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Dharma and Politics: A Critique of the Kautilya Arthasastr

Dr. Diptimayee Mishra*

Guest Faculty, Department of Sanskrit, Rama Devi Women's University, Bhubaneswar-751022, Odisha, India

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Abstract: The *Nyāya-vaiśeṣika*, the *Samkhya-yoga*, the *Mīmāṃsā*, the *Vedānta*, *Buddhism* and *Jainism* described the inevitable role of morality. According to the *Nyāya-vaiśeṣika* the actions are prompted by the three *dosas* such as *icchā*, *dveṣa* and *moha*. The *Sādhāraṇa* and *Varṇāśrama dharmas* are described the *Nyāya-vaiśeṣika*. The *Sādhāraṇa Dharmas* include ethical virtues. The *mīmāṃsakas* speak of three kinds of actions such as *kāmyakarmas*, *pratisiddha karmas* and *nityanaimittika karmas*. *Kauṭilya* advices that *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* are can together contribute the progress of the state. This paper attempts to describes the Religion, Morality and Politics helped shaping the social order during Kautilian age for good governance.

Keywords: *Nyāya-vaiśeṣika*, *Samkhya-yoga*, *Mīmāṃsā*, *Vedānta*, *Buddhism* and *Jainism*, *icchā*, *dveṣa* and *moha*, *kāmyakarmas*, *pratisiddha*.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Indian thought *Mokṣa* is the ultimate goal of human life. Meditation or *sādhana* is the most proximate means for *Mokṣa*. The elements of individual morality such as, *indriyanigraha*, *brahmacārya*, *aparigraha* etc. are practised first for that.

According to Manu there are ten symptoms of *dharma* such as –*Dhṛuti*, *ṣamā*, truth, purity, control the sensuous pleasure, control of mind, knowledge etc.

“*dhṛuti ṣamā damo streyam saucamindriya nigraha I dhividya satyamkrodho dasakam dharma lakṣanam*” II (Prasad 164)

The ten duties described by Manu *dhṛuti* (patience), *ṣamā* (forgiveness), *dama*(self-control), *asteya* (non-stealing), *śauca* (cleanliness), *indriyanigraha* (control of the senses), *dhi* (wisdom), *vidyā* (learning), *satya* (truthfulness) and *akrodha* (absence of anger). The social virtues are *ṣamā*, *asteya*, truthfulness etc. others are individual morality.

Division of Dharma

Dharma is the general term used for denoting the virtues and duties. Two types of *dharmas* have been recognised such as – *Sādhāraṇa* and *Varṇāśrama*. Every individual observe the *Sādhāraṇa dharma* of his being a man. The *Varṇāśrama dharma* relates to the particular stage of life. Hinduism has divided the society of people into four classes such as *Brāhmaṇ*, *Ṣatriya*, *Vaiśya* and *Śūdra*. The respective duties of different *varṇas* are described in the *Arthasāstra*. The duties of *Brāhmaṇ* are studying, teaching, performing sacrifices for self, peace, self-harmony, love, forgiveness etc. the works of a

Ṣatriya study, performing rituals, prescribed for him living the arms and protecting all life. The duties of *Vaiśya* are study, performance of sacrifice, giving gifts, agriculture, cattle-breeding and trade. The works of *Śūdras* described by *Kauṭilya* that their work is servicing of twice-born, agriculture, cattle-breeding, entertaining like actors etc.

According to *Kauṭilya* Religion is similar to morality. He describes the deep relation between religion and morality. He gave importance to behaviour as it reflects everyone's character. After describing four *varṇas* and *āśramas* then he advise every human to be truthful, king, helpful and pure in character. *Dharma*, behaviour, character and the king's orders are four pillars. A king should rule over his state according rules and regulations advised four fathers. *Dharma* is the main thing in this world a king should follow this. *Kauṭilya* describes various rules for the king to be good in character. A king should have constant association with elders in learning for the purpose of improving his training.

Also *Dharma* is based on truthfulness.

“*dharmasca vyavahārasca caritram rājāśāsanam I vivādarthascatīspādaḥ paścimaḥ purvabādhakah*” II (Prasad 167)

Law, transaction, custom and the royal edict are the four feet of the matter; among the later one supersedes the earlier one. Law is based on truth. The royal edict is the commands of the king while a transition, however on witness customs commonly held on the view of men. Here the king is the promulgator of

laws, when all law is perishing. The right conducts of the world consisting of the four *varṇas* and four *āśramas* by virtue. The king should protect his subjects according to law if he carrying out his own duty he leads to even. If he neglects his duties he should be punished. (*Kangle, II.3.1.38-41*)

Control of senses

According to *Kauṭilya* the king should control over the senses. He should avoid another man's wife or property. A king should avoid sleepiness, capriciousness, falsehood, wearing an extravagant dress, association with harmful persons. Ruler ship can be successfully carried out only with the help of associates who learned the Vedas and Purāṇas. He should listen elders opinion as one wheel alone does not turn. According to *Kauṭilya* the king should not allow the people to neglect their special duties because he finds joy after death for their special duties. The observance of one's special duty leads to heaven. A king should follow *dharma* as it shows right path for him as he is the backbone of the society. He should not neglect people. It is the duty of the king to show right way to their people and always gives them good advice. He should not allow anyone to break rules. Religion and morality are connected each other. *Kauṭilya* says that *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* can develop a state. A king is the protector of the earth and *dharma*.

"The king's happiness is based on his subject's happiness their welfare is king's welfare. A king shall not consider as good only that which pleases him but treat as beneficial to him whatever pleases his subjects". *Dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* can contribute to the attainment of *Mokṣa*. These three objectives are related each other. *Dharma* has always occupied the premier place. Every individual whether the ruler is ruled is governed by his or her own *dharma*. If the society respected *dharma*, the society protected itself. Religion and Politics are related with each other. Religion is backbone of the state. We can't divide religion from the state. According to Mahatma Gandhi 'Religion is the main thing of the Politics'. Politics is based on religion. According to *Kauṭilya* A king should follow the Religion.

The Bhagavad Gītā and Dharma

According to *Bhagavad Gītā*:-

"*tasmādasaktaḥ satataṃ kāryaṃ karma samācara* I
asakto hyā carankarma raramāpnoti pūruṣaḥ" II
(*The Gītā, III.19*)

Therefore always perform your work, without attachment, which has to be done; for a man who works without attachment he attains the Supreme.

"*karmaṇaiva hi saṅsiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ* I
lokasaṅgrahamevāpi sampāśyankartumarhasi" II
(*The Gītā, III.20*)

It is through action, that King Janaka and others attained perfection. Even with a view to the maintenance of the world-order, you must perform action.

"*indriyasyaendriyasyārthe rāgadveṣau vyavasthitau* I
tayorna vaśamāgacchetau hyasya paripanthinau" II
(*The Gītā, III. 34*)

Attachment and aversion for the objects of senses abide in the senses; one should not come under their away, because they are his enemies.

"*śreyānsvadharma viguṇaḥ paradharmas vanuṣṭhitāt* I
svadharme nidhanaṃśreyaḥ paradharma bhayāvahah" II
(*The Gītā, III. 35*)

Better is one's own duty, though devoid of merit, than the duty of another well performed. Even the death becomes blessed (gracious), in the performance of one's own duty; the duty of another is fraught with fear.

"*prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśah* I
ahaṅkāravimūḍhātmā kartāhamiti manyate" II
(*The Gītā, III.27*)

All actions are performed in all respects, by the modes of nature. The one whose mind is deluded by egoism, he thinks 'I am the doer'.

King is the backbone of the state. The king is the centre of the society or the state. So he should be puritan. He is the religion conservator so he is also known as puritan. The tenant should not be corrupted and renegade.

"*tasmatsvadharma vhutānām rājā na vyavhicārayet* I
svadharma samdhano hi pretya ceha va naṇdati" II
(*Prasad 168*)

The king shall never allow people to swerve from their duties who uphold his own duty according to the Āryas and following the rules of a castes and divisions of religious life will surely be happy both here and hereafter. When the world maintained in accordance with injunctions of the triple Vedas will surely progress, but never perish. (*Kangle, II.1.3.16-17*)

According to our Indian religions of age *Dharma* is the main thing which brings us *Mokṣa*. Our social system, unity, integrity is based on the Religion. According to *Kauṭilya* legality and religion are connected each other. A king should be puritan and also demeanour good behaves to the people of his state. So the king is known as 'Prophet'. He should control over the senses. *Kauṭilya* says that Religion and Politics are related with each other. A king should protect *dharma*, *Kauṭilya* advices that *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* are can together contribute the progress of the state. The king is the backbone of the state. So he should be religious and his character should be good. The king should look into the

affairs of temple deities, hermitages, heretics, Brahmins, learned in the Vedas, cattle and holy places of minors, the aged, the sick and the helpless woman in order or in accordance with the importance of the urgency matter. The king duty is to look into the affairs to the learned person in the Vedas and of ascetics after going to the fire sanctuary in the company of his chaplain and preceptor. The king's duty is saluting those suitors after getting up from his seat. (Kangle, II.47)

MAHĀBHĀRAT AND POLITICS

The name *Arthaśāstra* for the science of politics and administration appears to be quite old. The *Mahābhārata* mentions it in two places. *Arjuna* is described as 'an expert in *Arthaśāstra* and *Arthaśāstra* is described as 'followed by the best of kings in spite of the great influence of the *Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra*, later writers on this *śāstra* have preferred to name this as *Nītiśāstra* means either *Daṇḍanīti* or *Rājanītiśāstra*. The *Nītiśāstra* of *Kāmandaka*, the *Nītivākyaṃṛta* of *Somadeva*, and the *Nītiprakāśikā* of *Vaiśampāyana* are some of such instances. It seems that *Daṇḍanīti* is the oldest name for the *Śāstra*. According to *U. N. Ghoshal* that "*Arthaśāstra* is a comprehensive science of which *Daṇḍanīti* is only a branch. There so not appear to be sufficient grounds for making such a distinction. As stated in the *Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra*, *Daṇḍanīti* is concerned with *alabdhalābha* and *labdhaparipālana* along with other things. Now *Arthaśāstra*, as we have seen, is concerned with nothing more than these two state activities of *lābha* and *pālana*. It may also be pointed out that according to the *Nītivākyaṃṛta* of *Somadeva*, *Nītiśāstra* consists of *tantra* and *avapa*". A mythical account of the origin of the *Śāstra* is found in chapter 59 of the *Śāntiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*. In the *Kṛta Yuga*, men acted according to *dharma* even without rulers. In course of time men were overcome by greed, and passions, and anarchy prevailed everywhere. So gods approached *Brahmadeva*, the creators to find out a solution for this. The latter reassured them and composed a treatise so that an orderly and peaceful existence may be ensured for human life on earth. The treaty contained one hundred thousand chapters and dealt with the *trivarga* of *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*. It is added that the four lore's of *Trayī*, *Ānvīkṣikī Vārtā* and *Daṇḍanīti* were also treated in that work. (Kangle, III.3-5)

'Prajasukhe sukhaṃ ----- ca hite hitaṃ'

The subject's happiness is the king's happiness. According to *Kauṭilya* the king should look into the happiness of the subject as it gives his *Svarga*. The king should obey the god and the goddess. After gaining new territory he should carry out beneficial and agreeable works to the subjects by granting favours, giving exemptions, making gifts and showing honour. He should show the same devotion in festivals in honour of deities of the country festive gatherings and sportive amusements. The king should obey the Religion and should rule over his state regarding *dharma* if the people of the state did not obey the rules or regulations they

should be punished. The king is the promulgator of laws when all laws are perishing, by virtue of his guarding the right conduct of the world consisting of the four *varṇas* and four *āśramas*. They should carry out his own duty. According to law who protects the subjects leads to heaven or who does not protect the subjects derive the hell. The law is based on truth so everyone should be truthful. According to *Kauṭilya Dharma* is necessary for the state so he describes the chapter concerning law in the Book three as it helps the king to know about the duties. He describes concerning marriage, division of inheritance, buildings, recovery of debts, concerning deposits, rules regarding slaves and labourers, rescission of purchase and sale, resumption of gifts and sale without ownership, ownership, robbery, defamation, and assault, gambling and betting and miscellaneous. These are known as religious rules. The duty of the king is to observe the rules. He should be strict in this case.

CONCLUSION

The aim of *Arthaśāstra* is very practical to show the right way for the creation of an ideal state and an ideal ruler. The study reveals that the principles adopted in the text are useful for state-craft and state administration even today. In a disciplined society every citizen should follow the prescribed norms of conduct and duties (*svadharmah*) which may lead him and the society to an elevated position (*svadharmah svargāyānāntyāya*). The *Kauṭilian* principles are meant for the present and the future generations for maintaining social balance and growth.

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