a Circle of States consists of 18 elements."

The three Circles of States having the enemy (of the Conqueror), the *Madhyama* king or the neutral king, at the centre of each of the three circles, are separate from that of the conqueror. Thus, there are four primary circles of states, 12 kings, 60 elements of sovereignty and 72 elements of states.

The rather terse statement may be thus analysed:

Circle I: Comprising the *Vijigishu* (the Conqueror), his friend and his friend's friend—(three rulers).

Circle II: Consisting of the enemy, his friend and his friend's friend—(three rulers).

Circle III: Comprises the *Madhyama* king, his friend and his friend's friend—(three rulers)

Circle IV: Consisting of the *Udasina* king (the neutral king), his friend and his friend's friend—(three rulers).

Since each of the 12 primary kings have five elements of sovereignty, the total number of the elements is 60. Again, these 60 elements with the 12 kings amount to 72 elements of State.

The *Vijigishu*, as an aspirant to absolute sovereignty, is enjoined by Kautilya to embark on a career of conquest, subdue the surrounding states, and shine forth as the supreme, undisputed monarch. Striking at the right moment, the Conqueror attains his objectives and at the same time sees to it that the balance of power is maintained amongst the kings of a circle. He has to take note of the fact that he is himself encircled, as it were, by a variety of relationships, ranging from absolute indifference to friendly alliance or set hostility. Using the Kautilyan terminology, the Conqueror's complex relationships may be spelled out: *Ari* (the enemy), *Mitraprakriti* (the friend of the *Vijigishu*), *Arimitra* (the friend of the enemy), *Mitramitra* (the friend of the friend of *Vijigishu*), and *Arimitramitra* (the friend of the enemy's friend) are the five kings in front of the Conqueror. Behind him are *Parshnigraha-sara* (friend of the rearward enemy) and *Akrandasara* (friend of the rearward

friend). The Circle, as mentioned heretofore, is completed by the intermediary kings, *Madhyama* and *Udasina* or neutral kings.

"Each of the 12 primary kings shall have their elements of sovereignty, power and end,"[3] says Kautilya regarding the inter-dependence of the states. Describing the objective of all State policy, Kautilya observes: "Strength is power and happiness is the end."[4] The main thrust of the *Mandala* theory was to acquire power and wealth for the Conqueror. Kautilya, however, analyses the concept of strength, and categorises it into three kinds. The first is the power of deliberating which he characterises as intellectual strength. The second kind of strength consists of the possession of a prosperous treasury. The third comprises a powerful army (denoting the basic strength of sovereignty) plus material power in terms of physical strength. To Kautilya, the military genius that he was, it is axiomatic that the possession of power and happiness in a greater measure makes a king superior to another—and, in a less degree, inferior and in equal degree, equal. Hence, king is enjoined to endeavour to increase his power and elevate his happiness.

Six Expedients

The Circle of States, mentioned above, was one of the three main concepts governing relations between states, as enjoined by Manu and political thinkers who followed him. The other two were the policies (*Upaya*) and the expedients (*Sadgunavidhi*).

Treaty (*Sana*), gift (*Dana*), punishment or war (*Danda*) and sowing dissension (*Bheda*) were the four means of diplomacy. The six expedients of policy were: Co-operation (*Sandhi*); hostilities, marching or military expedition (*Yana*); readiness for attack—or halting (*Asana*); division of troops (*Dvaidhibhava*) and, subordinate alliance, i.e., seeking the protection of a superior power against possible aggression or for attacking a powerful foe (*Samasraja*). These expedients were resorted to only when the three methods of diplomacy, of treaty (*Sana*), gift (*Dana*) and sowing dissension (*Bheda*), had failed.

It appears that, by and large, Kautilya attached the greatest importance to the Circle of States (or *Mandala*) theory, among the three concepts of the theory of foreign relations. The six-

[3] & [4] *Arthasastra*, Bk. VI, Ch. 2.

fold policy (*Guna*) actually grew out of the *Mandala* concept. In other words, the Circle of States is the source of the six forms of policy—peace, war, observance of neutrality, marching, alliance and making peace and waging war. Following the six-fold policy, the king—according to Kautilya—should try to progress from a condition of deterioration (*Decline*) to that of stagnation (equilibrium) and thence to progress.

At this point, it is pertinent to clarify the position and nature of kings constituting the *Mandala* (Circle of States). The conqueror is the king who has the best elements of sovereignty as well as very good character. The king whose territory is contiguous to that of the Conqueror is the enemy. The king whose territory is separated from the Conqueror's by that of the enemy is the friend of the Conqueror. The king whose territory is contiguous to that of the Conqueror and his enemy —and he can help or resist both—is the mediatory (*Madhyama*) king. The king who has all the traits of the *Madhyama* king, but whose territory is not contiguous to the Conqueror, his enemy and the *Madhyama* king is the neutral (*Udasina*) king. Kautilya used the term 'a natural friend' for a king whose friendship with the Conqueror went back to the former's father and grandfather. The king whose friendship was sought by the Conqueror for his self-protection was 'an acquired friend.'

Vijigishu's Policies

"The extensive body of rules concerned with inter-State relations in Kautilya's work", observes Dr. U.N. Ghoshal[5] "contains the most complete as well as the most important contribution on the subject made by our ancient thinkers." Kautilya shows[6] how the six-fold policy (*Guna*) produces the efforts for "achieving a work" (*Vyayama*) and "for securing the result" (*Sana*) while it bears fruit in the shape of progress of the State. Explaining the constituent elements (*Prakritis*) of the State system, Kautilya mentions the three Powers (*Shaktis*) which consist of the elements, called the power of (the king's) counsel (*Mantrashakti*), that (of the king's) material resources (*Prabhu-shakti*) and that (of the king's) energy

[5] *A History of Indian Political Ideas*, 1959.
[6] *Arthasastra*, Bk. VI, Ch. 2.

(*Utsahashakti*); these are paraphrased, respectively, to mean the strength of knowledge, that of the revenue and the army, and that of prowess. The test of a strong, a weak, and an equal king—Kautilya continues—is the possession of the mentioned powers and successes in the greater or less or equal measure.

The objective of the Conqueror—absolute attainment of power and success or at least the denial of the same to his enemy—is developed as an important principle. The *Vijigishu* ('Conqueror' or 'Aggressor') should conclude peace when he finds himself to be weaker than the enemy, wage war when he finds himself to be stronger, take to neutrality—when there is a stalemate, attack when he is very strong, take refuge when he is weak, and adopt the dual policy in a situation when he finds that he is in need of extraneous help. Kautilya explains the conditions justifying severally[7] the application of the six types of foreign policy towards the attainment of Progress. Detailing a number of contingencies, in which the king expediently uses different methods to achieve a double target—to promote his own productive works at the expense of those of his enemy and of strengthening his own political as well as military position to the detriment of that of the enemy—Kautilya takes the argument further as to how Progress is equally attainable by means of peace and war. The basic principle involved is that while Progress should be the fundamental objective of all types of foreign policy, the particular type should be selected so as to ensure the maximum advantage for the king.

Discussing the vital policies of war and peace,[8] Kautilya advises the *Vijigishu* to make peace with a king who is his equal or superior and he should wage war with one who is inferior to him. The selection of the policies of peace and war is treated by Kautilya as involving a military as well as a political problem. His views regarding the Aggressor marching his troops against the enemy differ from those of the earlier *Arthasastra* writers. To him the selection of the policy of attack is a military problem in the widest sense of the term. Again, differing from the older masters, Kautilya assigns equal importance to the three principal factors of power, peace and time.

[7] *Arthasastra*, Bk. VII, Ch. 1.
[8] *Ibid* Bk. VII. Ch. 3.

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[6] *Arthasastra*, Bk. VI, Ch. 2.

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[7] *Arthasastra*, Bk. VII, Ch. 1.
[8] *Ibid* Bk. VII. Ch. 3.

An important issue discussed by Kautilya[9] is the old *Arthashastra* concept of inter-State relations vis-a-vis the attitude of subjects towards the king. Taking an original stand, Kautilya recommends that the king whose subjects are oppressed should be attacked rather than the one whose people are impecenuous and avaricious—for the latter remain loyal to their king and remain unaffected by the intrigues of the enemy. Thence, Kautilya graduates to the eventuality when two kings are vulnerable to the Aggressor's advance; the latter should attack the powerful but unjust ruler and not the weak but just ruler. The reason for the preference was that the former would receive no help from his subjects. Thus Kautilya indirectly served the warning to the king not to ill-treat his people, lest they become impoverished, greedy or disaffected—and, for him progressively dangerous. "A disaffected people rise against their master along with his enemy."[10] The king is told that disaffection of the subjects is a greater danger to the security of the State than their poverty or greed.

Kautilya has a reassuring word for the weak king,[11] whose age-old problem of standing up to the powerful aggressor (discussed by former *Arthasastra* writers) is treated from a refreshing angle. Taking a stand, at variance with previous authorities like Bharadvaja and Vishalaksha, Kautilya enjoins the weak ruler to seek refuge with a still more powerful ruler (than his aggressor), or he should combine with various such kings who are equal in power and resources to his enemy king. If such kings are not available, he should continue with a number of inferior but enthusiastic kings. At the worst, he should take shelter in a fort that is invincible. He should face the danger, posed to him by the enemy king in one of the three ways—by treaty or by a battle of intrigue or via an unrighteous fight. Intrigue and violence predominate among the means to be adopted by the weak king against his powerful enemy,

To determine the proper time and place for making an attack on the enemy, Kautilya observes that when a king finds that his enemy is enmeshed in such a troublous situation (like

[9]*Ibid*, Bk. VII, Ch. 5.
[10]*Arthasastra*, Bk. VII, Ch. 5.
[11]*Ibid*, Bk, XII, Ch. 1.

epidemic or other calamity) that cannot be remedied, or his enemy's subjects are oppressed and improverished, then he marches after proclaiming war. The *Vijigishu* desirous of expanding his territory should keep engaged his neighbouring enemy and should march against a third enemy. After having conquered that enemy of equal power, he should take possession of his territory.

It is remarkable that Kautilya did not subscribe to the earlier practice of making captives and enslaving the sons and wives of the defeated kings. He took a humane and realistic view, asking the *Vijigishu* to instal the fallen dynasty on the throne and treat the defeated princes with honour and kindness. In the case of the vassal's death, his son should be enthroned and, in the changeover, the least disturbance should be caused to the subjects of the feudatory states. He concluded the concerned chapter with these words,[12] linking his injunction with the Circle of States.

> Whoever covets the land, things, sons and wives of the kings whom he has either slain or bound in chains will cause provocation to the Circle of States and make it rise against himself, also his own ministers employed in his own territory will be provoked, and will seek shelter under the Circle of States, having an eye upon his life and kingdom.

The above evinces the preoccupation of Kautilya with the internal functioning of the State. Since small states flourished traditionally, wars and other inter-State conflicts could not be avoided. It was this geopolitical milieu that was reflected in the prevailing political thought. The doctrine of *Mandala* was the natural outgrowth, with the consequent directions to the concerned king as to the kind of diplomacy they had to follow. That a State would somehow come into conflict with its neighbours was manifest, for it would be difficult to march troops through foreign territory. Hence, the security—and expansion —of the State was the most important goal of foreign policy of the Conqueror, and, in pursuit of this objective, Kautilya advocated all methods of warfare, fair or foul. The latter modes

[12] *Arthasastra*, Bk. VII, Ch. 16.

were specially prescribed by Kautilya when the potential Conqueror did not possess absolute superiority over his enemy. Otherwise, he was asked to follow the chivalrous code (*Dharma Yuddha*). The major theme, however, was the dependence of peace upon power. This dynamic concept of *Mandala* was Kautilya's unique contribution to the theory of diplomacy.

'Dharma Yuddha'

As the Hindu science of warfare took cognisance of both ethics and valour, to wage war without regard to moral and traditionally accepted standards, was deemed a degeneration of the spirit of humanity and the institution of war into animal brutality. Whatever the cause of the hostilities, of the two kinds of war—*Dharma Yuddha*, based on *Dharma*, and *Kuta Yuddha*, resting on treachery, intrigue and diplomacy—the former was held to be righteous, and the latter, otherwise, and hence looked down on. Kautilya, well conversant with these concepts, introduced in the *Arthasastra*, a political expression, which was not used before his time. The term was *Dharma Vijaya*, most probably semantically an equivalent of *Dharma Yuddha*.

The *Vijigishu*, according to Kautilya, was to be content with the acknowledgement of his suzerainty by the kings of the defeated or conquered states. His dominant motivation was supposed to be the avoidance of war and needless bloodshed at all costs. The thrust of diplomatic relations with other states (and with foreigners) had to have the tilt for peace, the attempt all the time being to win over nieghbouring states through conciliation. Thus, the dominating personality of the *Vijigishu* would evoke esteem from the states and this would be the pivot for the Circle of States to maintain pacific relations with one another. In course of time, this concept was to bloom forth in the Thirteenth Rock Edict of Ashoka, who was himself born and bred in the Kautilyan School of Politics.

Thus Kautilya's contribution to diplomacy lay not only in the *Mandala* theory, with its postulate of peace through power, but also the value he attached to *Dharma Vijaya*. Hence, he treated the person of the *Duta* (diplomatic messenger) and/or ambassador as inviolable. The person of all the dignitaries involved in negotiation, treaties and alliances, is similarly invested with immunity and even sanctity. It was only when

the attempts of these diplomatic agents at reconciliation and compromise, and the use of expedients of policy, severally and conjointly, failed that retaliation was to be resorted to. This would take the form of *Sama* (treaty) and *Dama* (gift or bribery) against inferior powers, and the employment of *Bheda* (sowing dissension) and *Danda* (war) towards superiors and equals. But when all diplomatic overtures and peaceful expedients failed, the *Vijigishu* had to make all-out efforts to attack the enemy and to defeat him completely.

Envoys Classified . . .

Thus, it was natural that diplomatic service—the official apparatus to regulate relations between independent states by the process of negotiations—should grow in importance as the art of diplomacy gradually became more complex. A diplomatic agent was selected with great care. It was imperative that he should be a man of high moral character and belong to a noble family. Manu did not lay down any principles for the selection of an envoy but dealt with the matter on the practical plane, though he realised the importance of diplomacy for the inter-State negotiations that were constantly going on amongst the many states. The ambassador, called *Duta*, which literally means a messenger, who was deputed to foreign courts with a special mission—played the most important role in the implementation of the objectives of the six-fold policy of the State in the field of foreign affairs.

Kautilya[13] puts it simply when he notes that "whoever has succeeded as a councillor is an envoy," presumbly because the selection and training of high govenment officials was rigorous and their good performance was guaranteed by continuous scrutiny. In any case, the assignment of an ambassador was an onerous one and he did not have an elaborately-graded staff at his disposal as the modern counterpart has. The very best men were selected for the post of envoys. Hailing from a noble

[13]Kautilya used the word *Naya* for 'diplomacy'. His dictum: *Nayajnan prthvim jayati*: "a king who understands the true implications of *Naya* conquers the whole earth." Discounting the pardonable exaggeration, we can deduce the premium that Kautilya placed on the efficiency of diplomacy in the conduct of inter-State relations.

family, well versed in all the sciences, the ambassador possessed an excellent memory that would stand him in good stead in reproducing actual conversations that he had with V.I.Ps. He had to possess tact in an abundant degree to time his words and deeds and he must easily comprehend the meaning of facial gestures and expressions.

Kautilya is more specific when he classifies envoys in four categories. What we may call a Category 'A' (*Duta*) had the rank and qualifications of a minister. The office, it is stated, should be entrusted to one who had succeeded in discharging his duties in the Council of Ministers. He most probably resembled the ambassador of modern times. The second office, category 'B' (*Nisristartha*), should be given to one who possessed the qualifications of an ordinary minister. The next class, that is, Category 'C' (*Parimitarthah*), had the same qualifications but less by one-fourth. As his name implies, he should be entrusted with a definite mission. The *Sasanahara*, belonging to the fourth class, (Category 'D'), was an inferior kind of envoy who only carried royal writs from court to court.

The powers of the envoys matched the class to which they belonged. The ambassador of 'A' category was invested with full powers of negotiations, but the 'B' and 'C' category envoys were only entrusted with definite missions and could not exceed the briefs given to them. The envoy of the last category was a mere privileged messenger who had only to pass on the message of the king (or other royal writ) and fetch the reply. Manu had not categorised ambassadors as Kautilya did, the latter thus effecting an advance on his great predecessor in the field of diplomacy.

That there were no permanent embassies[14] of the present-day type in those days does not adversely affect the categorisation by Kautilya. *Duta*, the envoy of Category 'A', did, more often than not, stay in the country of his accreditation for a long duration of time, for his mission usually was to settle the balance of power in his master's favour. In other words, by

[14]Though kings in ancient India received ambassadors, respected them and negotiated with them, the system of inter-state relationship with a permanent machinery started in the West towards the end of the 15th century when European state-system was being established.

his continued presence, the envoy would prepare the ground for his king's ultimate success. The second and third types of ambassador did similar chores, though in a lower key. The last category, as already mentioned, was a privileged messenger.

. . . their Duties

Kautilya's description[15] of the duties of an ambassador may be succinctly summarised:

> Transmission of missions or the views of his State; maintenance of treaties; issues of ultimatums; gaining of friends; creating intrigues; sowing dissension among friends; fetching secret force; carrying away the force, relatives and gems; gathering information about the movement of spies; breaking of the treaties of peace; winning over the favour of the envoy and government officers of the enemy.

The envoy—added Kautilya—shall additionally cultivate friendship with the officers such as those in charge of wild tracts, border areas of cities and countryside. He shall also contrast the military stations, economic strength and strongholds of the country (to which he is accredited) with those of his master. He shall ascertain the size and area of forts—their assailable points—as well as the location of special treasuries containing valuable things. He had to report all secret information to the king in a cipher code—*Gudhalekha*. This was so, for the 'embassy', such as it was, was to be the control contre of espionage in the assigned state. The envoy remained there to supervise the work of the spies, to win over the discordant elements, extend help secretly to the 'fifth column' activists, and thus impair the internal security of the State. "These instructions are as valid today as when they were written in the fourth century B.C.," says Sardar Panikkar, probably the doyen among the diplomat-writers of the Nehru era.[16]

Whatever the rank of the envoy, he played a very important part in formulation and execution of foreign policy—with

[15] *Arthasastra*, Bk, Ch. 9, Sec. 32.

[16] K.M. Panikkar: *The Principles and Practice of Democracy*, 1952.

its ramifications looming large on the whole range of inter-State relations. The king was advised by Kautilya to be very careful about the reports sent by the envoy. To enable the envoy to function freely, his diplomatic immunity, obtaining already under a well-estabished inter-State convention, was continued in Kautilya's time. An ambassador's person was held inviolable. He could not be put to death or imprisoned because his person was traditionally inviolable so long as he discharged his duties properly. He was enjoined to deliver his master's message (to the king of the country of his assignation) even at the risk of his life. There is no disagreement among ancient political writers on this issue. But Shamasastry's study of the *Arthasastra* reveals that in the Mauryan era an ambassador could be arrested and even awarded death penalty for grossly transgressing his privileged functions.

The functions of an envoy in the Kautilyan state and those of an ambassador in the modern State are much the same. Safeguarding the territorial, political and economic integrity of the State was then the prime function of the envoy, as it is now. By the use of means, peaceful or otherwise, the ambassador was to ensure the safety and security of the State. The purpose of diplomacy, then as now, is to be ever on the alert and render infructuous the policies of other countries (or nations) which militate against the interests of one's own country. The diplomat has these days to play the complex dual role of Playboy-Gentleman, Historian-Commercial Trade expert and Columnist-Publicist.

There are, however, some differences between the ancient and modern diplomacy. Ancient diplomacy of the Mauryan era, like the classical diplomacy of the West, was a secret diplomacy. Modern diplomacy (ever since Woodrow Wilson's dictum of "open covenants . . . openly arrived at") is on the high road to becoming open or popular diplomacy, whose worst features (comparative lack of decorum, use of the language of abuse, appeal, over the heads of governments, direct to the people in the adversary camps, etc.) sometimes erupt at public forums like the United Nations. The prophet of 'open diplomacy' that President Wilson was, he did not foresee that there was all the difference in the world between "open covenants" and "openly arrived at"—that is, between policy and negotia-

tion. The general objectives of foreign pclicy may be open (thanks to the press and media, and the role of politicians in democracies, these will be open anyway) but diplomatic negotiations, by which these are carried out, must remain secret. With the New Diplomacy (also called "democratic diplomacy" or "diplomacy by conference"), as practised at the United Nations and its affiliated organisations, the horizon of diplomacy has been broadened, but the diplomatic methods of the past, going right back to days of Kautilya, have their value and relevance even today.

Role of Spies

It is pertinent to advert to espionage which was highly developed in the Mauryan times and figured prominently in inter-State relations. The utility of spies in the foreign service sometimes exceeded that of the envoys, and spying was the most important activity in the war period. Kautilya describes a complex, well-knit, and well-organised system of espionage, systematically used for maintenance of internal security and for foreign relations. Its genesis going back to the Vedic period, espionage[17] had reached the nadir of its perfection by Kautilya's time, and he—adding his own meaningful, frequent observations —reflected the excellence that it had reached.

A big Department of Spies correlated and collated the reports received from the spies at home and abroad. The Department scrutinised the activities of the spies and directed them, as well as the spies who spied on the spies. The correctness of a spy's report was validated by checks through other sources. Spies adopted all forms of garbs to carry on their activities. There were women spies under the garb of wives. Others posed as "ascetics with shaved heads of braided hair" and operated in enemy territory performing all manner of trickeries to entice the king and courtries to their fold. Spies pretended to be "the gods of fire", using different contrivances, which included "delusive contrivances"—their preparations duly spelled out by

[17]The Greek writer, Arrian, was of the view that Indian spies should be treated as a class, for their number was very large. Megasthenes characterises them as 'overseers,' employed to keep watch all around and report to the king.

Kautilya.[18] Likewise, poisons used by spies are described in detail. Women, including prostitutes, were used as spies, the strategams pandering to known weaknesses of the enemy. The spies would strike down the enemy king wherever he was known to go unguarded. Thus, in external spying, or, for that matter, in diplomacy, there was no morality. Little surprise was occasioned by unprovoked aggression or violation of the neutrality of other states. Treachery and falsehoods compounded by stark immorality comprised the *modus operandi* of spies and diplomacy too often was equated with deceit and fraudulent activities. The enemy, lulled by spies into a false sense of security, was attacked, taken by surprise and vanquished.

Treaty Relations

Various kinds of treaties between independent kings are discussed by Kautilya. One of these was an alliance with another State with the ultimate target of forming a coalition against an enemy. Kautilya also expatiates on various types of treaties concluded between a powerful and a weaker state when the latter is threatened by the former. These are divided into three broad categories, according as the essential conditions are the cession of territory, payment of money, or promise of military aid by the weaker State. These various kinds of treaties are general indications of the relations between states of unequal power.

Kautilya recognises the fact that the enforcement of a treaty proved a difficult problem. An oath was sometimes affirmed for the fulfilment of the terms of the Treaty. Differing from the school of political writers who thought that taking the oath was not enough and that hostages were necessary, Kautilya expounded the principle that "whoever is rising in power may break the agreement of peace." At the same time, he recognised the fact that the relations of the feudatories with the suzerain were often clouded by suspicion and occasionally characterised by treachery and ferocity on one side or the other. In such situations, moral considerations are conspicuous in Kautilya's statecraft by their absence, the sole guiding principle being the welfare of the State.

[18] *Arthasastra*, Bk, XIV, Ch. 2.

Discussing the sub-types of treaties (*Sandhi*), Kautilya observes[19] that in the event of two kings coming together in an expedition, the acquisition of land is better than that of money and the latter is better than the acquisition of an ally. By gaining land—argues Kautilya, with his superior political insight, as compared to his predecessors—the king can gain both the ally and the money and by gaining money he can gain the ally.

Vis-a-vis treaty relations between states, Kautilya reiterates this view—a frank recognition of the unique purchasing power of land on the one hand, and the mercenary nature of the foreign ally on the other. Adjusting all types of foreign policy to the single objective of Progress (as explained earlier), Kautilya observes, in the Chapter[20] dealing with the State-system, that the Aggressor (literally, the leader), by the application of the Six-fold Policy, shall raise himself from a position of Decline to that of Equilibrium and thence to that of Progress. He defines the Aggressor's sphere of influence: the whole territory—says Kautilya—extending north to south from the Himalayas to the Southern sea and stretching in the reverse direction for a distance of 1,000 *Yojanas*,[21] is called the sphere of the *Chakravartin* (the 'world ruler'). The acquisition of dominion is further applied to a scheme of 'world conquest' on a progressively diminishing scale—that is, the king's acquisition of dominion over his neighbours on a diminishing scale corresponding to his progressively limited foreign connections.

Mauryan Policies

Kautilya's principles found ready application by the Mauryan emperors in their inter-state relations. Following the guidelines of his friend and mentor, Chandragupta Maurya became the first great historical emperor of India. Following the appropriate policies as laid down by Kautilya, Chandragupta expanded the Mauryan power to its farthest limit within the country and increased his contacts with the powers abroad. Even while trying to uproot the Nandas with the help of Alexander

[19]*Arthasastra*, Bk. VII, Ch. 9.
[20]*Ibid.*, Bk. VI, Ch. 2.
[21]One *yojana* is approximately 5 miles.

(which succour was denied by the Macedonian invader). Chandragupta was following the diplomatic policy as enunciated by Kautilya, and ultimately, thanks to the variety of stratagams adopted by Kautilya, his expedition against the Nandas was crowned with victory, and he not only liberated the Punjab from the Macedonian yoke but established his hegemony as the Aggressor-*Chakravartin* over a large part of India.

After ousting Seleukos and forcing him to conclude a treaty, the victor, Chandragupta, made a generous gesture by presenting him 500 elephants. In establishing friendly relations with the Greek king, Chandragupta, again, was following the policy of goodwill and co-operation with the conquered enemy, as defined by Kautilya. Seleukos sent Megasthenes as his envoy to the court of Chandragupta, where he wrote his famous book, *Indika*, on Indian affairs. Chandragupta's court received many foreigner V. I. Ps, mostly Greeks[22] from Syria. The relations with the Greeks thus established were continued by Bindusara and Ashoka, who had an exchange of permanent embassies with the Hellenistic powers of the west. Actually, Ashoka despatched royal missionaries to the Hellenistic monarchies of Syria, Egypt, Greece, Macedonia and Epirus (or Corinth). Megasthenes continued at Bindusara's court as the Greek ambassador and was followed by Deimachus. Bindusara and Ashoka extended the contacts with the Greeks to secure services of Greek philosophers and administrators. The vast Mauryan empire, that had culminated in Ashoka's excellent diplomatic contacts with foreign powers, quite in conformity with the Kautilyan diplomacy of peace and war, came to an abrupt end with the exit of Ashoka.

Relations with Republics

The *Arthasastra* of Kautilya discusses the problem of aristocratic clan-republics (*Sangha* and *Gana* in the political sense) in detail[23], in the context of the king's policy towards the republics, and their reciprocal policy towards him. He

[22]Diodorus and Strabo recorded that the Mauryan administration looked after the Greek visitors very well. Their security was supervised by a special municipal board.

[23]*Arthasastra*, Bk. XI, Ch. 1.

divides *Sanghas* into two classes—the political type, whose consul bore the title of Raja and the military-cum-agricultural-and-trading type, who did not allow this title.

About the first type, Kautilya says: "The corporations of Lichchhivika,[24] Vrjika, Mallaka,[25] Madraka, Kukura, Kuru, Panchala and others, live by the title of a Raja." Regarding the other category, he writes: "The corporations of warriors (*Kshatriyasreni*) of Kambhoja and Saurashtra and other countries, live by agriculture, trade and wielding weapons." This type made military training compulsory and each such state was practically a nation-in-arms. These states were also rich because much attention was devoted to agriculture and industry. The Kambhojas[26] head the martial responsibilities mentioned in the *Arthasastra*. Panini had shown that the non-monarchical or *Sangha* form of government was much more popular than the monarchical one. These republics offered stubborn resistence to Alexander.

Kautilya starts with the observation that the acquisition of a *Sangha* is the best among a king's acquisitions of allies and troops, for the *Sanghas*, because of their tendency towards collective action, are invincible against enemies. The king should win over the *Sanghas*, that are favourably disposed towards himself, "with conciliation and gifts" (bribery), and those, that are the reverse, by means of dissension and force. Elaborating the latter doctrine, Kautilya says:

> Spies, gaining access to all these corporations, and finding out jealousy, hatred and other causes of quarrel among them should sow the seeds of a well-planned dissension among them. . . spies, under the guise of teachers (*Acharya*) should cause childish embroils among those of mutual enmity on occasions of disputations about certain points of science,

[24]Buddhist sources confirm that the Lichchavis called their consul the 'Raja'.

[25]The Mallas almost disappeared in the Mauryan time, though individual Malla families appeared in Nepal and Tirhut, up to the 11th century. As for the Lichchavis, they reappeared in Nepal, but under a monarchical form of government.

[26]Situated in eastern Afghanistan, these were mentioned in Ashoka's inscriptions as a community next to the Gandharas.

> arts, gambling or sports. Fiery spies may occasion quarrel among the leaders of corporations by praising inferior leaders in taverns and theatres. . .

Likewise, following the king's double line of policy against the republics, the spies were to foment quarrels between different *Sanghas*, between executive officers (*Mukhyas*) of the *Sanghas*, between the loyal and disloyal elements of the population, etc. In these and other quarrels, the king should support the inferior party with men and money and instigate it to attack the other faction. After mentioning the machinations of women spies, Kautilya, somewhat inconsistently, takes the reverse posture and suggests how the executive held by the *Sangha* should protect himself against the king. He should win goodwill and take the advice of all men. Kautilya, however, warns the king that the family group (*Kula Sangha*) is difficult to conquer. This *Sangha*, by virtue of its joint sovereignty, does not oppress the subjects as vicious *Sangha* rulers may do, and, therefore, it enjoys permanent rule. It appears that from very early times there were *Ayudhavija Sanghas* in India. Loosely translated as 'military corporations', these republics among others mentioned above, comprised a peculiar feature of ancient Indian military tradition. Kautilya also refers to *Vrishni Sangha*. Coins bearing their legends have been found and testify to the existence of this *Gana*.

The application of the king's policy of dissension and force against the recalcitrant *Sanghas* exposed the characteristic weakness of these states, namely, their tendency towards disunion. As a result of this calculatedly hostile policy, the weaker republics succumbed. When the monolithic empire established by the prowess of Chandragupta Maurya, aided by the military-diplomatic genius of Kautilya, suffered a decline, many of the older republics rose up again and, as Dr. Shiva Nandan Mishra[27] put it, "history felt the glow of their vigorous existence." Dr. Mishra adds: "It is difficult to say whether those republics which survived the Mauryan imperialism underwent some constitutional changes."

The postscript of history, however, is that the ruthless

[27] *Ancient Indian Republics*, 1976.

onslaughts of successive empires—the Mauryan, Sunga, Kushana and the Gupta monarchs—inflicted deadly wounds on the body politic of these republics. We conclude with the observation of Sri Aurobindo that "these republics were more suited for defence than for aggression and the unsympathetic imperial monarchists like Kautilya weakened them by sowing the seeds of disunion and hatred."

'Dandaniti'—its Scope and Significance

"DANDA is the cause of *Dharma*, and the king who knows this should inflict *Danda* even upon his (guilty) father." Thereby hangs a myth, belonging to the pre-political condition of man. Once upon a time, he was happily ruled by gods and sages. Unable to rule, the gods withdrew from the scene, but men took to evil ways. To mend the situation, the gods created a human king, endowing him with the worthy attributes of multiple-deities. Then followed the Divine creation of law which was identified with *Danda*—the coercive authority of the ruler. This myth is an explanation of the genesis of political concepts and forms a link between the thought of the *Brahmanas* with that of Manu, the ancient law-giver, and Bhishma in the *Mahabharata*.

Early Exponents

The king's ordained duty of administering justice can be traced to the *Rig Veda* period. Indirect evidence shows that it was continued in the time of the *Yajus-Samhitas* and the *Brahmanas*. In the period of the early *Smritis* (or *Dharama-sutras*), *Danda* as coercive authority, or the infliction of punishment, was deemed as one of his salient activities. Gautama,[1] explaining the duties of the king, shared with the higher classes, holds that the king's duties consist of extending security to all creatures and the lawful infliction of punishment (*Nyayyadandatvam*). Expatiating on the theme further, Gautama adds that the king must restrain those who

[1]Book X, Ch. 8.

do not restrain themselves. In another place, Gautama says that "the king adjudicating a law suit secures high bliss, and the king who does not slay a thief, incurs sin.." The thief casts his guilt upon the king who releases him, observes *Samkha-Likhita*.[2] Vasishtha[3] is more specifjc when he enjoins the king to apply *Danda* against those who violate *Dharma* (their prescribed duties); no one who has violated his *Dharma* is exempt from *Danda*. In other words, *Danda* is the means of ensuring the security and prosperity of the subjects.

Analysing the political ideas of the early *Arthasastra* writers in the introductory chapter, we have dealt with Kautilya's concept of *Dandaniti* as the pivot of the entire social fabric, on which depended the well-being of the State. As the most distinguished exponent of the technical *Arthasastra*, Kautilya explained the scope of the four sciences, called *Trayi*, *Anvikshiki*, *Vartta*, and *Dandaniti*. "*Trayi* stands for the entire Brahmanical Canon and especially its branch of Law, *Anvikshiki* represents the whole of scholastic philosophy; *Vartta* stands for the science of Economics... and *Dandaniti* represents the science of Politics and is concerned especially with the application of the coercive authority of the ruler."[4]

Whereas Gautama[5] includes only *Trayi* and *Anvikshiki* in his account of the king's curriculum of studies, *Dandaniti* is the only science to the (later) school of the Usanas (Sukra). According to this ultra-political school, politics is the master-science on which are fixed the operations of the other sciences. These indubitably are extreme views, representing a landmark denoting the early application of reason to problems of politics. As against the scope of *Dandaniti* being confined to policy and impolicy, the expression *Arthasastra* by its definition, as well as the contents of the works concerned, represents the art of government in the widest sense of the term. Hence, as noted in the Introduction, Kautilya used this more comprehensive term for the science of politics. More explicitly, Kautilya explains *Arthasastra* as the *Sastra* which deals with the means of acquiring and developing *Artha*, that is, "territory with human

[2]Book XIX, Chs. 7-10.
[3]Kane, No. 317.
[4]U.N. Ghoshal: *A History of Indian Political Ideas*; 1959.
[5]Book XI, Ch. 3

population," where *Dandaniti* is explained as constituting the "principle of government."

Manu, Bhishma. . .

The important principle of the king's coercive authority (*Danda*) was developed by the early *Arthasastra* writers. The *Dharmasutras* supported the king's obligation to justly apply *Danda* on the plea that thereby he ensured the security and well-being of his subjects. Manu's theory[6] of the coercive authority (*Danda*) of the ruler (recorded around seventh century A.D.) develops that of the old *Arthasastra* writers along several lines, besides repeating some of their concepts. Through fear of *Danda*, says Manu, all creatures, movable and immovable, "yield themselves for enjoyment," and swerve not from their duties. Manu describes the essential qualifications of the ruler for the successful application of *Danda*—he must be truthful, he acts after due consideration, and he is conversant with Virtue, Pleasure and Wealth. The king who is voluptuous, partial and deceitful, is destroyed by the same *Danda* which he inflicts.

Bhishma, like Manu, supports his plea for the king's obligation of protection by developing the old *Smriti* principle of moral and spiritual sanctions based primarily upon the law of *Karma*. The most important salient of the Yudhisthira-Bhishma discourse in the *Mahabharata* deals with the mutual relation of *Danda*, Law (*Dharma*) and the king. The true embodiment of *Dharma* is the king who protects the subjects with *Danda* that is applied impartially to friend and foe. We are further told that the Lord himself judiciously passed on *Danda* to the Kshatriya. When the king after himself giving an assurance of protection fails to live up to it, he takes upon himself the sins of all people, and goes to hell. In the same vein, Yajnavalkya[7]—less specific than Manu or Bhishma in analysing the ramifications of *Danda*—however, observes that the king who unjustly fills his coffers with the wealth of his people soon loses his fortune and is destroyed, together with his friends. Manu, in a parallel passage, accompanies his promise

[6]*Manu* VII, 14-31.
[7]I, 340-41.

of spiritual rewards and penalties with that of temporal ones, according as the king fulfils or fails his obligations to his people. In a late *Smriti*, Narada observed that if the king does not constantly apply *Danda* against all those persons who have neglected their duties, these people will perish. Brihaspati repeats after Manu the principle of the king's unlimited application of *Danda*. A still later writer, Garga, holds that the king's punishment of criminals is the means of purification of the kingdom. Says *Matsya Purana*,[8] after Manu, that the people do not fall into error provided he, who directs it, discerns well. *Danda*, the author sums up in the words of Manu, is the universal ruler and protector. Many of these concepts were based on Manu's and Bhishma's thoughts which held sway for a long time.

The early *Arthasastra* writers, by and large, present a somewhat simplistic though credible case for *Danda*. By dint of the very title *Dandaniti* used by them for the science, they understand *Danda* as the essence of government. Kautilya,[9] mentioning the oftquoted (but unnamed) Teacher, observes there is no such means of bringing creatures under control as *Danda*.

Likewise, Bharadvaja, quoted in *Mahabharata*[10] and in *Manu*[11] advises the king to bring all creatures under his control by means of *Danda*, for the world stands very much in awe of one ready to apply *Danda*. Another common verse (to *Manu* and *Mahabharata*, borrowed in all likelihood, by them, from a popular *Arthasastra* source) reads: "*Danda* alone rules all subjects, *Danda* alone protects them, *Danda* is awake when others are asleep, the wise declare *Danda* to be identical with *Dharma*." According to still another verse, common to these two works, the whole world is kept in order by *Danda*, for a guiltless man is a scarce commodity in the world; it is through fear of *Danda* that the world provides the amenities it has. Thus *Danda* is considered the most important instrument to bring about law and order in society, and is therefore the foremost

[8]225. 9. 18
[9]*Arthasastra*, Bk, I, Ch.4
[10]XII, 139. 7-8
[11]VII; 18

political principle. Dr. U.N. Ghoshal[12] says: "This estimate is justified by an argument which involves the application of human psychology to politics, namely, that men are predominantly evil. Secondarily, it is held that *Danda* is synonymous with Law, probably in the sense that the former is the essential means of fulfilment of the latter." In other words, *Danda* is the supreme political principle as well as the synonym for the principle of Law. Thence follow some original concepts based upon the materialistic view of wealth as the foundation of all human activities and the political concept of *Danda* as the basis of wealth.

Kautilya's Contribution

On either count, Kautilya carries the argument further. The old *Smriti* principle of the authority and obligation of the *Swami* to the branch of State Law is discussed by him in a separate section,[13] significantly entitled "Removal of Thorns". A number of clauses pertain to what may be called the law of treason, the offences, specially those against the king's person and property, as well as his authority, countered by dire punishments. Production of conclusive evidence is insisted in most cases. Different kinds of torture are to be employed, successively or severally, for the offences of concealing the king's revenue. "There are in vogue four kinds of torture (*Karma*)," says Kautilya,[14] "six punishments (*Shatdandah*), seven kinds of whipping (*Kasa*), two kinds of suspension from above (*Upari nibandhu*) and water tube (*Udakanal ikacha*)." As for women, the torture "shall be half of the prescribed standard." But "no Brahmana shall be tortured", branded and proclaimed; the Brahmana convict may then be banished by the king or sent to the mines for life.

Death with torture is prescribed by Kautilya for attempt to seize the throne, for violating the *Zenana* (ladies quarters) of the palace, for causing disaffection in urban and rural areas as well as among the king's troops. An offender is to be impaled for stealing or hurting the king's elephants. Mutilation of

[12]I *Op. Cit.*
[13]*Arthasastra*, Book IV,
[14]Ibid, Book IV Ch. 8.

limbs is prescribed for abusing the king. Whoever commits adultery with the queen of the land was to be burnt alive in a vessel (*Kumbhipakah*) —but adultery with a nun (*Pravrajita*) was punishable with a fine of 24 *Panas*—the nun paying a similar fine! Theft of jewels or valuable products from the State factories is a capital offence. The punishment for counterfeiting the king's edict or seal is visited with a graduated scale of penalties—according to the rank in society of the criminal—ending with death. The distinctive procedure for the trials of these and other offences against the king or the State is stated by Kautilya. These processes relating to the 'extirpation of thorns' (*Kantakasodhana*) are carried out by three police-magistrates (*Pradeshtris*). Law-suits are tried by panels of three judges (*Dharmasthas*).

Lost and ownerless property and treasure-troves accrue to the king.[15] The king is, however, reminded of his obligation[16]—laid down in the old *Smriti* law—that he should take steps to restore the stolen property to its owner; otherwise, he is to be compensated out of the king's treasury. The property of a person dying intestate or without heirs also reverts to the king as a rule. There is an exception to this rule, favouring the Brahmanas. If a learned Brahmana dies, his property is not seized by the king, but is distributed among his own class. Brahmanas[17] were beneficiaries in more mercenary disbursements. For their benefit, Kautilya[18] added an interesting new penal clause under the heading "Punishment for violating justice"—the king himself an offender in this case. "When the king punishes an innocent man, he shall throw into water dedicating to god Varuna a fine equal to thirty times the unjust imposition."

[15] *Arthasastra*, Bk. II, Chs. 6 and 15.

[16] *Ibid* Bk. III, Ch. 16.

[17] Brahmanas were "veritable gods on earth," according to some scriptures. Kings were accountable to Brahmanas, particularly in the period of Brahmana ascendancy, in the heyday of Manu and Narada. Some scholars have interpreted the statement that Law is divinely-ordained to mean that it is Brahmana-made. Hence, Dr. T.N. Madan observed recently, "Kautilya's *Arthasastra* is pre-eminently a document of Brahmanically controlled state. . ."

[18] *Arthasastra*, Book, IV, Ch. 13. This clause was to be repeated by *Manu* and *Yajnavalkya* in new rules of state law.

Then the king makes this amount over to the Brahmanas. This is supported by a plausible argument, going back to the Vedic mythology, stating that Varuna is the punisher of offenders. These clauses, constraining the king one way or the other, flowed from the ancient *Smriti* principle of the rule of law impinging on the king's internal administration.

Scope Extended

The coercive authority (*Danda*) of the temporal ruler was conceived in general terms by the early *Arthasastra* rulers. Under the aegis of the Law, they made *Danda* the regal instrument of the security of the people, and as such the concept became the most important political principle. Kautilya's contribution in this field lay in the development of the theory of *Danda* in three main directions.

Kautilya extended the scope of the function of *Danda*, in the first place. *Danda*[19]—he maintained—is the means to protect the subjects, and ensure that the three sciences—*Trayi* (the Sacred Canon) *Anvikshitu* (Philosophy) and *Vartta* (Economics)—thrive, for *Danda* is their foundation. *Lokayatra* (the course of worldly affairs) is also rooted in *Danda*. *Danda* is thus viewed in its wider dimensions, the ultimate guarantee of man's existence, while it caters to his many-sided interests as represented by the traditional sciences. Secondly, Kautilya promises a new technique in regard to the application of *Danda*. The king who imposes severe punishments afflicts all creatures, while one who inflicts punishments justly is respected by the people. Mild application of punishments is followed by the overthrow of the king. In the third place, Kautilya expatiated on *Danda's* role via three alternatives. Awarded judiciously with full knowledge of the canon, *Danda* "makes the people devoted to righteousness and to works productive of wealth and enjoyment." Ill-awarded, under the influence of greed or anger or without knowledge (of the Law), it afflicts even the forest-dwelllng ascetics, not to speak of the householders. When "the law of punishment is kept in abeyance" (that is, not applied at all), it leads to "the disorder implied in the proverb of fishes," that is, the larger fishes devouring the

[19]Ibid, Book, I, Chs. 4 and 5.

smaller (*Matsyanyaya-mudbhavayati*); for—says Kautilya—"in the absence of the magistrate (*Dandadharabhave*), the strong will swallow the weak; but under his protection the weak resist the strong."

In sum, while the just application of *Danda* ensures the complete happiness of the individual, its unlawful use results in universal disaffection, and its non-application leads to anarchy—the law of the jungle. Kautilya concludes the relevant section[20] with the words: "The people (*Loka*), consisting of four castes and four orders of religious life, when governed by the king with his sceptre, will keep to their respective duties and occupations." Kautilya thus ably harmonises the old *Smriti* concept of the rule of law in the fields of the king's internal administration with the early *Arthasastra* view of the psychological basis of *Danda* in the evil predilections of human nature.

Kamandaka, Somadeva, etc.

Kamandaka (500-700 A.D.?) who acknowledged Kautilya as his master followed the *Arthasastra Smriti* precedent, in his celebrated *Nitisara* to justify the king's application of *Danda* by reference to the tendencies of human nature. Men, he observes, are by nature not good, but are passionate, worldly and combative. Therefore, the fear of *Danda* is the only preventive against anarchy symbolised by the law of the jungle as well as the safeguard of individual security and the fulfilment of individual obligations. Dealing with the technique of application of *Danda* on familiar lines, he warns the king on the score of State policy, against excess or impropriety in its use vis-a-vis the people. He repeats his master to state that while rigorous *Danda* breeds disaffection among the people and plunges the king in ruin, and while mild application of *Danda* encourages disobedience of the king's authority, it is *Danda*, justly administered, that ensures respect for the Law as well as complete happiness of the subjects.

Kautilyan and *Arthasastra* concepts of *Danda* persisted in the Indian polity and were reflected in the last phase of classical Sanskrit literature, notably *Kathasaritasagara* ('Ocean of the rivers of stories') by the celebrated Kashmiri writer,

[20] *Arthasastra*, Bk. I, Ch. 4

Somadeva and the encyclopaedic work, the *Mānasollāsa* ('the delight of the mind'), said to be authored by king Somesvara III of the Chalukya dynasty of the Deccan, respectively, in the 12th centuries. Interesting ideas of the current state of polity, including the concept of the authority of the temporal ruler, can be culled from these works.

The old *Smriti* principle of the king's authority is referred to in a story in the *Kathasaritasagara*.[21] A king appreciated the fact that the aborigins living almost an animal life in an isolated forest submitted completely to their chief. He observed that there was nothing like kinglessness among even primitive people. Seeing this unique phenomenon, he further remarked that the office of the king, duly invested with authority, was created by the gods to prevent anarchy (*Matsyanyaya*, 'the maxim of the stronger fishes devouring the weaker') among men. Besides referring to the accepted concept of the universality of kingship, this extract from the famous classic of stories, justifies this institution by the doctrine (reminiscent of Manu, Bhishma, Kautilya and others) of the divine ordination of the king for the purpose of the protection of the subjects against anarchy.

The writer of the *Mānasollāsa* deals with the *Arthasastra-Smriti* theory of *Danda* in significant extracts.[22] Repeating the familiar dicta, the author changes the metaphor to compare the people with a mad elephant who is checked by the goad to observe its duties, through fear of *Danda*. The author observes that the king, who wrongly administers punishment to the innocent, and lets the guilty go scotfree, loses his good name and falls prey to much misfortune. The king has to deal out punishment justly, and not even his son, brother or other relation, or his *Purohitas*, are immune from it. Enjoining upon the king to inflict punishment in consonance with the traditional standards, the author reiterates the familiar conception of the functions of *Danda* as the ultimate safeguard of both the social and the political order and realisation of the obligations of every individual in the society.

[21]Ch. CII, 62-3.
[22]II, 1243-98.

Sukranitisara

In the later work (13th century) *Sukranitisara*, Sukra (Usanas) professedly writing for the benefit of kings and others, deals exhaustively with the duties of the king and the characteristics of the Crown Prince, inter-State relations, duties of the people, etc. Though he explains *Dandaniti* after the strict traditional interpretation to mean the science dealing with State policy, he defines *Arthasastra* as the science which teaches royal behaviour, without conflict with the *Vedas* and the *Smritis*, as well as the acquisition of wealth by some methods. The king, says Sukra in an original vein, was created by Brahma for the servitude of his subjects (*Prajas*), with his own share as his means of subsistence (*Bhriti*), as well as the lord of the people for their constant protection. Thus Sukra, taking a strikingly different line, conceives the king to be the servant as well as master of the people by Divine Ordination. Likewise, Sukra's discussion[23] of the old *Arthasastra-Smriti* principle of the coercive authority (*Danda*) of the king is also marked by his characteristic originality. Speaking of different ages, culminating with the latest *Kali Yuga* (Kali Age), he holds that the king is the maker of his Age by dint of his directions relating to Virtue and Vice, and therefore, this lapse from Virtue is the fault neither of the Age nor of the people but of the king. It is no wonder that with his mental make-up of an iconoclast, Sukra recognised the necessity of the deposition of the king, in extreme circumstances.

Repeating the *Arthasastra-Smriti* pleas for the king's application of *Danda*, Sukra—endowed with an independent outlook on matters of polity—however, observes pointedly that *Danda* is inferior to the king's forbearance in the scale of moral values and is in fact morally self-condemned. "The author," says Dr. U. N. Ghoshal,[24] summing up the analysis of Sukra's observation on the authority and obligations of the temporal ruler, "applies Manu's and Bhishma's theory of the king's influence in shaping the Time-Spirit so as to derive the origin of *Danda* primarily from the ruler's sins. This is accompanied by his theory of the proportionate decrease of *Danda* matching man's

[23] IV 41-59
[24] *Op. cit.*

increasing taint with the ruler's sin—an evident adaptation of the *Smriti* principle of the adjustment of a man's duties in proportion to his diminishing physical and other capacities."

We may sum up with some comments on the ancient Indian concepts relating to *Danda*, which have their own significance. The early *Arthasastra* view of *Danda* investing it with universal application, regardless of the offender's rank and status in society, was somewhat one-sided, and underwent changes in course of time. Kautilya, while respecting the old *Arthasastra* principle that *Danda* is a grand motivating force for the individual's obedience to authority, distinguishes between the results of its just, its mild and its rigorous application, as productive, respectively, of universal regard for authority, utter disregard and overthrow of the same. He makes it clear that while the just application of *Danda* ensures the complete happiness of the individual in society, its vicious or illegal use leads to uncontrolled anarchy.

Thus, Kautilya takes cognisance of the *Arthasastra* concept of the basic, evil predilections of man as well as the *Smriti* view of the rule of law vis-a-vis the ruler's administration. Kamandaka reiterates the function of *Danda* and the principles justifying its use, but Sukra repeats these ideas with a view to find fault with them on moral grounds, coming up with the original view that *Danda* originates as the king's sin because of his influence on the environment. The theory of *Danda* in the *Smritis*, as expounded by Manu and others, as also the later *Smritis* and *Puranas*, repeats the basic *Arthasastra* concepts.

The ancient Indian doctrine of *Danda* is, by and large, at variance with the concept of sovereignty in Europe, which implies a conscious legislative authority. The divine right of kings never existed in India in its extreme form, as it did in the West. The Indian kings never proclaimed (like James of England) that they were God's representatives on earth. In India it was *Raja Dharma* or *Dandaniti* that was deified, not the king. *Danda*, as analysed by Kautilya, Manu, Bhishma and others, throughout conceived the law of the social order, and similarly of the State, to emanate from the two-fold source of the canon and custom.

War and Peace

A state of perpetual anarchy—that was the state of nature according to Hobbes. The preventive to anarchy was postulated by Kautilya when he stated that chaos and utter confusion prevail in the state of kinglessness. That war is as old an institution as the world itself is an aphorism that will be contested by few. Walter Bagehot[1] held that it is war that makes nations. The Aryan polity substantiated these premises through the existence of a state of perpetual warfare in the most primitive times of India. Indra, the slayer of demons—wielding the mighty weapon of *Vajra* (thunderbolt)—was the national hero of the Aryans.

Explaining the origin of early warfare, the *Rig Veda* assigns acquisition of booty as one of the prime causes. The dominant cause of war among ancient Aryans was their love for war-glory.[2] The Vedic kings fought with one another for trivial causes, their tribal pride impelling them to take to arms and implant their glory everywhere.

Classifications

"Wealth is desirable, allies are more desirable, but acquisition of territory is most desirable." This war-like injunction in the *Mahabharata*,[3] followed by continual warfare, led to the classification of wars by Sukracharya, who enumerated three forms of war. The first, *Prakash Yuddha* (open warfare) was fought in broad daylight, and in a particular area. The second form was *Kuta Yuddha* (treacherous war), in which the enemy was deceived about the location of the conflict and the whole-

[1]Walter Bagehot: *Physics and Politics.*
[2]Indra: "*Ideologies of War and Peace in Ancient India*," 1957.
[3]*Udyoga*, XXIX, 31.

sale destruction of the enemy was aimed at. *Tusnim Yuddha* (silent warfare) was the third form of war, carried on in a surreptitious manner through creating disaffection in the enemy ranks. Kautilya in his *Arthasastra* prefers this subtle form of warfare, in case the other two types can be advoided. Otherwise, Kautilya opts for *Kuta Yuddha*, laying down that "an enemy should be attacked at his weak points, his food and fodder should be stopped, or, by making friends with him, he should be killed." In another place, Kautilya also favours warfare "by means of sorcery or by the power of *Mantras*, drugs and other magical performances."

Maxims and Principles

Astrologers, soothsayers, and court poets eulogised wars. Kautilya's maxim "The brave who died in battles go to heaven" was so inspiring that even Brahmanas[4] were persuaded to fight whenever the Kshatriya forces were inadequate. Due to the frequency of wars, which decimated the warrior Kshatriyas, such contingencies were not infrequent. As most writers on *Niti* testified, war was almost mandatory—more or less imperative. Seeing a suitable occasion, the Swami was to declare war on his enemy. Hence, the relevant dictum of Kautilya: "Whenever ministers, armies and allies of a king be loyal to him and in readiness to help him and reverse be the case of his enemy, at once war should be declared."[5]

The Mauryan emperors followed such principles, enunciated by Kautilya, to the letter, in their relations with kings inside India and abroad. Among these, Chandragupta specially followed the advice of his counsellor, Kautilya, who was also his Prime Minister. He had witnessed the tussle between the two intellectual giants, Kautilya and Rakshasa, who had tried their level best to push the claim of the Maurya and Nanda dynasties, respectively, and in which Rakshasa had been humbled by the superior diplomacy of Kautilya, and had finally been won over to Chandragupta's side by Kautilya.

[4]In time of war, Kshatriyas were the best fighters, according to Kautilya. Although the Brahmana warriors fought equally well, Kautilya had apprehensions that "they could be won at their feet."

[5]*Arthasastra*, XI, 9 and V, 21.

Following the diplomatic policy of Kautilya, Chandragupta had earlier approached Alexander to seek his help against the Nandas. The strategem did not work. With the aid of his preceptor, Kautilya, Chandragupta found other means to crush the Nandas, and thereafter, through alliances and expeditions by Chandragupta, "the Kautilyan diplomacy had its full play resulting in the establishment of the first great empire in ancient India." In the ancient annals of India, it has been the unique feature of Magadha (as of Delhi in subsequent ages) to witness the rise and fall of great, successive empires.

It is interesting, however, that the first historical emperor of India—whose empire extended not only to the whole of India, north of Narmada, but also included most of modern Afghanistan—did not perform the *Asvameda* sacrifice—the horse-sacrifice to which he was entitled as a *Chakravarti* Raja and which had become a political institution. Actually none of the imperial Mauryas solemnised their military victories by sacrifices. The explanation appears to be that Hindu rituals had received a setback in the Mauryan era and other pompous sacrifices were looked down on. The conquests of Ashoka, the greatest luminary of the era, were those of peace and not of the sword.

The World Conqueror

Idealism apart, the fact remained that wars constitute a regular phenomenon. The recurrence of the wars creating a kind of war psychosis resulted in the popular deification of *Chamunda* as the feared but adored presiding goddess of war. Endowed with 28 arms, some holding a sword, a club, a thunderbolt, a battle axe, a spear and other deadly weapons, *Chamunda* was portrayed as standing on a buffalo in the fiery pose of the slayer of the sacrificial animal. The frequency of wars and the mythology surrounding the goddess of war was but natural in an atmosphere surcharged with the war mentality.

The great law-giver of Hindus, Manu, lent his immense authority to legalise the institution of war. Constant preparedness for war—according to him—was the best guarantee of peace. The king was enjoined to "keep up with arms." War was compared to a holy sacrifice in the *Mahabharata*, Bhishma

sublimating it as a lofty act of religious merit. The *Puranas*[6] had it that there is no higher duty for the warriors than to risk their lives in battle. The *Rig Veda* (Hymn 75 of the 6th Book) is full of war songs. Nine out of 15 Books of Kautilya's *Arthasastra* deal, directly or indirectly, with the *Chaturanta Raja*.[7] who is enjoined to establish suzerainty "over the whole world, bound by the four quarters." This concept of universal sovereignty was a familiar motif in Hindu politics and Kautilya realistically details the measures by which it can be realised and consolidated, and concludes, in idealistic terms that it could lead to universal righteousness. Kautilya, the great champion of imperialism, consistently held the acquisition of territory by means of conquest as a very desirable object. "A conqueror well-versed in the science of politics," pronounces Kautilya, "who acquires territory from enemies gains superiority." Any king who opposes such attempts is to be vanquished, he adds. To the critics' averring "that in a war, both sides suffer by sustaining heavy losses in men and money and that even the king who wins a victory appears as defeated in consequence of this loss of men and money", Kautilya's firm rejoinder is: "No, even at a considerable loss of men and money, the destruction of an enemy is desirable."[8]

National Policy

The guide to the would-be conqueror as the *Arthasastra* indeed is, he does not find a stable equilibrium until he is the sole monarch of all the states surrounding him—the path of this target lying through war and diplomacy. "The inevitable

[6]The federating units centring round the *Samrat*, the dominating ruler, constituted the imperial system of Kautilya's day. The *Samrat* claimed the *Sarva Bhumi*, the whole area within natural boundaries and the whole country with natural boundaries, delimited only by the impassable mountain ranges of the north and the surrounding seas of the Indian peninsula. Kautilya described this natural frontier as the terrain lying between the Himalayas and the Cape Comorin. This was the *Chaturanta* territory, the ideal, one-state domain of all the known earth. The one-umbrella sovereignty was designated as *Ekachatra*.

[7]*Vishnu Purana*. III, 44.

[8]*Arthasastra*, VII, 13.

logic of dynamic politics forces the king to destroy the unstable political equilibrium attained for transitory periods between independent but unequal states, and thus challenge the homage of humanity," says M.V. Krishna Rao.[9]

In his scientific approach to politics, Kautilya, however, evinces flexibility of approach. The aggressor (*Vijigishu*), he says, should conclude peace when he finds that he is weaker than the enemy; he should wage war when he finds himself to be stronger; he should adopt neutrality when he assesses that neither he nor his enemy can settle the score; he should seek refuge when he is weak; and he should expediently adopt the duel policy in a contingency requiring the help from another ruler. War and foreign policy issues are thus decided in an *ad hoc* framework of political expediency. When progress is equally attainable by means of peace and war—Kautilya says—the former is to be preferred. This is so, for war involves expenditure in men and money, residence in a foreign land, and suffering.

Kautilya is no less concerned with the postulates of peace though it is, of necessity, linked with war. The Swami, he says, shall achieve progress through peace, when he, sizing up the situation, concludes that he is thereby likely to undermine his enemy's works and develop his own. The interregnum of peace, providing a scenario of confidence, should be utilised by him to undermine the development and other works of his enemy through spies, or entice the enemy's skilled artisans with tempting offers, or wean the enemy from his state-system.

Despite the frequency of wars in ancient India and the justification of war as an instrument of national policy, there was in the heart of India, the love for peace—an ideal capable of realisation. The commitment of the greatest Indian savants and sages of philosophical pacifism was complete. Sometimes their intervention averted situations fraught with atrocious consequences. The tradition and practice of *Ahimsa*—to eschew injury to all beings, human and animal—were in the soil of India, as it were, and blossomed forth in the transformation of Ashoka from *Chandashoka* (Ashoka the ferocious) into *Dhammashoka* (Ashoka the pious), who established a unique

[9]*Studies in Kautilya*: by M.V. Krishna Rao; 1953.

kingdom of righteousness. As for Kautilya, peace was "the result of armed force, maintained by the State." To him, preparation for war was the best guarantee for peace. His doctrine of militancy, necessitated by the overriding considerations of the security of the State, need not be painted in dark colours, just as Lord Krishna, persuading Arjuna to take to arms (in the *Bhagawad Gita*) is not thereby dubbed as a militarist. Simply because Kautilya gives elaborate details of *Kuta Yuddha*, there is a misapprehension that unrighteous and irreligious wars had his sanction. Kautilya was a political thinker *par excellence* and he had to investigate every aspect of human polity, including the worst features of war, and assess their relative merits.

Law of War and Peace

The art of war—as is clear from the portions of the *Arthasastra* relating to war and peace—was highly developed in the Mauryan times. Conceding this fact, Dr. F.W. Thomas ("Political and Social Organisation of the Mauryan Empire") says: "If all their sciences failed them against Alexander, and against subsequent invaders, we may conjecture, in accordance with other aspects of Indian thought, the reason that there was too much of it." The precepts (set out in the *Mahabharata*, the *Arthasastra*, etc.) as to the arrary of the forces—the elephants and chariots in front and the infantry in the rear—were followed too much, to the letter, like the ones regarding fair fighting—not attacking the wounded or those already disarmed, or not marauding treacherously during the night.

Wars were treated like national tournament in ancient India—regulated by special laws and techniques, including the best 'season' for conducting the expeditions (the period roughly correspoding to December-March months). The laws of war were meticulously laid down for the Swami and his ministers. Astrologers were consulted as to the auspicious moments for marching and gods' blessings invoked for success of the operations.[10] Army camps were laid out with scientific precision—the site bounded with watch-towers, parapets, mounds and thorny bushes to block the enemy movement. Normally, hostili-

[10] *Arthasastra*, IX, 4.

ties were declared in a regular manner, the fighting confined to daylight hours, and to specific sites. Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Maurya, recorded that the army did not interfere with the work of agriculturists and that they were allowed to pursue their occupation in perfect security. The beginning of the battle was signified by the blowing of the conch shell (*Shankha*). Prisoners of war were accorded generous treatment. The fruit and flower gardens, temples, etc., were to be left unmolested.

Mauryan Army

The Mauryan army must have reached a high standard of excellence and discipline, if we assume that the recommendations of Kautilya had been adopted in practice. The battle formations, described in close detail by Kautilya, should have given the army an invincible look. It is definitely stated by Herodotus that, in his time, the Indian army was the strongest in the world.

Chandragupta had inherited a big army from his predecessors. He raised its strength, and, at its peak, his strong, standing army included: Infantry, 600,000; Cavalry, 36,000; Elephants, 9,000 and Chariots, 8000. This formidable force was efficiently managed by a War Office. It consisted of 30 members, divided into six boards of five each. The six departments were: Admiralty; Transport; Commissariat and Army Service; Infantry; Cavalry; Chariots; and Elephants.

Of the seven limbs of the State, as given by Kautilya—the King, Ministers, Territory, Forts, Treasury, the Army and the Allies—the army was regarded as the most important in ancient India. A unique consensus emerged among all writers on Hindu polity that the army was the basic foundation of the body politic of the State. The frequency of wars, alluded above, made it imperative that the army was organised on most scientific lines. *Chaturangini* was the term used for the four-fold division of the army: the Cavalry (*Asva*), Elephants (*Hasti*), Chariots (*Ratha*) and the Infantry (*Patti* or *Padati*). These were the traditional divisions of an Indian army.

Though the *Mahabharata* mentions four divisions—*Visti*

(transport and commissariat), *Nava* (Navy)[11] *Chara* (espionage) and *Daisika* (scouts and guides)—these were adequately covered in the above-mentioned six military boards of Chandragupta Maurya. The military genius of the Mauryan era as Kautilya was, he covers the perfect organisation of the army in all its details. Megasthenes' account of the organisation of the War Office, with its six divisions, corresponds with the categorisation of Kautilya. The *Sachiva* (or War Secretary) controlled the entire, mighty organisation, which included the navy also, under *Navadhyaksa* (the Superintendent of Ships). The Military Department was indubitably the most important department, the expenditure on the armed forces being as high as 50 per cent of the central revenues. The Department had an elaborate organisation—the infantry, the cavalry, the elephant corps, the chariots, the transport, the labour corps, spies and instructors, each being looked after by a different branch. The army had its complement of doctors, nurses and ambulance staff, well equipped with instruments, bandages and medicines. The ambulance corps is mentioned in the *Arthasastra*. It is known to have formed part of the Kashmir army.

The main divisions of the army were the elephant corps, the cavalry and the foot—to which were added the foragers and the camp-followers. We find in the *Arthasastra* a scientific discussion of vanguard, centre, rear, wings, reserve and camp, which obviously had this big army in the background. Formation on the march and in battle, attack and defence were elaborately discussed, along with the use and value of a number of arms.

Cavalry and Elephant Corps

The horse was held to be an important ingredient in the armoury of the State and the attempt was made to obtain the best equine breeds. The best horses (as mentioned by Panini, and confirmed by Kautilya) were secured from the provinces west of the Sindhu. Kautilya mentions Kambhoja, Sindhu, Bahkika and Souvirs as the places for the best stud farms.

[11]The fact that *Nav* (नाव) is the derivative for the word *Navy* (and so is *Navgati* (नावगती) for *Navigation*) shows that Indians were among the most ancient seafarers.

In the chapter entitled "The Superintendent of Horses", Kautilya classifies horses as belonging to three types: *Tiksna* (fiery), *Bhadra* (gentle) and *Manda* (sluggish). The first two kinds were used for military purposes. Kautilya also gives details of the breeding, care and training of horses. He mentions seven varieties: horses for sale; those recently purchased (trainees); those captured in war; those mortgaged to the king; those temporarily kept in the royal stables; those sent for being looked after; and those bred locally (in the royal studs, etc). Horses were employed for ordinary war purposes, according to their mettle. More often than not, they were trained for everyday use as well as the difficult movements of the battle.

The *Arthasastra* has a special chapter on Cavalry exercises. Recalling Kikkuli (a Mithrani), who wrote a manual on horse-training (1400 B.C.) in colloquial Sanskrit, Kautilya describes various movements of the equine trainees. The movements described are circular or prancing like a monkey or leaping like a cuckoo. The exercises describe galloping at full speed—the breasts of the mettlesome horses nearly touching the terrain.

Since horses were so important to the State, in times of peace and war, it is interesting to note how they were accorded an almost human treatment. Regularly bathed, they were smeared with sandal paste and garlanded. Auspicious hymns were sung for them by the *Purohita*, on specified days. The waving of lights in front of the horses was a conspicuous part of the ceremony.

The efficiency of the army as a whole equally depended on the elephant force. Not a few battles in ancient India were won mainly by this corps. The account of Chandragupta's army—celebrated for its organisation—was on the training of the best breed of elephants. The Department of Elephants was headed by a Superintendent, like the one for horses. He ensured the upkeep of elephant forests, good arrangement of stables and the training of elephants by picked experts. The State's solicitude for elephants was clear from the fact that the killing of an elephant was a capital offence. Ceremonies similar to those for horses were observed to invoke the blessings of gods for the welfare of elephants. Necklaces adorned both the horses and elephants, their housings and mounts well decorated.

Forts and 'Fire-balls'

The Indian forts were—as described by Kautilya—systematically designed with moats, ramparts, battlements, covered ways and waterways The arts of mining, flooding mines and countermining were used as effectively as were the instruments of diplomacy. Thus, the art of war was developed to a high degree. The *Mahabharata* referred to the use of resins, waxes and combustible materials in the preparation of weapons.[12] Kautilya knew about this and added more specific details about explosives, while dealing with the attack on forts.

Kautilya laid down the specifics, inter alia, for capturing enemy forts:

> Having captured the birds, such as the vulture, crow, parrot, *maina* and pigeon which have their nests in the fort walls, and having tied to their tails inflammable powder (*Agniyoga*), he may let them fly to the forts. If the camp is situated at a distance from the fort and is provided with an elevated post for archers and their flags, then the enemy's fort may be set on fire. Spies, living as watchmen of the fort, may tie inflammable powder to the tails of mongooses, monkeys, cats and dogs, and let them go over the thatched roofs of the houses. A splinter of fire kept in the body of a dried fish may be caused to be carried off by a monkey, or a crow, or any other bird (to the thatched roofs of the houses.[13]

Furthermore, Kautilya describes the manufacture of incendiary balls, inflammable powders and 'fire arrows'—to be hurled at the enemy. Sapping and mining by "the use of machines"—is obviously indicated. Winding up the part

[12] *Sukraniti* states the formula for making gunpowder. Sulphuric acid—popularly known as *Gandhk ka attar*—was known to Indians from ancient times. Patanjali's *Lokeshastra* is a monumental work on Hindu metallurgy. The tempering of steel—a process of advanced metallurgy—was practised in ancient India. Controversy has, however, surrounded the premise whether gunpowder was made in ancient India, for later works like Somadeva's *Nitivakyamrta* and *Bhoja's Yuktikalpadruma* do not mention it at all.

[13] *Arthasastra*, Bk. XIII, Ch. IV:405

relating to the siege of a fort, Kautilya concludes on a humanitarian note, when he recommends that a fort should not be set on fire, if it can be captured by other means. "Fire cannot be trusted; it not only offends gods, but also destroys people, grains, cattle, gold, raw materials and the like." He adds, realistically: "The acquisition of a fort with its property all destroyed is a source of further loss."[14]

Praharana is the generic term used by Kautilya for all arms, just as Panini, the celebrated grammarian, did. Panini mentions the spear (*Sakti*), the sword (*Asi*), the battle axe (*Parasvadha*), lances, long and short (*Kasu* and *Kasutari*), javelin (*Heti*), etc. That arrows can be "cutting, rending or piercing" is the technical classification of Kautilya. Detailed prescriptions are given for the preparation of 'fire arrows'[15] (current since time of Manu, though he condemned their use). There was considerable variety in equipment—fixed and mobile—used by the army in war.

The *Arthasastra* lists the following engines of war[16], among many others:

Name of weapon		*Commentators's description*
Sarvatobhadra	...	a cart-like contrivance for throwing stones, through revolving wheels.
Jamadagnya	...	a machine for throwing arrows in a multitude.
Bahumukha	...	a covered tower from which archers shot arrows in all directions.
Sanghati	...	a long pole to cause fire inside a fortress.
Yanaka	...	a rod mounted on a wheel to be flung against enemies.
Parjanyaka	...	a water machine to put out fire.
Aughghatana	...	an instrument to pull down towers (a battering ram).

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] *Mahabharata*: *Dhronaparva*; 169:36.

[16] *Aryatarangini*: *the Saga of the Indo-Aryans*: By A. Kalyanaraman; 1969.

Hastivaraka	. . .	a big rod with several sharp points to drive back elephants.

It appears that the State's armoury included many destructive weapons of war, including mobile engines, such as the 'hundred-slayers'. A weapon called *Nalikastra* (a tubular contrivance charged with explosives) is described in *Sukraniti*. It is remarkable that this weapon could eject sharp missiles or 'fire-balls'. Held as indispensable for the security of forts, Sukra mentions the *Brihan-nalika*—nearest to what we know as a cannon. A *Nalika*—a hollow weapon, discharging 'fire-darts'—is described in the *Mahabharata*; a *Mahayantra* (a great engine) is also mentioned.

The principal defence in the battlefield against attack was the shield. Several kinds of shields are described by Kautilya. *Veti* (presumably made from hard matting) was one, others being *Charma* (made of leather), *Hanstikarna* (the word literally meaning elephant's ears—a long, wide shield that covered the whole body), *Talamula* (made of wood) and rand shields, known as *Kavata* and *Katika*.

Summing up the above discussion, we may observe that Kautilya's empiricism was manifest in matters of war and peace, for these vitally affected the cherished interests of the Swami and the people. Just as he was keen about the security of the fortified areas, the upkeep of horse stables and elephant forests, he also saw to it that the Swami's policy of acquisition of dominion was complemented by a generous policy of pacification of the acquired kingdom. Kautilya says. "A conquered country should be given complete security so that the people may sleep without fear", and adds pointedly, "The king should cover up the faults of the enemy by his own virtues." The king, ever regarded by Kautilya as the servant of the people, was, when stepping into the role of the *Chaturanta Raja*, enjoined by Kautilya to transform the state into a wholly spiritual creation, than which there could be no better environment for lasting peace.

Law and Administration

To the Greeks reason was the principle which inspired the social organism and it was embodied in Law. Reason made articulate was Law and Aristotle aimed at readapting Law to the promotion of virtue and noble living. "The service of the Laws is also the service of the gods, a service in which to obey is nobler than to rule", said Plato.[1] The implication was that the individual voluntarily subordinated his will to the collective will of the community. To the Hindus, as to the Greeks, Law was the supreme master, invested with power and spiritual efficacy. Law was the supreme master to both. They had no love for a state of anarchy—*Matsaya Nyaya*—to the Indians. Theirs was the struggle for the upholding and uplift of Law. Liberty untrammelled was not the conception of freedom whether for the Greeks or for Kautilya.

Reading Kautilya's *Arthasastra*, one has the comfortable feeling that one soars in a rarified, serene atmosphere where intellectual and spiritual freedom is assured for man via the *Dharmic* state. Kautilya was the interpreter *par excellence* of neo-Aryanism against the nihilistic philosophy of Buddhism which almost bordered on intellectual anarchy. In this respect, Kautilya was on par with Aristotle, who was pitted against the barbarism prevailing in his time. In the name of *Dharma*, Kautilya appeals to human values, to moral responsibility and to enlightened patriotism. Despotism and *Arajaka* (anarchy) were anathema to Kautilya. It was a complex, delicate adjustment, a harmonisation of apparently contrary principles and claims. Like the Greeks, the Indians were pragmatic and possessed the capacity for compromise, to a remarkable degree.

[1]*Laws*, VI, 702.

Sources of Law

Like Aristotle, Kautilya realised that the State held together under the aegis of a strong government could be not only a great civiliser but an agency that could shake a slumbering, somnolent society out of its stupor, and thus become a fount of dynamism that could regenerate society and enliven its art, architecture and literature. But a State that concentrated on religious and social issues was ordained to be a politically weak entity. Religionwise there were apparently two irreconcilable elements in the Indian polity of Kautilya's time: Buddhism, upholding the freedom of the individual in thought and action, and Hinduism, opting for the supremacy of mind or spirit over matter. Kautilya harmonised the two polarised concepts in the crucible of his exposition of the role of the State and the Swami (king) vis-a-vis the individual.

Kautilya's conception of Law was in consonance with his considered view of politics untrammelled by the bonds of irrationalism. *Shruti* was the origin of law to Hindu law-givers and Law was expression of the general view of the people. But in historic terms, tradition and usage were the primary sources of the foundations of Law. As a source of Law, *Smriti* referred to *Shila*, customs and recollections of the learned ones, who knew the *Vedas*, as sources of law. Inspired knowledge constituted flashes of intuition and, along with customs sanctified by practice, became sacred and gained acceptance. *Shishtachara*—the practices of learned men well-versed in the *Vedas* and whose deeds were motivated by altruism and *Dharma*—was given the greatest importance. Baudhayana describes *Shishtas* as those free from desire and the entanglements of *Maya* (illusion). They are *Raga Dveshadi Parithyaga*—liberated from envy and pride, free from greed, hypocrisy and anger. They have studied the *Vedas* in depth, and can deduce conclusions from them, which are independent of revealed texts. Kautilya drew upon Baudhayana while interpreting Law and *Dharma*.

Shishta thus presents a picture of Brahmanical traits distinguished by dedication to God, devotion to parents, even temper, freedom from jealousy and bitterness, gratitude, piety and harmless speech. Then there was the concept of *Achara*, according to which one had to follow the examples of men, good and great. The apparent finality of customs was, however,

conditioned by the repealing agency whose consistent role it was to adapt *Dharma* to dynamic public opinion. The sayings of learned men, along with the *Vedas*, *Puranas*, the *Itihasas*, *Nyaya* and *Anga*—observed Kautilya—all constitute the sources of *Dharma*.

Based partly on custom and partly on the authority of the sacred texts, the secular content of Law was also recognised as a source of *Dharma*. As a matter of fact, secular law coexisted with sacred law. The people were subject to their own customs and conventions set by their particular community organisations and these, well respected and preserved by the king, remained outside the jurisdiction of the sacred law. Thus Law had a realistic relationship with the social and legal institutions of the age—in fact, a rapport with the socio-cultural milieu of the time. In other words, the content of Law was regulated and determined by social objectives and it changed even as these did. The relativity of Law to these ends stretched from its body to the source and form. And, thus Law was rationalistic—prescribing a code of conduct to which people were to conform. Most of it was unwritten, like the Greek Law, taking concrete shape in the *ad hoc* pronouncements of judges, who were respected for their learning and practical wisdom. It was they who adjudicated summarily cases emanating from theft, robbery, duels and disputes among people, including those among trade guilds. The validity or otherwise of transactions among the people or the guilds was also decided by these popular judges.

Even-handed Justice

Kautilya describes in the *Arthasastra* how the king's law was carried out in its minutest details, the operation being simpler as penal law was a part of public law. *Kantaka Sodhana* Law comprised rules of law relating to the functioning of administration vis-a-vis artisans, labour union *Sanghas* and other trade associations as well as the regulation of administrative organisations of the *Rashtra*. *Kantaka Sodhana* was basically secular, closely purviewing day-to-day administration. The individual citizen was adequately protected from the malpractices of merchants through rigorous inspection of weights and measures (by the Superintendent of Commerce) and their profits were predetermined. Medical practitioners were

effectively checked so that they did not extort any undue advantages; likewise, the activities of musicians and other entertainers, weavers, washermen, scavengers, and even beggars and buffoons were kept under surveillance. It was also the king's duty to arrange for remedies against dire happenings such as famines, floods, fires, pestilences, wild beasts, etc. For calamities caused by spirits and demons. Kautilya suggests supernatural cures besides physical help to be rendered by the king to the afflicted people. The king's role in dispensing law and dealing out justice among the people is that of a father.

The paternal role of the king has to be preserved by all possible means, says Kautilya. He mentions thirteen kinds of criminals[2] who act surreptitiously to disrupt the peace of the country. He does not mind the use of saints[3] as spies to ferret out young people who are criminally inclined and pose moral danger to the society. He recommends apprehension of people[4] who lead lives that excite suspicion, like the persons who conceal their professions or destinations, or are attached too much to women and spend lavishly, or keep on changing their castes, names and residences. Circumstantial evidence furnished by officers (like *Pradeshta*, *Sthanika* and *Nagarika*) about suspicious characters was enough to put them behind bars. The people thus apprehended were formally charged on production of conclusive evidence,[5] and then only the judge would pronounce punishment on them.

Deeds of murder, or abetment of murders, are denounced by Kautilya in no uncertain terms. He has no pity for those who commit murders under the infatuation of love, or are beside themselves with anger or passions. Those who commit suicide[6] under the influence of various passions are likewise deprecated by him. Bodies of such unfortunates are recommended by him to be dragged along streets by *Chandalas* (sweepers) and no obsequies are to be performed in such cases, so that people realise the unnaturalness and immorality of suicide. Torture was practised to extract confessions but women, weak persons

[2] *Arthasastra*, Bk IV, Ch. 3.
[3] *Ibid*, Bk IV, Chs 3 & 4.
[4] *Ibid*, Bk IV, Ch. 6—*Sankarupakamabhigrahah*.
[5] *Arthasastra*, Bk. IV, Ch. 8.
[6] *Ibid* Bk. IV, Ch. 7.

and those who were forthcoming with admissions, were exempted from third degree methods. Not much difference was shown among castes in the award of punishments. Even Brahmana culprits were proclaimed and—if not punished too harshly—they were exiled or despatched to the mines to work there for life.

A severe code of penalties is prescribed by Kautilya for government officials who stray from the path of duty and are guilty of misappropriation or are otherwise guilty of causing damage to the property of the State like granaries, mines, manufacturers, mints, treasuries etc. Officials issuing unauthorised orders or judges, dealing out harsh corporal or other punishments or delaying their judgements, were punished in proportion to the seriousness of their respective offences. A rigid code was prescribed by Kautilya for the king to test the conduct of government officers and those that were approved had to keep an eye on the people in the towns and villages.

The cases where it may be more appropriate to impose fines in view of the status of the offender, the nature of the crime, and the motivation of the person, were decided by the commissioners. A consistent attempt was made to exercise equity amongst the offenders. The status in society of women and the concept of freedom as applicable to them were discussed at length by Kautilya in two chapters of the *Arthasastra*,[7] which also dealt with the punishment to be awarded to them for committing crimes and other offences. At the same time, the measures to protect women, whether young or old, from the machinations of evil people, are given in detail. Likewise, merchants and all kinds of traders were protected[8] by the State from exploiters. Their person and property were afforded absolute protection.

Thus, the Swami exercised benevolent but absolute sovereignty over his domain by dint of *Kantaka Sodhana* and *Dharmasthiya*[9] law and administration. The central administra-

[7] *Ibid* Bk. III, Chs. 3 & 4.

[8] *Arthasastra*, Bk. IV, Ch. 13.

[9] The *Dharmasthiya* court was presided by three *Amatyas* (officers) aided by three learned Brahmanas, it dealt with all civil disputes under the traditional heads of law. The other class of courts was known as *Kantaka Sodhana* (removal of thorns); three *Amatyas*, assisted by a number of spies, held these courts, which resembled summary courts of today. These courts tried all political offences and cases of misconduct on the part of officials.

tion unified diverse peoples and parts of the far-flung territories into one whole for purposes of social intercourse, commerce and the overall ends of security and defence. Internal unity and cohesion comprised the *sine qua non* for the king's career of aggression. Diverse interests—whether of dynasty or religion—were subordinated to this important, overall strategy. Towards the same objective, the king was enjoined to adopt and exert absolute powers in all matters of society and government. This was so, for any and every crisis or emergency postulated strength, prompt decision as well as continuity and consistency of policy. The king's was the final say in such contingencies though the real, day-to-day routine of administration was attended to by hardworking ministers and officers of the bureaucracy, who had a permanent tenure and status, and were selected via a rigid system for their abilities—administrative and others, including tact and resourcefulness. The objective of the well-ordered hierarchy of officials was to bring about wise and efficient administration through prompt decisions and the execution of a consistent policy. The coordination of the official machinery all over the State was achieved through the initiative and encouragement of ministers and the heads of departments. Thus the officers—*Amatyas, Anujivi, Brhtas* and others—were individually and collectively dedicated to the service of the Swami and, through him, the country.

Role of Ministers

It was the duty of the courtiers to keep track of the moods of the king, so as to ward off tricky situations, through tact and vigilance. Following the principles of[10] righteousness and as well as the paramount need of economy, the interests of the king and the State had to be protected at all times. The courtier should not needlessly cast aspersions on others nor harbour any illwill against any one. He should forget and forgive any act of evil done to him. At the same time, he was to guard against the king falling prey to evil habits or influences, as well as to save him from the machinations of intriguers and plotters. In case an erring monarch disregarded the highly important ends of *Artha* and honour, the ministers and courtiers were

[10] *Ibid*, Bk. V, Ch. 4.

enjoined by Kautilya to throw off such a king. Like the philosophers of Plato, the ministers, as visualised by Kautilya, provided the inspiration, and were the mainstay, so to say, of the multifarious activities of the State.

The ministers and courtiers guided the activities of the king, and thereby controlled the destiny of the State. Their responsibilities assumed a grave form at the time of the actual or apprehended death of a king and they had to exercise the utmost vigilance at this juncture, controlling the administration with a firm hand. They were the keepers of the national conscience on this occasion and others, including a national crisis or calamity like famine or plague. *Rajavyasanas* in the form of attacks by enemies of the kingdom had to be faced at all costs, the ministers making the best use of their capabilities—and their courage and statesmanship. The treasury had to be safeguarded and the army kept under check. The royal dynasty was to be kept under surveillance, the princes and pretenders to be dispersed (some to be sent out on difficult expeditions and others to be withdrawn from the capital), and tribes in outlying areas and other disaffected elements to be conciliated with bribes and other temptations. Only when these precautions—duly enunciated by Kautilya in the interest of the security of the State—were taken, the heir-apparent would be escorted by the ministers and courtiers from the palace to be shown to the people, and then would follow the grand ceremonial of the coronation, formally passing on to him the responsibilities of the administration of the State.

When the succession is disputed (*Svayam Rajyam Grnhiyat*) after the death of a king, the philosopher-statesman comes on the scene with the vital say in the matter. Bharadvaja is of the opinion that the minister should usurp the authority of the State in this strategic contingency. The minister was not to give up what came his way for his ensuing action would be dictated by the good of the State. Kautilya's advice to the minister should arm him with the authority of the sovereign during the interregnum, thereby consolidating the kingdom, but in this exercise of duty he must not provoke the wrath of the people. Thereafter, it is the minister's prerogative to enthrone such a prince who is adequately endowed with regal qualities. He achieves this end with the aid of the *Mahamatras* and

members of the royal family, after having persuaded the *Yogupurushas* and nobles to confirm his choice. He speaks to them: "Look at the father of this boy as well as your own valour and descent. This *Kumara* is only a flag and you yourselves are the lords." After having made the kingdom secure and instructing the new incombent (of the throne) in the fundamentals of polity (as illustrated in the *Itihasa* and the *Puranas*), the minister was free to retire from active role and retire to the jungles to lead the life of meditation of an ascetic.

Aristotle and Kautilya

Like Aristotle (and Plato), Kautilya sees the advantage in the rule by the noble elite; that is, the best and noblest comprising the aristocracy should be the Swami's guides and keepers of his conscience and serve him faithfully, unto the end. If need be, they were to lay down their lives for him. To Aristotle, the government by the aristocracy is the best form of government. He prescribes a code of conduct for oligarchs and monarchs so that, once power is in their hands, they retain it with all their might, using, as the needs dictate, all manner of espionage, including women spies, to keep down any apprehension of rebellion or assassination attempts on the rulers. Both Aristotle and Kautilya recommended methods to get rid of traitors and bad characters, that we would consider morally reprehensible. To them, as to Machiavelli, these artifices were the indispensable aids to preserve authority and the Rule of Law. In this context, however, we have to remember that both of them do state that there should be an underlying harmony between the people and the government and the latter should be rooted in the heart of the people.

The resemblances between Aristotle and Kautilya on the role of the State versus the individual are interesting, along with the subtle differences. To Aristotle, in idealistic terms, the State is a union or brotherhood of equal men, who are agreed to rule and to be ruled. The people coexist not by dint of fear or compulsion but are inspired by the motivation to lead the noblest lives and attaining the maximum possible achievement—mental and spiritual—in life. But the attainment of these ends was not possible for everybody in society. Those who were tainted by sordid or mean occupations were fit only for the

lower functions in society. Hence Aristotle (and Plato) excluded from citizenship certain classes of the people on the reasoning that their occupations were degrading. The Greek philosophers made no attempt to hide their contempt for the lower classes engaged in manual and industrial labour—an attitude comparable to that of the Brahmanas in India, which led to the formation of the caste system and the rigid application of the social code that separated the castes from birth to death. The Greek division of the society corresponds to Kautilya's division of the social orders into the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, which assumed the superiority of the highest, sacred class to the royal fighter and the Vaishya caste.

According to Kautilya and Aristotle, the State is like the soul to the body and, through strict measures, it ensures that amenities and weak spots for vice are eliminated. The temptation to evil deeds are also removed by the agencies of the State by raising the living standard of the people. The people are thus made to realise that the State has vital links with them, material and emotional. This concept of the role of the State aid anticipated by a millennium the modern notion of the Welfare State. Let us give an illustration from ancient India. The State encouraged agriculture, commerce and industries by all the means at its disposal. Active assistance was provided to agriculturists and manufactures in the supply of raw materials. Loans and subsidies were given to promote production. Similarly, land was given to the landless and water provided on favourable terms for irrigation purposes.

Special protection was given to artisans and weavers, regarded as essential services, and anyone harming them incurred heavy penalties. Taxes were remitted under certain circumstances and thus production was encouraged. Hence, in the *Atharva Veda*,[11] while the king is eulogised for his role as the protector of the people, it is mentioned that agriculture and husbandry were in a prosperous state, that peace and happiness reigned in the kingdom and that scarcity was an unknown factor. The king carrying out his duties in this manner was akin to divinity. He was the father and mother to his subjects and their greatest well-wisher: *Raja Mata Pitachaiva Raja*

[11] *Yajur Samhita*, XXII, 22

Hitakaro Ninam. This solicitude for the people reflected the scheme of the Welfare State as propounded in the early *Smritis.*

During the Vedic period, when the base of the economy was essentially agricultural, a lot of attention was devoted to the needs of agriculturists. There was progressive centralisation of power in the hands of the king in the post-Vedic and Epic periods alongside the evolution of the guilds, the latter changing individual activity to corporate enterprise, thereby giving rise to State control in matters economic. Despite the growth of guilds, agriculture retained its paramount importance and the king saw to the storage of half of the annual produce for the relief of areas in distress, and he had the indigent fed as well as provided with seed for growing food crops.

King's Duties

A study of the history of the post-Buddhistic period and the *Jataka* tales reveals that the forces that shaped the policy of the interference of the State in the economic life of the people in the Mauryan period had already taken shape in the centuries before the Mauryas came on the scene. The other aspects of economic life that were fostered in the age are what the Epics—the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*—mention as *Trivarga Dharma, Artha* and *Kama* comprising human needs and aspirations. The Epics also fostered the paternalistic ideals connected with royalty which provided the cementing factor of the Mauryan nation. Kautilya, the prophet of the Mauryan State, made the functions of the State more economic and social than political. Hence, as mentioned already, Kautilya advised the king to provide active assistance to the farmer by providing him not only seeds and cattle in times of need but also giving him money. Reservoirs were to be got constructed by him and filled with water; alternatively, he may provide the site, timber and the needed materials for the reservoirs.

Likewise, the construction of new irrigation works and canals was the king's responsibility. Mining operations and manufactures also fell within his direct field of responsibility. New mines were to be explored. The Superintendents of Metals (*Lokadhyaksha*) were to look after the manufacture of copper, the sulphate of arsenic, bronze, lead, tin and mercury. Likewise,

the manufacture of salt was a governmental monopoly.[12] The importance of mines as the source of the Treasury was realised by Kautilya.[13] He advised the king to open a number of departments to administer these, and, supervise closely the functioning of mines and manufactures. Kautilya says: "Mines are the source of the treasury, from treasury comes the power of the government, and the earth whose ornament is the treasury is acquired by means of treasury and the army."

Administration-wise, the king's duties vis-a-vis the people were thus multifarious. He was enjoined by Kautilya to protect the agriculturist from the rigours of oppressive fines, inappropriate taxes and forced labour. He was to protect the farmers' herds of cattle from thieves, tigers and other poaching animals, snakes and other poisonous creatures as well as from cattle diseases. Pastures were to be provided by him, kept in trim for the use of shepherds and cowherds. Forests yielding timber and elephant forests were to be provided and protected. Kautilya is very keen that wealth of the State should be augmented by all means. It is reiterated that the king should take all possible steps to foster and widen the scope of foreign trade.

The science of *Vartta*,[14] dealing with agriculture and trade, primarily rested on the power of the State to regulate its subjects and check external enemies. Considering the etymology of *Vartta*, Kautilya says that *Artha* is the *Vritti* of man and it covers the whole range of human activity. *Artha* poses the question of ends and *Vartta* that of means. *Vartta* encompassed agriculture, cattle-breeding, reservation of produce, weaving, carpentary, smithy, prices and wages, weights and measures, tolls, passport regulations, coinage and especially the sponsored domestic industry for widows, orphans, old and helpless women and unmarried girls. Thus *Vartta* comprehensively embraced the most vital divisions of economics relating to practical administration, such as the organisation, fair distribution and convenience of transport. Thus, *Vartta* stood for the science of economics.

[12] *Arthasastra*, Bk. II, Ch. 2
[13] *Ibid* Bk. II, Ch. 2
[14] *Arthasastra*, Bk. I, Ch. 4

Kautilya was well-versed in *Vartta* and *Dandaniti*, in so far as the latter represented the science of politics and was concerned specially with the application of the coercive authority of the Swami. Kautilya's state basically had a materialistic basis. Even when he expatiated on the role of a saintly king, he observed realistically that "wealth alone is important, in as much as charity and desire depend upon wealth for their realisation."[15] Hence, Kautilya's reiteration of the importance of power and politics for the acquisition and preservation of wealth. These contribute in abundant measure to the affluence of social life and the happiness of people, for the Kautilyan state was a social welfare state like Aristotle's state.[16] The 'state capitalism', such as it was—the State owning industries and exploiting land, mines and forests—had one over-riding objective: the creation of a prosperous economy and progressive increase of the national wealth of the state.

Mauryan Administration

A major portion of the *Arthasastra* is devoted by Kautilya to matters financial and financial administration. Town planning and fortification are described in detail. The complex web of a wide-ranging bureaucracy and thirty *Adhyakshas*, constituted as the apex of the complicated hierarchy of departments controlling all social, economic and religious activities headed by the king, is graphically described by Kautilya. The presence of the king—the ultimate authority in all spheres—is felt everywhere. The administration of the State, neatly organised into territorial divisions, each having a certain number of inhabitants, endowed with their occupations/progessions and resources in land and cattle, is also elaborately described.[17]

These divisions begin with the village (*Grama*), which is the unit of administration and then it rises to *Sangrahma*, *Kharvatika Dronamukha* and *Sthaniya*. Each unit has its administrative head who exercises power as the duly constituted representative of the central government. The *Adhyaksha-prakarana* details the duties of officers who had twin functions: besides carrying

[15] *Ibid* Bk. I, Ch. 7.
[16] *Ibid* Bk. I, Ch. 15.
[17] *Ibid* Bk. V, Ch. 3.

on the administration, they oversaw the activities of trade and commerce for the State. The *Sitadhyaksha*, as the Superintendent of Agriculture, supervised the crown lands with the help of the lay farmers, landless labourers, as well as the cultivators called *Ardha Sitah*—they paid one-fourth or one-fifth of the crop as rent of the land. It is not clear in the *Arthasastra* as to how the revenue was collected but each cultivator paid it direct to the official concerned.

The Mauryan system of administration, so far as it applied to agriculture, was a sort of state-landlordism. The land revenue system was efficient and on it depended largely the stability of the government—even the security of the State. The cash coffers of the government were adequately filled from the land revenue and the income that came from the royal domain as well as the taxation of non-crown lands. Land duly prepared for tilling was allotted to *Karadah* tax-payers for cultivation—it was theirs for the purpose, for life. Two kinds of taxes are mentioned by Kautilya—*Bhaga* land-revenue and *Udakabhaga*. Though State landlordism was the rule, it appears that there was private ownership of land also. This is implied by the mention in the *Arthasastra*[18] of the right of alienation by sale or via mortgage. There is mention of *Parabhumi* for raising buildings on sites which belonged to others.

Formation of new village was encouraged by the State. The surplus population of any congested area was induced to move to these areas, or else foreigners were given incentives to emigrate to these places. The revenues accruing to the State comprised *Shadbhaga* (sixth part of the produce), the water rates, octroi dues, tolls and customs duties. All the reserved forests—duly protected—and those unclassified, were State monopolies. Likewise, elephant forests and the ones yielding teak, palmyra, bamboo, birch, etc., were crown property. Metals like copper, lead and bronze, plants yielding colouring materials, medicinal herbs, and even poisonous plants as well as skins of animals, belonged to the king. He controlled the industries that were provided with basic materials from these sources, and saw to it that the labour and industrial laws promulgated by him were obeyed by the people, and that the offenders were sternly punished.

[18]*Arthasastra*, Bk. III, Chs. 9 & 11.

The treasury was amply funded by the income from the mines. The State derived good revenue from the minting[19] of gold, silver and copper. Both the land and ocean mines[20] were a State monopoly, directly owned by the State, or jointly by the State and private parties. It was the responsibility of the State to keep gold mines in trim and to explore and activate new ones. Officials who supervised these important operations were appointed by the king. The premium of five per cent, a share from the manufacture of goods from minerals, tolls, octroi and the compensation for interfering with the royal monopoly of profits (*Vaidharana*) of coinage (*Rupa* and *Rupika*), were the constituents of the king's income from mines.

The income from mines was increased by the State going in for the manufacture of agricultural and other implements and the weapons of war.[21] Mail armour was produced but its manufacture was not a State monopoly. Mining and commerce in minerals and mineral products were exclusive State operations. The king was enjoined to oversee this monopoly so that the treasury was adequately full all the time.[22] Likewise, salt constituted a State monopoly. Salt tax was an important source of revenue. It was collected as rent at the place of its extraction and as part of the produce. This tax was levied on salt, whether produced at home or imported from abroad. Heavy fines and punishments were imposed on those who adulterated salt or other edible commodities. The manufacture of oils was supervised by the Superintendent of Storehouse. It was the duty of the Superintendent of Commerce (*Panyadhaksha*) to secure domestic markets for the products manufactured by the State. There was a system of incentives to encourage the manufacture of silk dress materials, fibrous and woollen clothes and cotton fabrics. Workers putting in extra labour were given the due overtime allowances. Social welfare was advanced in so far as cripples, widows, beggars and poor, unmarried girls were provided employment. They received extra tips for working on holidays.

An official was deputed to collect tolls on merchandise—

[19] *Arthasastra*, Bk II, Chs, 2 & 17.
[20] *Ibid.* Bk II, Ch. 1.
[21] *Ibid.* Bk II, Ch. 1.
[22] *Ibid.* Bk II, Ch. 1.

imported or exported. Kautilya observes that merchandise, whether imported or exported, shall be sold to people at equitable prices, to avoid any profiteering that mars their interests. He prescribed severe punishments for offenders hoarding foodstuffs or profiteering therefrom. In the case of local commodities, a five per cent general profit was permitted over the fixed price. As for foreign articles, the permissible profit was ten per cent. The profits secured by the middlemen were strictly regelated and any excesses were liable to punishment. The State's role, however, was paternalistic, in so far as unforeseen losses incurred by merchants were compensated by the State.

Dimensions of Taxation

It is interesting that, according to Kautilya, trade and commerce was carried on with foreign countries. The active interest of the Mauryan State in the promotion of trade is seen from Kautilya's provisions for the construction and security of trade-routes and the foundation of market-towns in rural areas. There is a plenitude of information about ships[23]—peaceful and otherwise—and about the laws of navigation.

A number of goods were imported from China, Kamarupa, Simhala, Pandya and other countries. *Vartanam*[24] levy was paid for all foreign commodities at the port of entry; another levy, called *Dvaradaya*, was paid by the concerned businessmen for import of foreign goods. Another interesting bureaucratic feature was that undesirable aliens were not debarred from cities; on the contrary, they were made to pay a tax to enter the city in question.

The port town had a brisk commercial life.[25] Ferry fees of all kinds helped swell the king's treasury. Since the king owned rivers, lakes, reservoirs and even the seas and oceans, he levied taxes on fishing, ferrying and trading in these waters. The customs and other dues from passengers of ships, pearl-

[23]"The Superintendent of Ships shall show fatherly kindness to it, whenever a weather-beaten ship arrives at port". "Pirate ships or vessels with the enemy, shall be destroyed." "Foreign merchants should be allowed free access to ports, to which entry should be regulated by passes."

[24]*Arthasastra*, Bk. V, Ch. 21.

[25]Mukerjee, Radhakumud: "*A History of Indian Shipping and Maritime Activity.*

fishers, conch-shell dealers, were collected by Superintendent of Marines.[26] Collection of income tax was well-organised. It constituted a major part of the revenues of the State. A big slice came from the income tax from dancers, musicians, rope dancers (*Plavaka*), actors, jugglers (*Sambhika*), soothsayers, *Ganikas*, *Roopdasis* and other prostitutes. This taxation was not progressive but proportional to the fluctuating income. The *Rupajivas* collected their fees from their visitors and, like the *Agaronami* of Athens (Greece), the price, that each prostitute had to pay according to her class, was fixed.[27]

An Excess Profits Tax was also collected. A general sales tax was levied on sales in general. The sale and purchase of buildings as conducted by auctioners was also taxable.[28] When the value of buildings was raised by traders, the excess over the usual price went to the State. Taxes were collected by the Superintendent of Slaughterhouses from butchers and sellers of meat; he also regulated the supply and sale of meat. Gambling operations were centralized under the control of the Superintendent of Gambling. A tax called *Yatravetana* was levied from pilgraims. Thus the State was quite enthusiastic in the matter of collection of taxes. Though revenues were collected from all possible sources, it was not to exploit or over-tax the people but to provide them as well as the State immunity from external and internal danger. The ample resources thus assiduously collected, were benevolently spent by the State—practically a welfare state—on social services and highly productive enterprises, such as laying of roads, the building of public structures and forts, the setting up of educational institutions, orphanages and asylums as well as new villages.

The high-ranking officials of the State exercised the utmost vigilance, to scrutinize and control the income and expenditure of the State. The benevolent public measures of the king postulated security against internal and external enemies, and this was provided through a very complex and formidable system of espionage, very well described by Kautilya—hence the comparison of the great Mauryan statesman with Machiavelli. The treasury was replenished all the time. What was

[26] *Arthasastra*; Bk. II. Ch. 28.
[27] *Ibid*: Bk. II. Ch. 6.
[28] *Arthasastra*: BK. II, Ch. 4.

constantly guarded against was a depletion of the treasury which might lead to internal revolt or external invasion. The high officers as well as the governors and deputy governors of Ujjain, Kalinga, Takshasila, Suvarnagiri, Tosali, Samapa, etc.), were advised by Kautilya to be vigilant all the time, and extend full cooperation to keep the State coffers well provided.

Public Finance

Kautilya was keenly conscious of the fact that public finance was the backbone of the State. The administrative apparatus and the enterprises emanating therefrom depended upon finance.[29] The power of the government ensued from the treasury: "from the Treasury comes the power of the Government and the earth whose ornament is the Treasury, is acquired by means of the Treasury and army."[30] This realistic appraisal was made by Kautilya vis-a-vis the transition that had taken place in the country in his time from a largely agrarian and industrial economy. As a result of Alexander's invasion, India interacted vibrantly with the important currents of the world movements. There came about an unprecedented disintegration of economic and political idea of the *Rashtra*. There were rapid fluctuations in the sources of revenue. The agricultural taxes declined. Hence Kautilya attached much importance to customs and income tax and adapted the economy to the emerging set-up of the Mauryan rule.

Evaluated by our standards, Kautilya's *Arthasastra* is a unique authoritative text on public finance in ancient India. Like Aristotle, who has been rightly characterised as the Father of European Political Science, Kautilya thought in terms of enduring values—and practically evolved a science of public administration and finance, far in advance of his time. His was a treatise of lasting value and universal application and he showed himself to be more advanced than Aristotle. "While Aristotle and the Greeks condemned interest, trade and exchange, Kautilya recognised their use and importance in the economy of national life."[31]

[29] *Ibid* Bk. II, Ch. 8.
[30] *Ibid* Bk. II, Ch. 12.
[31] Rao, M.V. Krlshna: *Studies in Kautilya.*

Kautilya regarded revenue and taxes as the earning of the sovereign for the services he and the Administration would render to the people, afford them due protection and maintain law and order. The Raja was only a *Bhumi-Pathih*—the trustee but not the owner of land—as his role was to project it, for the people and for the land revenue, the principle source of the State's income. The taxes from the land and water were the king's for he was the protector of both.

In Kautilya's era tax was not "a compulsory contribution made to the State" as it is in the modern time, superseding any immediate quantitative relations between the tax-player and the State. In Kautilya's time the relationship was one of contract, between the king and his subjects.[32] Reflecting the Aryan tradition of *Dharma*, this contract theory of taxation was a special feature of ancient Indian public finance. It was a sacred relationship, based on *Dharma*, in so far as the people were entitled to claim the refund of taxes when there was any laxity in affording them protection. If the areas inhabited by *Pauras* and *Janapadas* were attacked by raiders, they could ask the king for tax concessions, or even the remission of the dues. Once the king lagged in his duty to afford protection to the subjects, the bond of allegiance between the two was snapped, and the latter had the option to choose another ruler, or to stage a threat to move to the enemy domain.[33]

The principle of taxation as propounded by Kautilya can easily stand the scrutiny of any present-day evaluation. Each tax was specific; none was arbitrary. Precision determined the schedule of each payment—its time, manner and quantity clearly pre-determined. The land revenue was universally fixed at 1/6th share of the produce. As for import and export duties, these were determined on *ad valorem* basis. The import duty levied on foreign goods was 20 per cent, i.e., 1/5th of their value. Tolls were leviable on merchandise, whether imported or exported, on the same basis. Road cess, ferry charges and other transit levies were fixed—all tolls determined after thorough scrutiny.[34] There was condemnation on arbitrary exactions or their preemptory collection. The taxes, says Kautilya, "must be

[32] *Arthasastra*: Bk. II, Ch. 8
[33] *Arthasastra*; Bk. XIII, Ch. 2.
[34] *Ibid* Bk. II, ch. 21-22.

levied at proper times and place just as fruits are gathered from a garden as often as they become ripe."[35] In other words, the taxes were to be collected only when due, but the citizens should not find them irksome. The same principle guided exemptions that were due to them on equity grounds. Permanency of tenure (of service) and allied incentives comprised the rewards to the officials who increased the king's revenue. The collectors were instructed by Kautilya to carry on the work of revenue collection in such a way that government expenditure is decreased and the revenue accruing to the government increased progressively.[36]

Welfare State

All told, Kautilya's concept of taxation has a truly modern ring—the processes punctiliously described by him resembling charges made by a public authority for specific services rendered and the goods provided by it. The overall emphasis was on equity and justice in taxation. Vis-a-vis the protection afforded by the government, the citizen was to compensate, as nearly as possible, in direct proportion to his assets and abilities. That the affluent have a bigger taxable capacity was well realised by Kautilya, who, therefore, scaled down the taxes to be drawn from the indigent. For the agriculturist, the water tax rate was proportionately increased in relation to the irrigation facilities provided by the State.[37] Equity also prevailed in determining the toll duties, ferry charges and other charges on commodities transported by men or pack animals. The Welfare State principles were evident so far as not only learned Brahmanas,[38] students, women and minors, but the subjects, who were suffering from disease, or were dumb or blind or otherwise incapacitated, were exempted from taxes, or given remissions, in proportion to their disabilities. If, however, a Brahmana was professionally in a vocation that[39]

[35] *Ibid* Bk. II, Ch. 12.

[36] *Ibid* Bk. II, Ch. 9.

[37] *Arthasastra*, Bk. II, Ch. 24.

[38] The Brahmanas of the Vedic faith enjoyed traditional immunity from taxation. This prerogative of theirs was not questioned except by a solitary Jaina writer, Jinasena, but no authority—Hindu, Buddhist or Jaina—concurred with him.

[39] *Arthasastra*; Bk. II, Ch. 28.

belonged to an inferior caste, he was obliged to pay the taxes. The revenue collectors maintained an uptodate record of all these exemptions and remissions.[40]

The revenue of the State was divided into clear-cut categories. Gross capital—excise duties, taxes on artisans, guilds and warehouses, duties collected at the gates of the cities and ports, metallic manufactures, cotton goods, liquors, oils, etc.—constituted the most important source of public finance. Varying from one-tenth to one-twentieth, the duty was fixed according to the kind and value of the commodity. Other sources were: profits from state lands (*Sita*), religious taxes (*Bali*), taxes paid in cash (*Kara*), taxes paid by merchants, superintendent of ferries and other boats, etc. Nine kinds of revenues came from the mines. Public works, fruits, orchards, flower gardens and irrigated fields also yielded considerable income. The State leased forest lands for sale and timber. Shepherds, cowherds and owners of herds of other animals like horses, camels, donkeys, etc., had to pay regular taxes to the State. *Vanik-path* was the income from roads and traffic paid via tolls on land routes and waterways.

Public Revenue

Kautilya's conception of tax revenue and non-tax revenue constitutes his unique contribution to the study of public finance. This broadly corresponds with modern system of categorization of revenues accruing to the State. He placed land revenues and taxes on commerce under the head of the tax revenues. Land revenue and taxes on various kinds of commerce are placed under the latter category. These were fixed taxes and included half-yearly taxes like *Bhadra*, *Padika* and *Vasantika* presentations to the king, on various auspicious occasions, marginal taxes, etc. Customs duties and duties on sales, taxes on trades and professions, and direct taxes comprised the taxes on commerce.

Produce of crown lands, profits accruing from the manufacture (by the State) of oil, sugarcane, beverages, profitable exchange of foodgrains as well as various barters by the State authorities, were placed under the head of no-tax revenue. The most important items of public revenue were the land tax, cus-

[40] *Ibid* Bk. II, Ch. 35.

toms duties, excise duties on sales to ensure that there was no tax evasions. Restrictions were imposed that no commodity could be sold at the original place of its growth or manufacture. If any goods were sold at the place of manufacture, heavy fines were imposed on the offenders. The State stamp (*Abhignana Mudra*) in *Sindhura* (or vermilion) was affixed on goods, duly released by the State authorities—and hence the counterfeit commodities could be easily detected.

Commodities utilised on marriage occasions, the articles needed for sacrificial ceremonies, and special kinds of gifts, were exempted from taxation. There was no prohibition as such, but restrictive excise duties were imposed on intoxicants, the professed objective being the reduction of their consumption by the populace. Traffic in liquors was strictly regulated—infringements, big or small, duly punished. Free use of liquors was permitted for four days on festival occasions. In this regard, the State was also liberal in permitting the use of *Sveta Sura* (white liquor) in families where there was sickness. All kinds of liquor were subject to a toll of 5 per cent. Tax evaders and other offenders where fined to the tune of 600 *Panas*. Spies posted at liquor shops checked on the spending by customers.

Taxation Measures

War taxation features prominently in several sections of the *Arthasastra*. The financial system is made stringent during the emergency. Arbitrary financial measures are similarly enjoined during other emergencies like famine, floods or periods of other socio-economic stress. Kautilya visualizes continuous organic growth of the economic life and interaction of economic doctrines with political concepts and the stern realities of life. Hence, the land revenue was raised from one-sixth to one-fourth, during an emergency. Foodgrains were procured in large quantities along with such necessities of life as vegetables, fruits, fish, medicines, cottons, silks, etc. Merchants and other traders, goldsmiths, prostitutes along with those controlling religious endowments, were made to pay heavy tolls, during war and other emergencies. The exemptions from these heavy dues obtained only in the cases of Brahmanas, forest tribes and those engaged in building fortifications. The king was advised by Kautilya to raise war loans-Says Kautilya in the *Kosa Bhisamharna* sections that the Collec-

tor General shall seek subscriptions for war loans from the cities and villages. The people engaged in commerce will pay big donations.

An extremely complicated administrative set-up as the bureaucracy was in Kautilya's time, it was an important, even indispensable ally of the Swami. He saw to it that his largesse along with their dues were received by the State functionaries on an equitable basis, which incidentally contributed to the peace and security of the kingdom. The complex bureaucracy comprised ministers, chamberlains, commissioners, superintendents of a number of departments, *Amatyas*, *Mahamatras*, officers in charge of forts, State lands and boundry areas as specified, revenue collectors, bards, story-tellers, astrologers, spies, *Ganikas*, *Yuktas*, etc. The nature of their duties, including the occupational hazards, determined their salaries. State endowments of land, along with accommodation, were made in favour of physicians, surgeons and messengers—these grants were inalienable. Besides, there were grants of subsistence allowances for the dependent members of those who lost their lives while attending to their duties.[41]

As has been mentioned already, the king was ever solicitous for the welfare of his subjects. Among other obligations, he was responsible for the construction of *Dharamsalas* at the places of pilgrimage and looking after the temples and other sacred constructions. (These places were called *Viharyatra* in Kautilya's times; Ashoka changed these to *Dharma Yatra*). *Samajas*, *Utsavas* and other forms of entertainment for the people were directly financed by the king. These festival occasions honouring the gods were well utilised to reinforce the loyalty of the people to the king. The functionaries looking after the ceremonials at the palace were well remunerated. The priest and the sacrificial priest received a monthly salary of 48,000 *Panas*; the same was the honorarium of the heir apparent, the queen and the mother of the king. No wonder that the regal opulence of Pataliputra was compared with the contemporary capitals of the Persian empire.

Among the writers on ancient Indian polity, Kautilya, while instructing the Swami in the lessons of dutifulness and impartia-

[41] *Arthasastra*: Bk. II, Ch, 12.

lity towards his subjects (illustrated at best in the raising and disbursing of the public finance), advocates the doctrine of his paternal rule, in two-fold aspect—the beneficent and the authoritarian. The great mass of industrial and trade regulations set forth in the *Arthasastra* and the vast bureaucracy of officials —described earlier—imply that the task was performed with considerable success.

All said and done, any evaluation by modern standards[42] would place Kautilya's *Arthasastra* as an authoritative text on public finance, administration and law. His conception of tax revenue and non-tax revenue was his unique contribution to the study of public finance. More than any other classical writer on India's ancient polity, he realised that public finance constituted the backbone of the might of the State. Credibly enough, one can add that his was the only politico-economic treatise of its kind in classical antiquity, and, at that, perspicacious, objective and far-seeing.

[42]Interest in the *Arthasastra* of Kautilya has been evinced by Russian Indologists, who have been writing learned commentaries on Indian treatises and the history of Indian philosophy and religion. The Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences published, in English (in 1980) A. Samazvantsev's "Arthasastra—Problems of Social Architecture and Law".

Kautilya, Machiavelli and Aristotle

KAUTILYA has often been compared with Niccolo Machiavelli (1496-1527), the Italian political thinker, whose famous reflections are set forth in two complementary works, the *Discourses* and *The Prince*, which were published posthumously in 1531 and 1532. The comparison is not entirely complimentary when we consider that for a long time the word *Machiavellian* had become embedded in the English language as synonymous with *Mephistophelian*. Reassessment of Machiavelli's works, starting at the beginning of this century, somewhat toned down their unsavoury reputation.

Nevertheless, a lot has been said about Kautilya's 'Machiavellenism'. His critics have characterised him as a wily, unscrupulous Brahmana, who, as the malevolent councillor to tyrant-monarchs, did not hesitate to inspire dastardly crimes for the greatness of the State. To others, he is honest, disinterested, unselfish, astute, a noble spokesman of national liberties and emancipation from foreign domination and internal misrule. To still others—and their number is happily on the increase—he is the political philosopher *par excellence*.

Similarities

Kautilya's *Arthasastra* has much that is common with the content and tenor of *The Prince*—a manual written by Machiavelli for the guidance of rulers based upon the principles set forth by him in the *Discourses*. The two books are perhaps the world's most famous treatises on the art of kingship. And, both the writers realistically analyse the methods by which a king may rise to supreme power and maintain it against all odds. It is indeed a matter for interesting speculation whether Machia-

velli found his inspiration and model in Kautilya. May be, some European had brought back an Arabic or other translation of the *Arthasastra* which Machiavelli drew upon but never acknowldeged.[1]

There are, however, points of similarity between the characteristics of Kautilya's India, the Italy of Machiavelli and our own turbulent times. The third century B.C. (Kautilya's era) and the 15th century A.D. (Machiavelli's age) were periods of immense vitality that went with the comparative lack of restraint in the social mores of the changing times, paralleled only by the turbulence and chaos in the political ideas of modern times. The two earlier periods were distinguished by the breakdown of long-established forms of democracy which were overtaken by authoritarian regimes, because the people who could take no more the disruption caused by ceaseless warfare and dissensions, readily accepted (benevolent) despots who could guarantee them comparative security.

With the background of an able, conscientious public servant of the Republic of Florence (elected Secretary to the Second Chancery of the Republic, he was sent on 24 missions as ambassador-at-large to several European countries), Machiavelli was able to work out a theory of government, quite different from the earlier theories of the Christian era, which were based on the principles of natural and moral laws. Machiavelli approached the problem of politics as a scientific investigator, and the outstanding characteristic of *The Prince* was the complete absence of moral principle in its main argument. Machiavelli, the product of his time, had seen the breakdown of Christian moral values. People in Italy had lost faith in the tenets of Roman Catholic religion. Their dominant preoccupation appeared to be the security of personal happiness and personal property. The State was weak, divided and in danger of being swallowed by powerful neighbouring States of France and Spain. No wonder that Machiavelli, reflecting the cynicism of the age he lived in, was contemptuous of moral principles.

In *The Prince*, Machiavelli lays down with cool, scientific

[1]This, of course, is pure speculation. Machiavelli might equally have got his ideas from the Chinese *Book of the Lord Shang*, brought back by Marco Polo.

detachment, the general principles by which a state can be most effectively unified and strenghthened. He is not concerned whether the means thus prescribed are 'moral' in the accepted sense of the term. What matters is the end in view—the creation and maintenance of a strong, united and expanding state. For the reasons given in his other major work on politics, *Discourses*, this end is assumed to be the primary object of politics, and to be dictated by men's fundamental demand for personal security. Whether it is 'good' or not is a meaningless question to the Florentine diplomat-philosopher, until and unless 'the good' is equated with 'the desired'.

Kautilya evinces the same proclivities, and hence, to different scholars, he stands for different things, just as Machiavelli was variously understood by different people. To some, Kautilya is the evil-minded adviser[2] of tyrant kings, to others he is the eminent, disinterested spokesman of natural liberties, who upholds freedom from alien domination at any cost, and reiterates the constant avoidance of internal subversion and misrule. But these different estimates, including the ones already mentioned, adulating him as a great writer on ancient polity, are not quiie fair to Kautilya, for he is best interpreted in the perspective of his own professed objective, his special genius and his milieu. We have to consider how he endeavoured to effect changes in the political thought processes of his day—not what were the end (or contributory) results of his thoughts in later days. Kautilya's consistent attempt was to make political science more theoretical by accreting to it certain tried tenets and principles. His objective, like that of Machiavelli, was to transform statecraft into a permanent science. He wrote his *Arthasastra* for Chandragupta Maurya and gave probably the first authoritarian account of the political and social conditions in the Gangetic Plain.

[2]Bana, the celebrated author of the *Kadambari*, brands Kautilya's statecraft with ignominy on the ground of its cruelty and connects its followers with the creed of deceit, treachery and murder. The latter group (as pointed out by Dr. U.N. Ghoshal in "A History of Indian Political Ideals"; 1959) includes the author of the *Kamandakiya Nitisara*, besides others who place Kautilya among "makers of the kingly science."

Kautilya and Machiavelli

Mature, long experience and off-the-cuff assessments, springing from the soil, as it were, constitute—according to Kautilya—indispensable guides to political action. Among the postulates of victory for a king is that he conform to set political principles and rules sanctified by *Rajadharma*. Therefore, both Kautilya and Machiavelli commend to statesmen considered, set policies that are expedient and practical. Their in-depth analyses of given historical events demonstrate facets of universal validity which can be applied in comparable situations. Their writings were in fact down-to-earth: whereas Kautilya's *Arthasastra* reads like the meticulous notes of an official with an all-round experience based on practical knowledge, *The Prince* is concerned with the practical question of the precise methods which a 'prince' or monarch must employ to govern society effectively.

Just as Machiavelli deplored the loss of power and prestige of the Empire and the Papacy, Kautilya juxtaposed the great achievements of the past of the country with the penurious, unstable conditions that prevailed in the wake of Alexander's invasion. Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* with the professed object of indicating the methods by which Lorenzo de Medici could make himself master of all Italy, just as Kautilya had in mind the expansion of the Mauryan Empire under the aegis of Chandragupta Maurya. Machiavelli's ruminating over the plight of Italy in the beginning of the 15th century was paralleled—much earlier—by Kautilya, who was seized of the sad fact how India in the second half of the 4th century B.C. had succumbed to foreign domination. This subjugation to aliens acted like a catalytic agent and provided a keen incentive to political analysis and historical inquiry, pregnant with the seeds of critical self-analysis. The two political philosophers nurtured a conviction in the definite superiority of the political and other institutions of the ancient world as so many infallible guides to their own (and later) times. Both of them held the belief that through a proper, critical study of history, one could deduce not only the causes of maladies of society but the cures also.

The political maxims of Kautilya (and Machiavelli) are not just codifications of the practices and procedures of his era but have solid foundation in principles laid bare by intuitive per-

ception of political truths, and established via a scientific process of verifiable observation. Imbued with an enduring value, these precepts have validity, not only for the writer's contemporary time but the future also. One of the signal lessons of history is that in any particular situation, alternative courses of action are open to the statesmen or the monarch, though the choice offered may be limited. Accordingly, Kautilya introduced (as Machiavelli did, later) the formulae of elasticity in political action. Endowed with an uncanny insight into the unforeseen and unpredictable complexities and turns of history, Kautilya (again, anticipating Machiavelli by so many centuries) found that political tactics have to be flexible in a fast-changing, fluid world.

Votaries of Power

Both Machiavelli and Kautilya were votaries of power; they also admired efficiency in man. But the vital difference between the practical application of their political theories is that Machiavelli's hero (Cesare Borgia of *The Prince*, whose achievements are idealised to the end) acquired considerable power through the use of force and fraud. To Kautilya, on the other hand, the king was subservient to his *Rajadharma* even though the king was the source and foundation of all sovereign authority. But Machiavelli glorified the State and stressed the overriding claim of the State to the loyalty of the individual. He would not concede that man had any right over against the State. Man attained his optimum development through subordinating himself to the society, held Machiavelli, and that the State provided a political framework, essential to the development of mankind.

To Machiavelli a scientific approach to politics is the only national course of action, available to man. He holds that those who seek to solve political issues by an objective standard of morality only complicate matters, for they subject the issues to their own prejudices, and prevent the solution of problems in a scientific manner. Whether the means employed to achieve these ends are legimitate does not bother Machiavelli. To him political forces are essentially materialistic and irrational. In fact, Machiavelli completely divorced the study of politics from the study of ethics. His writings (like Kautilya's and

Aristotle's) continue to be interesting to the political philosopher for his salient view that the only rational approach to the problems of politics is a scientific one and that the facts of morality are empirical.

To Machiavelli, as also much later, during his heyday to Mussolini, the State was all in all; but to Kautilya the State was subordinated to the society which it did not create but which it existed to secure. Kautilya reflected the Indian conception of polity in which the king was the servant of the people and there was no room for the possibility of a tyranny of force compelling unquestioned obedience to the State. His philosophy (of history) was not fatalistic. History, to him, was the expression of human intelligence and reason a formative and conquering power. His reasoning has some similarity to Hobbes' in stressing the king's duties to the people, but has no resemblance either to Hegel's or Spinoza's theories of the State.

A broad philosophic basis distinguishes the doctrines of both Machiavelli and Kautilya. Their approach is pragmatic in so far as they keep within the confines of immediate practical concern. Flexibility is their hallmark as they relax the rigidity of the doctrines of politics, suiting the changing political events and conditions. There is further similarity between the two political philosophers as their ideal is a state whose ruler is bent on expansion and the subjugation of a large territory. To both the State is *a priori* committed to expansion of territory —not merely the necessity of the existence of the State—because human affairs are in an everlasting state of flux.

The *Discourses* show that Machiavelli never thought that a dictatorship was the best form of government—it could at best be justified only as an expedient in special circumstances, e.g., when the State has to be unified and made strong or when a corrupt state must needs be reformed. Machiavelli found the origin and justification of the government in its power to promote the security and happiness of the individual.[3] If the government fails to achieve this objective, it won't secure willingness on the part of the ruled, to obey, and will meet its downfall.

[3] *An Introduction to Political Philosophy* By A.R.M. Murray; 1953; London.

Thus it appears that Machiavelli's theory finds application and acceptability in the democratic system rather than the totalitarian, for only in the former case is the individual's will expressed in the will of the majority. As a matter of fact Machiavelli subscribes with fervour to the opinion of Aristotle (Kautilya's viewpoint is much the same) about the judgement of the community on broad issues having better chances of being right than the judgement of a single individual or a small group of individuals. He expresses himself[4] in apt words:

> As touching wisdom, and settled stayedness, I say that the People is wiser and more staid, and of more exact judgement than a Prince. And therefore not without cause the People's voice is likened to God's voice; for we see that the universal opinions bring to pass rare effects in their presages, so that it seems by their secret virtues they foresee their own good or evil.

Nevertheless, it is true that some of Machiavelli's principles have found ready acceptance in modern totalitarian governments. Many critics of this century, who observed dispassionately the transformation of *The Prince* and other works by Machiavelli, from once notorious to respectable and famous writings, also noted that Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin pursued courses of action, including the infamons 'purges', which are in accordance with the maxims prescrjbed by the Florentine political philosopher. Still, it is clear from the extended argument of the *Discourses* that Machiavelli did not opt, thumbs down, for dictatorship.

Break with Tradition

Machiavelli is not, however, concerned with the education of citizens. Still, his contemporaries (like Leonardo da Vinci in *Machiavelli the Scientist*), and later writers, observed that Machiavelli is more scientific than Aristotle, or any other of his predecessors, and that is what constitutes his break with tradition. Still another departure from accepted norms is Machiavelli's view about religious beliefs which he considers as

[4] *Discourses on Livy* : I, 58.

having no objective significance, except in so far as the ruler or the statesman may use them as valuable allies in fighting a war, professedly against the forces of evil. Thus Machiavelli's attitude to politics anticipated the anti-religion dialectic of Karl Marx. Both the philosophers believed that political forces are essentially 'material' or irrational, and that the moral judgements usually inspired by these elements are themselves the expression of forces that are equally irrational. From this and other well-established premises, we can infer that the key to a rational understanding of political forces and the successful achievement of the end of government is reached through scientific analysis rather than through morality. This interpretation has acquired an added dimension in the present century with the development of logical doctrines which claim that moral experience cannot, from its very nature, provide rational directives for human conduct—in national and, specially, in international affairs.

The attitude of Kautilya and Machiavelli to history reveals interesting resemblances and divergencies. The empiricism of Machiavelli, bolstered by many allusions to signal examples from classical history, is paralleled by the empirical method of Kautilya, who occasionally makes apt reference to traditional history. To Kautilya history was the rationalised sum-total of human experiences. Its lessons had a validity and utility to the observer and the analyst, and, through them, the kings. In fact, the *Arthasastra* was written more from standpoint of the rulers rather than the governed. And this reveals that Kautilya was interested in the establishment and operation of the machinery of government in the forces through which governmental power was generated and applied so that the integrity and solidarity of the State was preserved and without lapse to *Matsya Nyaya* or anarchy. Hence, the king and his ministers figured prominently in the treatise.

There were some valuable lessons that Kautilya deduced from history and for the Swami and his ministers. The king may not make laws that violate ancient customs. The king (or the statesman) should take cognizance of the spirit of the times and not make any alterations in the administration or the constitution unless the people have become hopelessly corrupt. But where the subjects are not corrupt, any turmoil or revolu-

tion cannot damage the state. The very best institutions become vitiated where the people are depraved and degenerate. Still another lesson culled from history by Kautilya was that the people *en masse* may go wrong on general principles but will be, more often than not, on the right side where specific issues are concerned. Machiavelli, as quoted earlier, held the same view, but it was at best a stance, in a manner of speaking. A confirmed cynic, Machiavelli did not think much of the populace. Happiness of the society, and the State adopting measures for the welfare of the less priveleged, did not bother him, as these concerned Kautilya. The majority of citizens—to Machiavelli—were content with the security of person and property that the State provided them, and he left them at that, concerning himself with the small, elite minority who seek power over their fellows.

Their Maxims

As for the maxims set out by Machiavelli, these are often addressed to princes as well as to the high functionaries who carry on the affairs of the government, and even the usurper or the new monarch. In a similar vein, Kautilya's stratagems for warriors and statesmen as given in the *Arthasastra* rest on his deep learning, knowledge of human nature and a sound discernment of the mosaic of motivations that inspire people high and low. These trickeries have undoubted utility for tyrants and usurpers but can be useful to the good kings too —the ones who are bent on reform and the weal of their subjects. In the field of *realpolitik*, there is much that is common between Kautilya and Machiavelli. Kautilya is too aware that the Swami can hardly feel secure in a state where the persons shorn of power by him are still alive and well. Much more risk is involved in threatening a man than in having him killed. Hence, the archetypal maxim goes on, people must either be embraced or destroyed. But this kind of evil maxim should not mislead us as to the real aim of the *Arthasastra*. The essence of its teaching was the fostering and dissemination of a more scientific statecraft.

Machiavelli had a pessimistic view of the world and its affairs. According to him,the world neither grows better nor worse; it is always the same. The good and the evil are even identical.

Consciously maintaining the separation of politics from ethics and religion, Machiavelli often sacrifices ethics to political expediency. Says he: "The Prince should choose the fox and the lion . . . A prudent Prince should not keep faith if the keeping of it is to his prejudice." If it suits his purpose, he has to go against faith, against charity, against humanity and against religion. On the other hand, Kautilya's principles, generally speaking, have a firmer basis in morality. Behind all the seemingly Mephistophelian expediencies of the *Arthasastra* "there remains an ultimate accountability to the rule of *Dharma*", even though the tendency to apply the weapons of force and fraud on the subjects in the interest of the State is rationalised.

Kautilya: 'A Bigger Man'

In his conception of statehood and kingship, Kautilya inclined towards Plato and Aristotle who regarded the State as a moral institution and attempted a moralisation of individual ends through the benevolent agency of the State. Like Plato, Aristotle sees the need of reconstruction of society on enduring principles of goodness and justice. Kautilya's objectives are identical but these ethical considerations are conspicuous in the writings of Machiavelli by their total absence. In the *Discovery of India*, Jawaharlal Nehru agreed that there is some justification in describing Kautilya as "the Indian Machiavelli," but he added that Chanakya (Kautilya) was "a much bigger person in every way, greater in intellect and action . . ."

A bigger person than Machiavelli, who scanned a much bigger canvas, both in terms of history and terrain that he covered in his writings. Kautilya's account of the organisation and the working of the State-administration is much more detailed in the *Arthasastra* than in any work of the Italian political thinker. Kautliya's manifest motivation in writing his celebrated treatise was to produce a change—as far as he could—in the political practices of his day and, maybe, of the

[5]Pandit Nehru showed a strong fascination for Chanakya (Kautilya) in his writings. The famous character-sketch of himself which he wrote anonymously in the *Modern Review*, Calcutta, when he was elected Congress President, was under the *nomdeplume* of 'Chanakya.'

later ages too. The traumatic developments that had followed Alexander's invasion of India had hurt his patriotic sensibilities and set him thinking about the causes of the malaise that had crept into the society, as in a later day Machiavelli was affected by the disintegration of the Empire. The realist that Kautilya was, he did not attribute the degeneration to an impish Destiny or divinely ordained misfortune but he perceived it as the direct consequence of lethargy, misgovernance and improvidence. Thus, he evolved, and expatiated on, principles of political conduct that would cover all such contingencies. He was convinced that the Swami and his ministers acting in concert could strengthen the fabric of the State to such an extent that it could withstand any whim of time or fate.

The nature and different kinds of sovereignty—how these are acquired, maintained and lost—are discussed threadbare in the *Arthasastra* by Kautilya. Having studied the currents and trends of history, he could tell how events of history could be controlled through enlightened statesmanship. A state, guided by the foresight of its ruler, and armed to the teeth, is equipped thereby not to be buffeted by every change of fortune. The hapless weaknesses of the states that Kautilya came across in his time made him think and he deemed it necessary to overhaul the existing system. Not merely content with simply theorising about the postulates of statehood and society, he saw to it that *Rajadharma* of the country became and object of immediate concern to the Swami and his ministers.

Moral Base of the State

Again and again, Kautilya stressed that the State was an organism on which depended the happiness of the society and its individual members. This moral base of the State was again and again denied by Machiavelli, for his mission was to free politics from slavery to theology, and, isolating the phenomena of politics, studied them wholly without reference to the facts of moral existence. Kautilya held that the roots of civilization were laid in polity and that *Danda*, which extended all-round protection to the subjects, was the crucible of civilization. "The king is the *Udyata Danda* in whom all the *Prakritis* (or elements) are concentrated." To him the king is the source of authority as well as he is the first citizen: *Tulya vetanosmi*

bhavadhihsah bhogam idam Rajyam.

Hence, according to Kautilya, the foundation of the State policy is the education of the Swami. It consists primarily of the inculcation of self-discipline, to be had through absolute self-control of the organs of sense (*Indriyajayah*), and strict observance of the precepts of science (*Sastranushtanamca*). The prince is therefore enjoined to abandon lust (*Kama*), anger (*Krodha*), greed (*Lobah*), vanity (*Mana*), haughtiness (*Mada*) and too much joy (*Harsha*). He is to be instructed in philosophy (*Anvikshiki*), in economics (*Varta*) and in politics (*Dandaniti*), to complete his training. He cannot be an autocrat, having likes and dislikes which are not accounted for. His very *raison d'etre* is the happiness and the security of the State and it is his role to completely identify himself with the promotion of its prosperity. Being the very foundation of the social fabric, it is the Swami's *Dharma* to provide for the basic foundations of civilized existence even in conquered countries and to make the good life possible throughout his domain.

Thus Kautilya, like Aristotle, visualised the possibility of a disciplined social order as a condition precedent for achievement, whether that of the king or the people. Likewise, Plato prescribed a rigorous mode for the selection and training of the Guardians. Kautilya, as noted, regarded the private character of the Swami or the prince as the imperative for virtuous administration. As for Machiavelli, he left the personal and private character of the Prince (or his upbringing) out of sight, and treated him as the personification of the State, wherein the private individual is inevitably merged in the politician.

In the light of the foregoing, it is clear that the comparison between Machiavelli and Kautilya is not quite appropriate even though they were the originators of systematic politics and conceived it as a branch of learning to coordinate with other cardinal sciences. Machiavelli's interest in *The Prince* was sparked by contemporary events, including the ups and downs of his own career. Kautilya's authorship, on the other hand, owed its inspiration to the political speculation of writers going back to the second millenium B.C. and the consensus in most treatises was on *Dharma*—that is, law based on duty and morality. Hence, to Kautilya, the Indian State was the sole guarantee of the moral order with its sphere coextensive with the

whole of society, and kingship represented the principles of unity, transcending the multiplicity of institutions. The essence of the Indian traditional politics was self-government (*Swaraj*), whose attributes were self-control (*Atma Swamyama*), complete dedication to duty, absolute poise and piety sans superstition.

Comparisons apart, it can be stated, in summing up this part that both Kautilya and Machiavelli exalt the State—though with differing emphasis —and regard the king as morally and legally the source and embodiment of all sovereign authority. The two philosophers expound some identical principles of statecraft for given conditions. But whereas Machiavelli often sacrifices ethics to political expediency, Kautilya's principles have a firmer basis in morality. Machiavelli was the prophet of force (and fraud) in so far as his theory of government (the much-maligned 'Machiavellism') regards the interests of the ruler alone. On the other hand, Kautilya was the spokesman of *Udyana*—the establishment of righteousness on the earth. Kautilya's work is not "a bitter book" like *The Prince*,[6] nor does he glorify the monarch as much as the 16th-century Florentine does.

In the *Arthasastra*, as in *The Prince*, politics is not consciously separated from ethics and religion. Machiavelli is not in two minds as to his objective. He purports to teach the 'Prince' only political techniques and methods that would bring success to him. The only vices that he recommends the 'Prince' to avoid are the ones that might endanger his government. Indeed, Machiavelli vindicated Cesare Borgia when he declared that the 'Prince' need not respect a treaty if it does not match his designs. Actually, Machiavelli was struggling for a pittance when he wrote *The Prince* in exile, and was still angling for a position that would secure him a few hundred florins. Thus, his cynicism was a reflection of the age he lived in. He considered men "ungrateful, fickle, deceitful, cowardly and avaricious."

Kautilya and Aristotle

Whatever the disputation about the authenticity of the

[6]"*The Prince* is the supreme humiliation of a chained Titan, a mendicant prophet. It is the anguish of a frightened mortification," Ferraro in *Foreign Affairs*, 1937.

Arthasastra or Kautilya himself (or the period he lived in), the fact remains that Kautilya's work has many references to the period which generally coincides with the fluid conditions existing at the crucial time of Alexander's invasion of India and the period after that. Tradition mentions Kautilya as the preceptor of Chandragupta Maurya, just as Aristotle was the teacher of Alexander at Macedon, before the latter set out on his campaign of conquest. In comparative terms, there is so much that is common between Kautilya and Aristotle in regard to their contemporaneity, their close association to the great conquerors—Chandragupta Maurya and Alexander the Great—and their attitude towards the republican forms of government which were in a state of decay.

Aristotle was born in 384 B.C., when Plato was 43, and died in 322 B.C. at the age of 62. He was therefore 37 years old when Plato died in 347 B.C. He became tutor to Alexander, Prince of Macedon, (afterwards Alexander the Great) in 343 B.C. There is little indication that he exerted any influence over Alexander's character. His great work, the *Politics*, makes it clear that he disliked all types of dictatorships, and like Plato, thought that the small city state, which had no political ambitions, provided the most favourable environment for the good life. Just as Kautilya never refers to the conquests of Chandragupta Maurya, Aristotle makes no reference to the campaigns and conquests of his great pupil, presumably because he had little sympathy with them. The *Politics*, like Aristotle's other works, takes the form of a treatise, not a dialogue, and its style is quite different from that of Plato's dialogues.

For Aristotle the nature of a thing is not what the thing is but what it is capable of becoming. Sometimes he speaks of 'the natural' as *ipso facto* 'the good'; that is, the attainment of an organism's destined end is its supreme good. He held that "it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal."[7] Aristotle thus stated what has been designated as the Organic Theory of the State. It has been so called because it conceives of the State as a kind of organism. According to this theory, the political society is not a mere collection of individuals but has an organic unity of its own.

[7]*Politics*, I, 2.

Hence, there can be no tangible conflict between its interests and the real interests of its constituent members.

Whereas Plato enunciates the 'Ideal State', which is governed by experts ('guardians'), to Aristotle the best possible state could assume a number of forms. Plato's State[8] had a rigidity in the selection and training of experts which exceeded the rigours prescribed by Kautilya for the king. And, he was pitted against democracy "in which the opinions of the corrupt and the important may count for as much as the knowledge of the upright and the wise. . ." Though Aristotle recognised that the select minority is more likely to have an extraordinary merit, the rule of the many could produce an enlightened outlook vis-a-vis the issues of the State policy, the end result entailing the possibility of fewer lapses. The people were the best judges whether a policy is good or bad, which in present-day terms is a fundamental of democracy.

Aristotle advocated the principle of government by consent. A good government, according to him, which tries to foster the interest of the society, receives the consent of the people as a whole. This concept has a modern relevance, for the democracies of today have been going concerns, with the compromise consensus obtained to weld diverse interests of different classes. To Aristotle, the State was undistinguishable from society. In this context, one of the most important safeguards against the bad forms of government was respect for impersonal law. Society under the king was an organism to Kautilya also. He held that diplomacy conducted in Inter-State matters with an utter disregard for the ordinary standards of morality would be rejected as inoperative in international relations. Hence, the *Arthasastra*, aimed at reconstituting a decaying social order, turned out to be a handbook for princes, which was not the case with the *Politics*, though it demonstrated Aristotle's greatness as a philosopher, who, notwithstanding the very different political and social environment of Ancient Greece, formulated the principles which are accepted, on all hands, as the moral basis of democratic government in the present day.

Aristotle's thought was sometimes influenced by Plato (who

[8]Cf. 'Kautilya and Plato' in Chapter "The Swami and Dharma."

held that philosophers should be kings) when he observed that if a perfectly good man could be found, it would be befitting to entrust him with absolute power. And, yet, according to him, the Ideal State is unattainable. Taking the empirical line, he advises the statesmen to follow the middle course; he should become conversant with what is best—in abstract terms—theoretically, and, what is best, practically. Tying it up with his Organic Theory of the State, Aristotle holds that the natural end of the State is a stable, harmonious condition in which all individuals and groups occupy the places for which they are all suited. The most striking feature of the *Politics* is the enunciation of principles which, so many centuries after, have come to be accepted as the essential foundation of the democratic way of life.

Their Affinities

This Aristotlean concept equals with Kautilya's keenness to establish *Rajadharma* as a science that has permanent validity. Both the philosophers, believing in the immutable human nature—moved as humans are by premordial passions, culminating in the same, identifiable crises—upheld the expediency of a policy that had succeeded in the past. Hence, the policy that had stood the test of time should predetermine the present, for history tends to repeat itself. The principles of statecraft were to be dicovered through the studied restructuring of examples of history. To Aristotle (and Machiavelli), as to Kautilya, a state may be exalted to the principle of power and greatness by the mighty efforts of a king, who learns the precious lessons from historical examples. Hence, time and again, Kautilya gives examples of the great monarchs of India's past, and keeps on stressing the imperative need to arrive at general laws from the data furnished by history.

There are other affinities between Aristotle and Kautilya. Like Aristotle, Kautilya felt that to hold aloof from office and political activity, and to spend one's life in pure contemplation is not the only course worthy of a philosopher, nor does inactive life behove him. Kautilya recommended that heavy fines should be imposed on the people who embraced asceticism without making sufficient provision for their families. In fact, he discouraged pseudo-asceticism as that would devitalise society and

militate against strict observance of the *Ashrama* stages of the ordered life of the individual, which were so important in the fulfilment of the highest ends of the State. He even attached great importance to Vedic sacrifices and their potency in warding off evils, that might otherwise adversely affect the society or the State.

The *Arthasastra* is—on many counts—more Aristotelian than Machiavellian, and resembles Aristotle's *Politics*. Like Aristotle, Kautilya was a keen student of the contemporary and earlier Republican governments: *Dwairajya*, *Vairajya*, *Arajya* and other *Sangha* forms of government. The governments of *Sanghas*, as known to Kautilya, conformed to a general type which had been described for the first time in the west by Aristotle. At the apex of the administration was a large deliberative council. Elaborate regulations, like the moving of resolutions, the taking of votes and other matters of procedure, obtained in these councils, in ancient India as in the councils of the city states of Greece. The councils were aristocratic or oligarchic. The procedures of choosing a king, of organising the judiciary and the administration in India were generally similar to those in Greek towns. An exemplary spirit of individual freedom prevailed amongst the *Sanghas*. As in the case of the city states of Greece, the *Sangha* Rajyas soon become a prey to party strife.

Kautilya's work[9] deals with the king's policy towards the *Sanghas* and their reciprocal policy towards him. He holds that the acquisitions of *Sanghas* can become the king's greatest political and military assets. He prescribes a double-edged policy for the king vis-a-vis the *Sanghas*, how he should sow dissession among the officers and the people, through his spies. Conversely, Kautilya says that the *Sanghas* should protect themselves against the king and his machinations. *Sanghas* apart, Aristotle (like Plato) had his preference for the select elite. The State—according to Aristotle—has to be so organised as to foster within it a class of gifted, virtuous men and philosophers, who will assert the supremacy of reason, both in the State and in the heart of the individual.

[9]*Arthasastra*, Book XI, Ch. 1.

Conclusion

Thus each one of the philosophers, Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli and Kautilya, was involved in the demonstration of precepts relating to political action, in their differing ways. We have covered extensively what Kautilya had in common with Machiavelli, and where lay the subtle differences in their approach to the problems of politics. As Professor R.S. Sharma has observed: "...the practical character of the *Arthasastra* shows that it is closer to the *Politics* of Aristotle than the *Republic* of Plato..." Kautilya had much less in common with Plato, who was preoccupied, in idealistic terms, with the upbringing of the 'Guardians' ('moral experts') and distrusted the role of the people in the State. The essence of Kautilya's teaching (though his manner throughout was less didactic than that of the Greek philosophers) was the promotion of a more scientific statecraft.

In the manner of Aristotle, Kautilya stressed the importance of the individual and the value of human endeavour in securing the best in this life. Likewise, he appealed to the sense of honour, human dignity, moral responsibility and enlightened patriotism. In terms of metaphysics, he ascribed the origin of all things to Reality and not to God. He dwelt distinctly and exclusively on the secular side of life. In placing reason over (sacred) authority, Kautilya anticipated by more than two thousand years the principles embodied in the Constitution of the Indian Republic.

Some Aspects of the 'Arthasastra' Society

Life of the People

Compared with the preceding period of invasion and turmoil, the Maurya era, commencing with the reign of Chandragupta Maurya, was distinguished by affluence, with the social life richer in content, and diversified, as shown in the interests of the nobility and the people.[1] The common people, hardly affected by the fatalism and pessimism aired in the religious literature of the time, evinced a pronounced liking for the good things of life. Both men and women loved finery in dress, expensive costumes and jewellery.[2] A robust zest for life was reflected in the art, architecture and literature of the period.

Kautilya mentions assemblies known as *Utsava*, *Samaja* and *Vihara*, where not only entertainments were provided for the people but delicious dishes and intoxicating drinks were served. He also refers to a number of fragrant substances, which were in common use, on these and other occasions. It was the responsibility of the king to lay on these festive celebrations for his subjects. Entertainments were provided by jugglers, rope-dancers, buffoons, mimics and wandering bards or heralds (*Charana*). Music, dancing and singing and dramatic performances were very well organised. Both indoor and outdoor games are mentioned in the literature of the period. Dice, trap-

[1]Kautilya gives detailed account of the fat salaries of affluent Government servants. The Prime Minister and the Royal *Purohita* for instance, received a salary of 48,000 *Panas* per month. (*Pana* was a silver coin, of good value). The wages of industrial workers and labourers, of lower grades, are, however, not mentioned.

[2]Somehow neither Kautilya nor Megasthenes makes any special references to feminine apparel.

ball and guessing other people's thoughts were the favourite indoor games. The outdoor games included archery contests, hunting, boxing, chariot and other races, playing with marbles, ploughing with mimic ploughs, etc. These wide-ranging activities showed that people in Mauryan India enjoyed their life to the hilt.

Meat and other viands were served in the course of the said celebrations and on other festive occasions. "When Ashoka tells us in his Rock Edict I that many hundreds of thousands of animals were every day slaughtered in his kitchen for curry, we can easily infer that a similar practice was followed by the Maurya Emperors", says Dr. R.C. Majumdar.[3] This would be more true of the previous reigns of Chandragupta Maurya and Bindusara, than the successors of Ashoka, affected as Ashoka and his successors were by his conversion to Buddhism, and his consequent ban on the slaughter of animals. Ashoka's other edicts[4] refer to pleasure and hunting trips of kings and women performing various rites.

Despite the propagation of *Ahimsa* (non-injury to living beings) by the Buddhists and Jains—duly enforced by Ashoka—varieties of fish and meat, including beef, were consumed by the people. The overall impression one gets from the *Arthasastra* is that the sale of flesh, fish, etc., was regulated much better than it is in present-day India. We also gather from Kautilya that the State regulated slaughter-houses strictly. The superintendent of slaughter-house supervised the slaughter-house; he ensured that "cattle such as a calf, a bull, or a milch cow shall not be slaughtered."[5] A fine of 50 *Panas* was to be levied if the offence was committed, or the animal tortured to death. Kautilya adds: "The flesh of animals which have been killed outside the slaughter-house (*Parisumam*), headless, legless and boneless fish, rotten flesh, and the flesh of animals which have suddenly died, shall not be sold. Otherwise, a fine of 12 *Panas* shall be imposed."[6] We gather from the *Arthasastra* that the State looked after forests which were maintained for rearing animals and birds. There were other forests where animals "lived under

[3] *The Age of Imperial Unity*, 1953.
[4] R.E. VIII and R.E. IX.
[5] & [6] *Arthasastra*, Book II, Ch. 26.

state protection" in preserves. Kautilya, in the same context, names birds and animals that were declared "protected from all kinds of molestation."[7]

Kautilya mentions various kinds of liquor and gives details of their manufacture—yet another index to the easy-going life of the people and their comparative affluence. The sale of liquor was, however, regulated by the State. Kautilya instructs that it be sold, in fixed quantities, to people of sound character, mostly within the premises of the liquor shops. He adds that on festive occasions—"festivals, fairs (*Samaja*) and pilgrimage"[8]—they had the free option to manufacture and consume liquor for four days. The Superintendent of Liquor was to collect "the daily fines (*Daivasikamatyayam*, i.e., the licence fees) from those who on these occasions are permitted to manufacture liquor."[9]

The jurisdiction of the Superintendent of Liquor extended not only to fortified towns and rural areas but to army camps also. He was to make sure that liquor shops had good decor and comfortable furniture. Also, he was to put spies at these places to check on the movements of strangers and foreigners, vulnerable as they would be, lying down in various stages of inebriation and in different postures, along with their winsome mistresses. Megasthenes is on record that Indians do not consume liquor or wines except at festivals but Kautilya's observations point to the fact that drinking was fairly common especially amongst the kings, the nobility and the Kshatriyas.

That peace and prosperity prevailed throughout the Empire of Chandragupta Maurya is fully testified by the contemporary accounts of Megasthenes and other Greek writers. The affluence was due primarily to the fertility of the land and its great mineral wealth, Megasthenes observes: "The inhabitants... having abundant means of subsistance, exceed in consequence, the ordinary stature, and are distinguished by their proud bearing. They are also found to be well-skilled in the arts, as might be expected of men who inhale a pure air and drink the very finest water." The Greek writers spoke of the "widespread prosperity of the country" and "a healthy and stalwart people" inhabiting it, who "ate from golden vessels, wore silk, muslin

[7] *Arthasastra*, Book II, Ch. 26.
[8] *Arthasastra*, Book II, Ch. 15.
[9] *Ibid.*

and gold and jewelled ornaments". Kautilya's *Arthasastra* corroborated "the abundance of the objects of enjoyment." After detailing the numerous fruits and metals, Megasthenes refers to the fertility of the land owing to "the profusion of river-streams", and the growth of various kinds of cereals and plants useful for food. The double rainfall enabled the peasants to gather the harvents annually.

The cultivators comprised the most numerous class in the society, on account of agricultural prosperity and as the continuation of traditional socio-economic factors. Shepherds and cowherds formed a class by themselves and lived on pasture-lands in hilly areas. Though the agriculturists formed the majority of the population, the urban life in the Maurya time attracted many people. The number of cities was so great—according to Megasthenes[10]—"that it cannot be stated with precision." Most of the houses in cities—situated on the banks of rivers or on the sea-coast—were built of wood, as these were meant to be temporary being liable to the ravages of floods and rains.

The houses were generally two or three-storeyed, the mansions of the nobility containing several courts, one running into the other courtyard. There were palaces, workshops, store-houses, arsenals, prisons and other structures. Water-courses drained the houses and ran alongside streets into moats. Penalties were imposed for the misuse of moats, like the deposit of dead bodies or refuse. The windows of houses could not overlook each other except across the lane or street. As the civic precaution against fire, vessels in their thousands were kept at the ready. The State made it obligatory for people to render assistance to others in case of fire breaking out in the vicinity. Arson—says Kautilya—was punishable by the burning alive of the culprit. The nocturnal interval was indicated by the blowing of trumpets, to hail it and to end it, and no one could leave the house during the hours of rest except for special contingencies. The city chief reported all the untoward incidents during the night, and took charge of lost and owner-less property. All these provisions are mentioned by Kautilya in his comprehensive manual of rules about life in cities and rural areas.

[10] *Indika*.

Security of life and property was fully maintained in urban and rural areas by the administration of Chandragupta Maurya. Theft was a rare occurrence; houses were generally left unlocked and unguarded. The people loved colourful costumes and ornaments and this national trait encouraged trade and industry. Thus it may well be inferred that the common man in ancient India—and particularly in the Maurya era—was not averse to worldly enjoyments and material welfare.

It is but to be expected that in this atmosphere of prosperity, the royal court was the cynosure for its pomp, elegance and magnificence. The king's public appearance was a glittering social event. According to the Greek writers, he (Chandragupta Maurya) was carried in a golden palanquin, garnished with pearls, followed by foot soldiers and body-guards. The writers mention the king hunting lions with dogs. Races of oxen, horses and animal fights were other royal pastimes. The royal procession, led by elephants and horse chariots, was seen at its spectacular best on religious occasions. Tame parrots were trained to hover about the king's mount and wheel round him on such occasions. The king received presents of animals like antelopes, deer, rhinos, tamed tigers and fleet-footed oxen, yaks, hunting hounds and birds like geese, cranes and ducks and pigeons, at the annual ceremonial washing of his hair, which too was a big festive occasion. That Chandragupta's palace, in its construction and decor, complemented all this pomp and pageantry has already been mentioned.

Whatever the class to which the people or the nobility belonged, materialistic ends alone were not considered the be-all of existence. The need to preserve an equilibrium in life was fully recognised, in so far as *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kama* (religion or spirituality, wealth and happiness, respectively) were regarded as the three ends in life, to be pursued, at one and the same time, without giving undue prominence to any one. But the State of Kautilya had primarily a materialistic basis, vide his observation that "Wealth and wealth alone is important in as much as charity and desire depend upon wealth for their realisation."[11]

[11] *Arthasastra*, Book I, Ch. 7

The saintly king—says Kautilya, in the course of his descriptions of the prince's training—should pursue Pleasure without conflict with Virtue and Wealth, and he should not live without enjoyment. In the alternative, the king should pursue the three ends in an equal measure. Religious texts and scriptures differed from these liberal views, in Kautilya's and later times, and stressed the overriding importance of *Dharma*, to the exclusion of the other two objectives. But, by and large, the harmony of these three pursuits of life can be placed as the ideal which formed the general background of life in what we have termed as the *Arthasastra* society.

Industry and Trade

Kautilya in the *Arthasastra* not only summed up the entire development of political thought and practice in a systematic and comprehensive manner but along with the Greek writers presented a full picture of the advanced material civilisation of his period. His work is also an important source presenting "a lifelong picture of the commercial history of the times to which it belongs". As we have already dwelt on, the people not only enjoyed the necessities of life but also its luxuries in various forms. Almost all parts of India were knit together by active links of business and commerce. The reason was that the Maurya empire was a compact, federal system, and the opening up of the western trade routes by Alexander had resulted in an unprecedented expansion in the industry and commerce in India, both internal and external. The Empire had intimate contact with West Asia and the Mediterranean countries on one side, and China on the other.

The organisation of trade as well as the trade routes of the Mauryan period are covered by Kautilya and in Pali books. The best possible use—to further trade and commerce—was made of navigable rivers. Boats laden with merchandise plied up the Ganga from Champa to Varanasi, and further to Sahajati. Likewise, the boat traffic up the Yamuna reached up to Kausambi, and thence joined the land route to Sind and Sauvira. Megasthenes and other Greek writers referred to the 'Royal Road' from the North-West Frontier to Pataliputra (length 10,000 *Stades*=1,150 miles). Sign posts at regular intervals indicated distances and cross-roads. The road was continued from

Pataliputra to the mouth of the Ganga. Kautilya mentions the measures taken for the security of these and other trade routes. He also refers to the ordinances that regulated trade with foreign countries by land and sea.

Cotton and silk goods, along with traditional export items like spices, indigo, rare woods, etc., were exported to Syria, Egypt and other countries. Kautilya mentions Aparanta (or the west coast), Kashi, Madhura (the Pandyan capital) and other places as the producers of finest cotton fabrics. A variety of silk fabrics were made in India as a cottage industry product; some (called *China Patta*) were imported from China. Muslin and cotton also came from China and 'Further India'.

"Who the merchants are, whence they come, with what merchandise and where it has been visa'ed" was recorded by the concerned officials. Octroi was charged at the gates of the cities. The country produce was also subject to octroi upon entry. The amount and price of all goods imported was announced, and the sale was by auction, the profits accruing to the State treasury. The prices of everyday commodities were declared daily—and checked. All weights and measures were subject to inspection, routine as well as surprise checks. Selling the produce of his factories and workshop, as well as the prisons, his lands, forests and mines, the king was a big trader himself For this purpose, he maintained store-houses (*Koshthagara*) all over his domain.

There was brisk trade activity all over the kingdom. Blankets and rainproof cloth came from Nepal. Kautilya mentions a number of shrines, particularly the ones from the Himalayan areas, as well as from Central Asia and China. Fragrant woods of different kinds, particularly *Chandana*, *Agaru* and *Bhadrasi*, are described by Kautilya, with their place of origin, colour and properties. It is evident that ivory-carving and wood-work had attained a high standard. Ivory was used for ear-rings and other ornaments, besides inlay decoration in furniture and household articles. Kautilya also mentions the large-scale construction of boats and ships and manufacture of chariots, carts, machines, etc.

These and other trades and arts testify to the developed state of industry and commerce in the Mauryan era. Stone-cutting, the art of polishing hard-stone and the art of jeweller

had also attained high perfection. Kautilya described five kinds of pearl necklaces, and added that the ornaments, which decked the head, arms, waist and feet, were likewise variegated.[12] The king's palanquin was of gold and, according to one of the contemporary Greek writers, "furnished with pearls which dangle all around it." As a matter of fact, metal work and ornamentation went back to pre-Vedic times. It was therefore realistic for Kautilya to give details of metallurgy and refer to the manufacture of copper, lead, tin, bronze, brass, iron, etc.

Most of these manufactures were State-controlled. Thus, the Maurya State was a complex, well-organised trading and industrial centre, having in its employ thousands of merchants, artisans and other skilled personnel. We have adverted to the vast bureaucracy of officials that regulated the State enterprises like mines and forests and regulated relations between the State undertaking and private establishments. Some of the merchants' organisations (*Sanghas* and *Shrenis*) are recognised by Kautilya. These were largely self-regulating groups, working harmoniously with the State authorities to develop and maintain the tempo of industry, trade and commerce.

Role and Status of Women

Megasthenes makes an interesting reference to the Amazonian bodyguard in attendance on Chandragupta Maurya, when he went out to hunt. The female bodyguard of the king is also mentioned in Kautilya's *Arthasastra* which instructs that "the king, on getting up from his bed, shall be received by troops of women armed with bows." Women sometimes carried on administrative work in ancient India. There were highly educated women, who held honourable position in society and in the household. In post-Vedic times, however, the wife who formerly performed Vedic sacrifices[13] was denied the right to do so, and could not even recite the Vedic *Mantras*. That woman was reduced to the status of the Shudra is clearly reflected even in the *Bhagwad Gita*. (On the contrary, Buddhism and Jainism offered a more respectable status—and even careers—to women).

[12]Excavations at Taxila and other Mauryan sites have proved that these skills were attained by the artists of the era.

[13]*Manu*, IV, 205-6.

Other rigours imposed on women like the progressive discouragement of widow remarriage and divorce, and the encouragement of the practice of *Sati*, can at best be attributed to the growing importance attached to the physical chastity of women. The rules about remarriage in the *Arthasastra* follow the ones set down in the *Dharmasutras*. To give some instances, they allow remarriage of a woman whose husband is dead, has become an ascetic or has gone abroad, in each case, after a period of waiting, which varied according to the circumstances or the caste of the partners. But both Manu and Yajnavalkya forbid the remarriage of widows.

Kautilya begins his discourse on marriage by the statement that marriage precedes the other calls of life. A salient, bright feature in the *Arthasastra* is the regard shown to women in matters of marriage which is generally viewed as a contract. Kautilya, however, prohibits women of the higher castes—and the *Dharma Vivahat*, i.e., those married according to religious rites—from claiming the liberal privileges that were permitted to others. Marriages contracted in accordance with *Dharma* could not be dissolved. *Sulka* ('bride money'), the price paid by the bridegroom for the bride, was sanctioned by Kautilya. He did not ordinarily favour polygamy, permitting it only where the question of progeny was involved. A wife was entitled to claim maintenance in proportion to the income of the husband; she was not eligible in case she lived separately from her husband. She had, however, a right of maintenance in case her husband was away from the home for a long time. A widow, who desired offspring, could bear a son to her brother-in-law. Says Kautilya: "Let her obtain the permission of her *Gurus* and meet him during the proper season only." The system of marriage was sacramental but it stressed the importance of contractual obligations, during or after the lifetime of each partner. Relations between man and wife were remarkable for the reciprocity of treatment. Neither could practise cruelty on the other partner.

Kautilya is also liberal as regards divorce or repudiation. Taking a rational view, he says in the *Arthasastra*, "If a husband either is of bad character, or is long gone abroad, or has become traitor to his king, or is likely to endanger the life of

his wife, or has fallen from his caste, or has lost virility, he may be abandoned by his wife.[14] On the whole, Kautilya identifies the position of the wife with that of the husband, while Manu assigns her a definitely inferior role. The question of inheritance received elaborate analysis at the hands of Kautilya. There was the general rule of equal division of property between man and woman. The system of marriage was sacramental, but it emphasised the importance of contractual obligations. Kautilya's *Arthasastra* views the relationship between the husband and wife as a cooperative union. They are partners in an enterprise, productive of mutual benefit, and aimed at the highest objectives of society. Kautilya prescribes fines and punishments for women tainted with sin. It is apparent, however, that he is more lenient in his treatment of women than Aristotle (or Plato), both as regards marriage and inheritance. The *Politics* of Artistotle does not mention many of the legal rights of women. To Plato and Aristotle, the marriage tie is a lifelong union, and opportunities for divorce few and far between. In the interest of harmony in the home, Aristotle pledged women to what was practically conjugal silence; the wife was in no case to oppose the husband so long as he did not trespass on her domain.

Kautilya provided for subsistence to poor pregnant women and to their newborn offspring. Preserving the honour of women was one of the chief responsibilities of the State. Criminal intimacy with immature girls—including cases where their consent had been obtained—were punished with heavy penalties. The injunction that "No man shall have sexual intercourse with any woman against her will"[15] is repeated three times by Kautilya, while prescribing punishments for offences against them. But if a woman, of her own accord, yields herself to a man, "she shall be slave to the king." Protection was extended even to daughters of the prostitutes. So far as the prostitutes themselves were concerned, their role, as glimpsed in the *Arthasastra*, was interesting.

A prostitute (*Ganika*) remarkable for her looks, youth and accomplishments—says Kautilya[16]—was to be appointed Super-

[14] *Arthasastra*, Book III, Ch. 4.
[15] *Ibid*, Book IV, Ch. 12.
[16] *Arthasastra*, Book II, Ch. 17.

intendent of Prostitutes on a salary of 100 *Panas* per year. A rival prostitute (*Pratiganika*) was also to be appointed on half this salary. Detailed regulations were laid down for regulating the profession—two days' earning every month paid as tax to the State. The prostitutes had to attend the king's court and formed a part of the royal household, receiving high salaries. They held the royal umbrella, the fan and the golden pitcher, attending on the king on litter, throne or chariot. Their salary and status were classified according to their accomplishments. Besides employment in the harem of the king, they worked in the kitchen, bathroom and the storehouse of the palace.

As to how the accomplishments of this class of society were fostered by the State is clearly defined by Kautilya:[17]

> Those who teach prostitutes, female slaves and actresses, arts such as singing, playing on musical instruments, reading, dancing, acting, writing, painting, playing on the instruments like *Vina* (lyre), pipe and drum, reading thoughts of others, manufacture of scents and garlands, shampooing, and the art of attracting and captivating the mind of others, shall be endowed with maintenance from the State.

The teachers were also to train the sons of courtesans to be chief actors (*Ramgopajivi*) on the stage. The State made good use of the prostitutes in its multi-pronged espionage activities. The wives of actors, and others of similar profession, well-versed in different languages, were utilised "in detecting the wicked and murdering or deluding foreign spies." Poor widows of Brahmanas often secured employment as wandering spies. It would appear from these practices (as is also evident from Buddhist *Jatakas* and other sources) that the courtesans as a class were not looked down on.

Labour, Slaves etc.

The economic conditions and status of the working classes, particularly the labourers, were definitely better in the Kautilyan society than in the Buddhist period that preceded it.

[17] *Ibid* Book II, Ch. 17.

As an orthodox Brahmana, Kautilya recognised the institution of *Varanashrama Dharma* (sanctifying the division of Hindu society into four castes), but he laid down liberal rules that assured the lower classes an equitable place in society. While conceding the social precedence of the Brahmanas, Kautilya (unlike the Sutra legislators who preceded him) was conscious of the fundamental rights of the Shudras. Following the canon of the Buddhist legislators, Kautilya subjected even Brahmanas to capital punishment.

The mention of caste was essential in the records of the accused in the law courts. While this was so, the law-makers preceding Kautilya had forbidden the Shudras to testify in the courts. The rationalist that Kautilya was, he allowed Shudras to submit their evidence in courts, and thus he raised their social and legal status in society. Kautilya went further in asserting that washermen, weavers and other workers of the labouring classes formed an integral part of the Aryan society, and were therefore Aryas.

Kautilya laid down strict rules to protect skilled workmen. He did not allow high caste people to allot their servants humiliating tasks like carrying the dead and the offal, "or to sweep ordure, urine or the leavings of food."[18] Anyone causing injury to a craftsman was liable to be put to death.[19] If a labourer died on duty, it was the king's responsibility to assist his family with the means for their maintenance. There was provision for labourers to enjoy holidays. It can be safely asserted that as almost a direct consequence of the progressive secularisation of society brought about by the liberal innovations introduced by Kautilya, the ground was prepared, as it were, for the noble social and moral transformation of society effected by Emperor Ashoka. The legal inequalities that persisted in the code of Kautilya, because of his respect for the established conventions and the Vedic faith, were completely nullified by Ashoka. His edicts decreeing good treatment for serfs constituted an advance on the *Arthasastra* which had permitted certain inequalities at the expense of the slaves.

But, by and large, Kautilya was not in favour of slavery.

[18] *Arthasastra*, Book III, Ch. 13.
[19] *Ibid.*

In fact, he denounced it, at a time when Aristotle was justifying slavery in the West as a divine and beneficent institution. Selling of any person—Kautilya made it clear—was taken serious note of by the State, and the culprit was liable to be severely punished.[20] Kautilya's clear pronouncement was that "never shall an Arya be subjected to slavery."[21] But Kautilya's statement does not imply that an Arya could not be made a slave or that he was free from slavery. Actually, Aryas were as much subjected to slavery as the people of other classes.

During the Buddha's age, the power of the master over the slave was unlimited. Kautilya's attitude to slaves, on the whole, was tempered with justice and equity. If a master made a female slave to attend on him while he was bathing naked, or he violated the chastity of a femaie slave, he would—thus observed Kautilya[22]—forfeit the value paid for her. A master was to be punished with "the first amercement" if he has "pledged a female slave under his power, against her will."[23] The purchase-value was forfeited, and other punishments incurred, if a master commits or helps a third person to commit rape with a female slave pledged to him. Kautilya also promulgated regulations to protect the children of slaves.

Thus Kautilya extended legal protection and humane treatment to slaves, in a broad-minded manner, that was conspicuous in the Buddhist canonical texts by its absence. It was perhaps owing to this humane treatment of domestics that the Greek writer, Megasthenes, referred to the non-existence of slavery in India.

Language and Literature

Kautilya's *Arthasastra* not only furnishes the means of describing the complete polity, including the administrative and social systems, of the Maurya era, but along with other texts like the code of Manu, Patanjali's commentary upon the grammar of Panini, the Pali books, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, provides information about the language and

[20] *Arthasastra*, Book III, Ch. 13,
[21] *Ibid.*
[22] *Ibid.*
[23] *Ibid.*

literature of the time. The Aryan language in its various local and dialectical forms was current from the Punjab to the eastern boundary of Bihar, which was therefore called *Aryavarta*. Today's east Madhya Pradesh and Chota Nagpur was peopled with non-Aryan tribes speaking the Dravidian languages and Munda—the former dominating South India, eastern Deccan and further south.

Deviating from the old Indo-Aryan forms, the spoken Aryan language developed three distinct dialects—a northern or north-western, a midland and an eastern dialect. Of these, the first was regarded as the purest form of the Aryan dialect. This speech was nearest to the Sanskrit language as systematised by Panini. It was this dialect that the Indian emigres carried to Chinese Turkestan where it flourished for some centuries as the official language. Meanwhile, the eastern dialect approximated to the Prakrit stage, which most probably was the language of the court of Emperor Ashoka, and remained so for the duration of the Maurya empire. This was also the language of the Buddhist canon.

The literary language *par excellence* remained Sanskrit, specially as it became fully established after Panini. The learned people from all parts of India helped in its growth. According to some accounts, Chandragupta Maurya and his son, Bindusara, nurtured the development of the Sanskrit language along with Brahminical learning. That Kautilya, with all the prestige that he commanded, wrote the *Arthasastra* in Sanskrit, must have contributed as a positive factor favouring the growth of Sanskrit. There was a lot of important activity in the area of grammatical studies, as is apparent from odd references in the *Mahabhashya* of Patanjali, who wrote in the succeeding epoch. Among the later commentators, Katyayana, from the south, also deservedly became a celebrity. Tradition, which is rather doubtful, makes him minister of Nanda.

Patanjali's many references testify to sound products of literature in classical Sanskrit in the Maurya era. These also included *Kavyas* (*belles lettres*). Metrical forms were improved and elaborated in these diverse compositions. A Brahmana minister of Nanda, as well as of Chandragupta and Bindusara, namely, Subandhu, who was a *Mahakavi* (great poet), composed the *Vasavadatta-Natyadhara*, in which he portrayed the

romantic story of a beautiful Princess of Ujjain and her lover, Udayana. It is an original dramatic work, in which the characters of one act become the spectators in the following act. Through these and other works, it is evident that the arts of drama and dance had made considerable headway in the Maurya era. These provided the materials for the popular shows. Hence, the rules laid down by Kautilya against such performances encroaching on the productive activities of the people in the rutal areas.

Paths of Peace

Kautilya's *Arthasastra* is of great interest not only to the scholars of Sanskrit literature but also to students of Indian history. It is a repository of information about the social and political life of the ancient Hindus during the third and fourth centuries before the Christian era. "It is", says Narendra Nath Law,[24] "in fact, a unique record of the secular aspects or developments of Indian civilisation in that brilliant period of Indian history—the Age of Chandra Gupta." And, it throws abundant light on the life of the people, especially upon the arts of peace and war.

One of the remarkable features of Chandragupta Maurya's administration, as set forth in the *Arthasastra*, concerns the triumphs achieved in peace which were no less spectacular than those of war and conquest. The area of the welfare activities of the Department of Public Works was quite extensive. Over and above the protection extended by the State to the disabled, the helpless and the infirm, which have been dealt with earlier, the king had to protect the agriculturists specially, and the people generally, during famines.[25] The supply of seeds and provisions was to complement the administration of famine relief. Cash subsidies and loans in kind were to be provided to the adversely affected agriculturists whose avocation was held as sacred and inviolable, and they were not to be molested even during hostilities. Thus, a certian equilibrium—via a cross-section of traditional

[24]*Studies in Ancient Hindu Polity*; 1913.

[25]Megasthenes' assertion about the absence of famines in India cannot be literally true—one is said to have occurred soon after he left India.

zones of peace in the agricultural areas—was maintained, a factor which has been manifestly absent in the 'total wars' of this century. Kautilya's peacetime famine policy envisaged the diversion of national wealth for the amelioration of the conditions of the poor and needy agriculturists and others.

In its all-embracing benevolent role, the State's functions were unlimited. The policy towards labour was efficient as well as humane. While instructing the king to be firm in regard to the execution of policy in internal matters and external issues, Kautilya was exceedingly solicitous about the preservation of flora and fauna of the land. He declared as punishable offences cutting of the tender sprouts of fruit trees, flower trees or shady trees in the parks. Levy of fines[26] was separately indicated for tearing the big branches, minor branches or trunks of the trees. Likewise, causing pain to quadrupeds was punishable with fines —the fine doubled in case blood was let from the injury to the animal. These measures constituted an affirmation of the principle of *Ahimsa* which identified human and sentient beings and other forms of creation.

We have discussed elsewhere how even during wars the ethics of warfare laid down for Kshatriyas was adhered to in its vital particulars, and high traditions of chivalry and fairplay were maintained with dignity. The same moral considerations extended to the incipient and developing international law, almost attaining the status of a positive law, in relations with the neighbouring states, at the time of war or peace.

The attainment of the ends of *Dharma* did not preclude Kautilya from his sound secular standpoint which distinguished him from other ancient or later writers on Indian polity. In an agnostic manner, he attributed the genesis of the material world to Reality and not to God. Throughout he dwelt distinctly and almost exclusively on the secular side of life. His philosophy has, therefore, been described as Rationalistic Legalism—even if that is stretching the expression a little. In the Mauryan era, as reflected in the *Arthasastra*, there was no encroachment of either Philosophy or Theology upon the domain of Polity or *Artha* (economics). Thus, more than two thousand years ago, we find in the *Arthasastra*, the important

[26] *Arthasastra*, Book III, Ch. 19.

secular principles that were to be enshrined in the Constitution of the Indian Republic.

'Positive Knowledge'

Sir Brajendranath Seal[27] says: "The Hindus no less than Greeks have shared in the work of constructing scientific concepts and methods and in the investigation of physical phonomena as building up a body of positive knowledge which has been applied to industrial technique; and Hindu scientific ideas and methodology influenced the courage of natural philosophy in Asia—in the East as well as in the West." These observations apply with equal cogency and relevance to the social sciences of the ancient Hindus as these do to the positive sciences. For instance, Hindu medicine[28] received steady recognition from Alexander's time, when the Greeks had already known about its existence. Chemistry in ancient India was the handmaid of medicine. The chemists—their accomplishments duly featured in the *Arthasastra*—devoted their attention mostly to the making of medicines, drugs to promote lengevity, aphrodisiacs, poisons and their antidotes. Much has been written on Hindu algebra and Hindu geometry which were "quite independent of Greek influence".

Among the ancient writers on polity, Kautilya's ideas stand out as the best exposition of applied and public finance, besides their undoubted merit as the best enunciation of political economy. Kautilya had a dynamic concept of economic laws; he affirmed that these should be adapted to the changing pattern of the socio-economic scene. Hence, the system of taxation that Kautilya laid down for the Mauryan State, envisaging the relativity of economic doctrines, is in keeping with the rules of taxation in modern society. Rejecting the absoluteness of economic theory, Kautilya anticipated the exponents of the Historical School by more than two thousand years. Similarly, his ideas on agriculture and importance of trade and commerce in the socio-economic life of the people in an organised community, were much more progressive than those of Aristotle and the Greeks. He was much more realistic than the Romans

[27]*Positive Sciences of the Ancient Hindus.*
[28]D.D. Mehta : *Positive Sciences in the Vedas*; 1974.

who looked down on trade and commerce and the taking of interest. Unlike the clergy of the Middle Ages or the orthodox Muslims, he did not condemn usury as opposed to the teaching of the sacred books.

In the words of M.V. Krishna Rao,[29] "Kautilya was a State Socialist, in the sense that he stood for the maintenance of the authority of the State, for the extension of its functions and not the overthrow of the government, and its institutions, and thereby establish a Socialist State." Good government ensued from the social welfare measures that the State took, pursuing them diligently and consistently. It was towards the same end that Kautilya spelled out the measures for the regulation of commerce and mines and other manufactures. Guilds and artisans were protected by the State. Kautilya's ideas thus added up to more than "a body of positive knowledge which has been applied to industrial technique. . ." and comprised a comprehensive social plan which aimed at realising *Dharma* through *Artha*.

'The System that Endures'

Using the name 'Chanakya' for Kautilya, K.M. Panikkar[30] observed: "The system that Chanakya perfected or inherited or, in any case, described, endured without much change through ages. The Hindu kings to the last followed the organisation of the Maurya empire in its three essential aspects, the revenue system, the bureaucracy and the police. The organisation as it existed was taken over by the Muslim rulers and from them by the British. If Indian administration is analysed to its bases, the doctrines and policies of Chanakya will be found to be still in force."

There can be no argument that the three elements mentioned by Sardar Panikkar are still the fundamental constituents of the State. These were more so in the heyday of the Maurya Empire—the era lasting as many as 137 years. Signs of inner exhaustion of the great empire founded by Chandragupta Maurya surfaced in the time of Ashoka, and these were accelerated by his shift to pacifism from the mighty militarism of the

[29] *Studies in Kautilya.*
[30] *A Survey of Indian History.*

empire. Similarly, Muslims were uprooted by a moral laxity in the last days of the Mughal era, and even the Britism Empire disintegrated due to a defeatist mentality created by many socio-political factors during the two world wars.

Other explanations—other than the one mentioned above—have been offered as to the cause of the decline of the Maurya Empire. An eminent scholar, Hara Prasad Shastri, has observed that the fall of the Mauryas was due to a reaction started and fostered by the Brahmanas against a Shudra (?) ruler. "Above all", says K.C. Lalwani[31], "the fact that the founder of the Maurya Empire along with a few successors was a Jaina, and its greatest emperor, Ashoka, was a convert to Buddhism, further supports the non-Aryan character of the Maurya Empire."

The non-Aryan character of the Mauryas remaining a moot point—to be settled at the bar of history, with the production of incontrovertible proof—the fact remains that like the Mauryas, the foreigners came to India, thrived, and suffered decline, mostly due to inner exhaustion. The Mauryas were followed by the Bactrians, the Kushans, and Guptas by the Huns, the Arabs, the Rajputs, and the Sultanate by the Mughals, and they, in their turn, by the Afghans and the British. What, however, persisted down the centuries, through a maze of rulers and dynasties, was the domonstration of precepts relating to political action, which was the real aim of Kautilya in the *Arthasastra*. The essence of Kautilya's teaching was the promotion of a more scientific statecraft, best illustrated in his pronouncements on diplomacy and inter-State relations, which have enduring value still.

[31] *Philosophy of Indian History*, Vol. I.

Epilogue

BY rechristening New Delhi's spacious and well-laid Diplomatic Enclave—the sector allotted to foreign embassies—as CHANAKYAPURI, in the mid-fifties, the Government of India paid a fitting tribute to the memory of Chanakya[1] (or Kautilya, the name used in this book), the celebrated sage diplomat, who was the minister of Emperor Chandragupta Maurya, and author of *Arthasastra*. A treatise on kingship, art of government and diplomacy, the *Arthasastra* not only affords a better insight into the Ando-Aryan life under the Mauryan Empire than the ordinary chronicles of royalty, but is justly acknowledged as one of the most important works of ancient India in Sanskrit.

The work is split into 15 Books (*Adhikaranas*) with 180 *Prakaranas* (items). The very vast range of subjects, encompassed by these, makes us deduce that the author of the monument of Mauryan polity possessed an astute and alert mind, vast knowledge and a sharp intellect. The material of the treatise is divided by another device—perhaps a later one—into chapters

[1]Mr. Earl Warren, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, while laying the foundation stone of the American Embassy building in Chankyapuri, New Delhi, on September 1, 1956, remarked on the great significance of the fact that the diplomatic enclave was named after Chanakya. He described Chanakya (Kautilya) as "India's first and greatest diplomat," and added, "I am conscious of the fact that even 300 years before Christ, India had a diplomat who wrote...that a ruler should do nothing to displease the people." It proved, Mr. Warren added, that Indian diplomats, so long ago, were imbued with a high social conscience. The Government of India, he added, had done a great service to mankind by bringing all diplomatic missions together in an integrated colony for the purpose of improving relations among representatives of various nations.

(*Adhyayas*) separated from each other by the insertion of verses summarising the content of each *Adhyaya*. Following a combination of *Sutra* and *Bhashya* (commentary), Kautilya prefers prose to verse. The term *Sutra* most probably applies to the heading of the *Prakaranas*, and the remainder is a commentary on it with a certain amount of mixture of verses.

The style of the *Arthasastra* is generally simple, though enigmatic at some points. A few obsolete words occur in the text. "The presence of many obscure and technical terms renders the work at times difficult to understand, according to Dr. R.C. Majumdar.[2] He adds: "Its language is correct Sanskrit: though a few un-Paninian forms like *rochayante* (that which pleases) and *papsishthatama* (unpleasant) occur." But the very archaic style of the work is in tune with the claim that it dates from the period 321-296 B.C. Its diction apart, the Kautilya *Arthasastra* provides a vast amount of detailed information about the secular and material side of life, as opposed to the religious and spiritual, in ancient India. It is on the basis of this and other works on polity that India's is among the world's oldest systems of political sciences.

Kautilya's work is of exceptional interest and value on many counts. Making it a manual for the king and his ministers/administrators, Kautilya perceived their problems with such clarity of vision that his solutions became a veritable storehouse of learning that was drawn upon by the writers on the science of polity that followed him. The *Arthasastra* has been charaterised as "one of the greatest classics of all ages."[3] As a scheme of administrative organisation, the *Arthasastra*, making due provision for all imaginable possibilities, is unsurpassed in the literature of ancient India.

Kautilya's analysis of the four traditional sciences as well as the six traditional types of foreign policy, the technique of the application of the king's *Danda* (coercive authority), the order of importance of the seven constituents of the State, etc., comprised contributions of enduring value. Making a departure from the stand of some of his predecessors, Kautilya followed the *Smriti* pattern in formulating his ideas of the polity and the

[2] *The Age of Imperial Unity*, 1951.
[3] *Ancient India* (4 Vols.) by Tribhuvandas H. Shah, 1939.

State, thus making the science of *Arthasastra*, for the first time, a respectable subject of study to the Brahmana canonists. In the words of Dr. U.N. Ghoshal,[4] "It is tempting to suggest that Kautilya. . .contributed not only to the remarkable conception of the superlative merit of *Rajadharma* in the *Mahabharata*, but also to that wholesale incorporation of the *Arthasastra* material into the old *Smriti* tradition which constitutes one of the most distinctive characteristics of the political thought of Manu and Yajnavalkya as well as of Bhishma in the Great Epic." Still, Manu and Bhishma stand on a higher moral pedestal than Kautilya. As for Yajnavalkya, he expounds the usual policies of conciliation, diplomacy, fraud and force.

Kautilya's inestimable service lay in his incomparable summary of the previous literature on political thought, so that his work amounted to a virtual reconstruction of the science of polity. Among the points of information contained in the *Arthasastra*, Kautilya throws light on the land routes and sea routes which are not mentioned elsewhere. We have a good idea of the foreign trade carried on in the Mauryan era. Some points about Kautilya's contribution to the field of State relations and diplomacy bear reiteration. Kautilya's contribution not only lay in expounding the ramifications of the *Mandala* theory with its pronounced postulates of peace through power but also the value he attached to *Dharma Vijaya*. Following the dialectical method, Kautilya stated and discussed the views of his predecessors, and, wherever necessary, corrected their views, always aiming at the perfect conclusion. His consistently secular tone and almost complete freedom from any religious bias tended to show that priestly influence was not always so powerful as the *Dharmasutras* might lead us to think.

Speaking of diplomacy, the manner in which Kautilya categorised ambassadors was an advance on the previous writers on inter-State relations. In fact, Kautilya's genius for classification, and his turn for systematisation, comprise his special accomplishments. Differing from old masters, Kautilya assigned equal importance to the three principal factors of power, peace and time. He was realist enough to serve a warning to the king not to ill-treat his people, lest they be

[4] *op. cit.*

impoverished, greedy or disaffected, and become for him progressively dangerous. In fact, he made it clear that the disaffection of a people is a greater danger to the security of the State than their avarice or poverty. He enjoined the king as *Vijigishu* to be benevolent to the conquered people, and refused to subscribe to the earlier practice of enslaving the sons and daughters of the defeated king.

While discussing, in the Introduction, the activity in the domain of political thought that followed Kautilya, we mentioned *en passant* some of the works on the science in the post-Kautilyan era. Spelling out Kautilya's lasting influence on his successors in more detail than we have done heretofore, we may mention Kamandaka reproducing—almost like a carbon copy—Kautilya's well thought out programme of education of the prince, with a view to developing his character and intellect to the optimum degree. Likewise, Kamandaka deals with the security of the king and the kingdom and the complex policy of inter-State relations. He, however, lacks the penetrating insight that Kautilya had, and in case of the latter, it was derived from actual experience of public and political affairs. Though Kautilya's great influence in the field of political thought was evinced, to a considerable degree, in the *Kamandakiye Nitisara*, the author of *Sukraniti* presented bold departures, while other works were so repetitive as to become redundant for students of ancient polity.

Whereas Kamandaka reflects more or less the old ideas, specially those of Kautilya, no light is similarly thrown on the subject of the political science by the fragmentary *Katyayana Smriti* or, for that matter, in the less important works. Most of these suffered from the stagnation and decline in the realm of political ideas that characterised the so-called Classical Age of India. Kautilya's progressive ideas on the king's paternal relations with his subjects, and how he identifies himself completely with their interests, find an echo in Aryasura and in Kalidasa. No less a master of Sanskrit classical literature than Kalidasa supports Kautilya's views about the role of the righteous conqueror—and the 'fine art' of blending benevolence with harshness in the best interests of the country. The empirical blending of apparently contradictory traits in a king's policies, as expounded by Kautilya, is mirrored in the writing of the

dramatist Vishakha-datta and the poet Bharatrihari. Bharavi refers to the Kautilyan policy of bringing peace to a newly acquired domain. Both Bharavi and Bhatti mention how the king selects the right foreign policy following a careful estimate of the threefold condition of States and the three factors of their strength, after Kautilya. The four expedients are referred to by the poet Kumaradasa while he is dealing with the king's policy of conquest. These factors, along with the policy of force, are also discussed by the poet Magh. Kautilya's influence is also discernible in the Buddhist and Jaina literature.

Direct quotes from Kautilya's *Arthasastra* are to be found in such works as the *Smritis*, *Kavya* (*belles lettres*), philosophy etc. Kautilya had of course become a controversial figure, some hailing him as the beacon of a new science of polity and others condemning him for inspiring fraud and cruelty in the conduct of inter-state relations. Bana in his celebrated prose romance *Kadambari* subjects to censure Kautilya's doctrine that *Danda* is created to ensure universal security and stability of the social order. But we have to bear in mind that Kautilya uses the doctrine to wean the king's disaffected subjects from their erstwhile loyalty. The author of *Sukranitisara* analyses the concept in the light of his original theory of political authority being based on the king's virtue and past merit. Somadeva in the 10th century A.D. and Mallinatha in the 14th century A.D. quoted from 'Kautilya.' In the variegated panorama of India's history in the later centuries, even the Muslim invaders of the 11th century onwards were powerfully influenced by the maxims of and practices in government and administration of the type advocated by Chanakya. Scholars have established that the *Arthasastra* was well-known up to the 15th century A.D. After the discovery of the work at the beginning of this century, it has been rightly held that Kautilya's analysis of diplomacy and foreign policy has an ironical relevancy to many of the present-day problems of power politics.

In the Introduction, we referred to Dr. Thomas R. Trautman's statistical investigation[5] of the authorship of Kautilya's *Arthasastra*. Using a complex mathematical technique, which is beyond the range of the ordinary Indologist, Dr.

[5]*Kautilya and the Arthasastra*, 1975.

Trautman noted that the "separate authorship of Books II, III and VII is well established." Dr. A.L. Basham, the celebrated Indologist[6] in the course of his foreword to the book observed, "Many periods and aspects of the history and culture of India need re-thinking in the light of archaeological and textual criticism of this kind." While we agree with that observation, throwing open the subject to further research as archaeological, numismatic and other discoveries become available, we may quote Dr. Trautman that "the *Arthasastra* is linked to the times of the Greek sources by the mention of coral from Alexandria." This ties up with the consensus that the Kautilya *Arthasastra* was the product of the Mauryan age.

The discovery of the *Arthasastra*, at the beginning of this century, has contributed in many ways to the enrichment of knowledge about ancient India. There is little in the *Arthasastra* which the student of political science will not find interesting from the comparative point of view. It is no longer a valid assertion that Indians never freed their politics from theology and metaphysics and did not study politics as an independent art or science. Indologists are also agreed that the work of Kautilya throws more light on the actual details on ancient Indian life than any other text in the whole range of Indian literature.

In his own day, the sage-diplomat witnessed—and inspired —the irresistible expansion of the Mauryan Empire under Chandragupta and Bindusara. Later, Chandragupta's grandson, Ashoka, built his great empire on the basis of *Arthasastra* and the scheme of administrative machinery detailed in its pages. Ashoka bequeathed to history the ideals of *Dharma* enshrined in the seal and emblem of the Republic of India. Thus Kautilya was the prophet of Ashoka's kingdom of righteousness for, despite whatever Kautilya wrote on statecraft and diplomacy, there is the persistent core of a serene atmosphere in the *Arthasastra* where intellectual liberty and spiritual freedom are guaranteed for the people through the *Dharmic* state. In the present chaos of nations, with the long and ghastly shadow of the atomic armoury stretching across the earth, it is all to the good if people the world over are reminded of these high ideals.

[6]The author of the best-seller *The Wonder that was India*, 1954, and *A History of Ajivikas*.

Glossary

Abhignana Mudra—official stamp (*Mudra*) on goods released for sale.

Achara—usage.

Adhyakshas—superintendents.

Ahimsa—non-injury to all beings.

Ajna—king's decree.

Amatya—king's minister.

Anvikshaki—comprises the philosophy of Sankhya, Yoga and the *Lokayadha* (atheism).

Aparigraha—give and take.

Araja—non-monarchical.

Artha—money or wealth.

Arthasastra—science of wealth, according to Kautilya.

Asva—cavalry.

Asvamedha—'horse-sacrifice'.

Bali—religious taxes.

Bhumi Patih—king as the trustee of the land.

Bhaga—part of taxes.

Bhāshya—commentary.

Charitra—characteristics; features.

Chaturanta Raja—a king ruling over 'the whole world', bound by the four quarters.

Danda—force or physical punishment—the law regulating these; coercive authority,

Dandaniti—politics; one of the four traditional sciences.

Dharma—custom; principles; obligations.

Duta—literally messenger; envoy who visited foreign courts on particular missions.

Ganika—woman of ill repute.

Gudalekha—cipher code.

Guna—characteristics; traits.

Harsha—joy.

Hast—elephants.

Kama—indulgence of sensual desires; lust.

Kara—taxes paid in cash.

Karnatika—tax-collector.

Karadah—tax-payer.
Kavya—*belles-lettres*.
Krodha—anger.
Kshatravidya—the Kshatriya science.
Lokayatra—wordly affairs.
Mada—haughtiness.
Madhyama—central; middle point.
Mantri Parishad—advisory body of ministers.
Matsyanyaya—law of the jungle.
Moksha—final release from human bondage.
Mukhya—executive officer.
Naya—diplomacy.
Nayas—power.
Nitisastra—science of polity.
Nyaya—edicts, justice.
Padati (*Patti*)—infantry.
Pana—Maurya silver coin.
Prajapati—the god of creation.
Prakarana—item.
Purohita—family priest.
Rajadharma—whole duty of the king, or, the duties of the king and government.
Rajan—king.
Rajasana—edicts of kings.
Ratha—chariots.
Samaja—assembly.
Sadgunavidhi—expedients, norms.
Sati—wife burning herself on the funeral pyre of her husband.
Samrat—dominating ruler.
Sastra—science.
Satya—truth.
Senapati—commander-in-chief.
Shakti—power.
Shankha—conch shell, blown by the mouth.
Sindhura—vermilion powder.
Sita—state lands.
Sveta Sura—white liquor.
Trayi—the Sacred Canon.
Udasina—neutral king.
Upaya—policies.
Udhakbhaga—share of water.
Utsava—festival
Vijigishu—aggressor.
Vyavahara—transaction.
Yukta—government officer.
Yojana—app. 5 miles,

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