

# Kautilya's Saptanga Theory

## Lecture: 2

We know that Kautilya's Artha Sastra deals with the science of politics (or administration) of the state or the Dandaniti of the state. There is an allegation that Kautilya did not develop any major theory. What he discussed is practical teachings which allowed young prince to become a very noted ruler in later life. But we find that Kautilya discussed at least one major theoretical exposition, that is the Saptanga theory of the state. Saptanga is from two words: Sapta and Anga, meaning seven organs or limbs-just as the human body has several organs. For a smooth functioning of the human body harmonious relationship and proper functioning of all the organs are necessary. Similarly Kautilya believed that for the smooth functioning of the state at least a harmonious relationship and proper functioning of seven organs are necessary.

It is common knowledge that Kautilya was influenced by earlier predecessors and the customs prevailing in ancient India. But it would be an exaggeration to conclude that he not only summarized the prevailing thinking on the socio-political customs of his times but also enriched it with his original ideas. As Prof. U. N. Ghoshal puts it: 'The Arthasastra is much more than the summary of the earlier literature on the subject: it involves in the form of closer analysis of the earlier ideas and notions, a virtual reconstruction of the science.' Moreover, one should also note that the basic difference between Kautilya and the western political thinkers is that the former was more interested in the practical aspects of state administration along with universal theories, while many of the western philosophies devoted most of their time to postulating abstract ideas which may be regarded as a mere luxury in philosophical speculations.

The Saptanga theory refers to seven Angas or at some places Kautilya called them Prakritis. These seven Angas or Prakritis that constitute a state and a very proper blending of functions of all these for the state is necessary to sustain in an efficient manner. The Angas are Swami, Amatya, Janapada, Durga, Kosha, Danda and Mitra. One should remember that these seven Angas have been mentioned by Kautilya in a descending order of magnitude. That is, the preceding element is more important than that which is immediately following it. Going by that logic, Swami is the most important organ of the seven Angas. It is important than Amatya; Amatya than Janapada and so on. At the same time Kautilya also mentioned the vices that could prevail upon each of these Angas. Here also the preceding element is more disastrous or likely to create disastrous consequences than the vices which are following them. So going by the same logic here also we find that the vices of the Swami are likely to create more disastrous consequences than the vices of the Amatya. Or the vices of Amatya are more disastrous than the vices of Janapada and so on. So the seven organs of the state have to be

mentioned in this same manner and have to be taken into consideration in this order of magnitude.

The first Anga is Swamin which means master or prabhu, the lord or sovereign. Surprisingly nowhere Kautilya used the term Rajan which is the word for the king we normally associate with a monarchical form of government. Perhaps a kind of possessiveness is associated with the word Swamin. Swamin is just not a ruler or a king, he is something more than that, subjects are not only under his political control but Swamin exists in the whole of life of the people. Swamin is a veritable sovereign over all within his territorial empire and owing allegiance to none.

Kautilya mentioned that Swamin should be one of noble origin. He should be quite wise to conduct the daily affairs of administration and also to conduct the state in a particular fashion or according to a particular goal that he was envisaged. The emphasis on noble origin indicates that a person of humble origin or in other words a common man could not aspire to become a Swamin. This also shows that Kautilya emphasized the hereditary nature of this occupant. Swamin should be succeeded by someone from his own family preferably by the Yubaraj, the eldest male successor to the throne.

According to Kautilya, Swamin should have three qualities. One is the Avigamika Guna, that is, the Swamin should be able to inspire confidence amongst his subjects. When the monarch wanted to do something these subjects should follow him or the subjects should consider the particular project. The second quality is called Pragna Guna, that is, the Swamin should be wise enough to deal with all the matters of the state. A. T. Embree wrote that the king should be 'non-fatalistic, endowed with strong character, looking up to (experienced) old men (for guidance); religious, truthful in speech; not inconsistent (in his behavior); grateful; having liberal aims; full of abundant energy; not procrastinating; controller of his feudatories; of determined intellect; having an assembly of ministers of no mean quality; intent on discipline - these are the qualities by means of which people are attracted toward him.'

Finally the Swamin should have Utsaha guna, i.e., he should be energized or he should enthuse all his subjects to follow him.

Kautilya also talked about the training of the Swamin. It is quite natural that even if someone is from the noble origin he may not have all the qualities on his own. Kautilya so explained in details how the Swamin should be trained in various aspects. He talked about three philosophical courses; the Nyaya, the Yoga and the Lokayata. And interestingly the emphasis on the Lokayata indicates that Kautilya wanted the Swamin not only to be trained in philosophical other worldness but a philosophical this - worldness too. That is, the Swamin should engage himself in the proper expansion of his kingdom, in the proper administration of his kingdom,

in maintaining the social life of his kingdom and in nurturing the activities of his state.

Apart from training in philosophical discourses, the Swamin should be trained in Trayee, that is, the three Vedas; Rik, Sama, Yaju Vedas. Also the monarch should be trained also in Dandaniti - the science of administration and the science of politics. He should also have the knowledge of training of Vartas, that is, the science of economic activities.

Regarding the vices Kautilya said there could be seven kinds of vices that the Swamin should encounter. Just as diseases are bound to make their appearance in the case of persons who eat unwholesome foods, so do enemies make their appearance - some immediately and some in course of time - in respect of Swamins who are devoid of the knowledge of the science of polity, but it never happens that they do not make their appearance at all. The primary duty of the Swamin consists of the protection of his subjects and the constant keeping under control of evil elements.

The second element or Anga of the state is Amatya. Here a confusion arose whether Mantri and Amatya are one and the same. Kautilya of course categorically distinguished the two categories. Mantri, according to Dandaniti, is the counsellor or advisor to the king. The number of Mantris should be limited to three or maximum four. If there is only one Mantri, he should not be relied upon wholly and if there are two they could quarrel. So the number should be fixed at three or maximum four. Mantra, however, was not mentioned as Prakriti or Anga in the Saptanga theory. But Amatya had been mentioned.

Amatya means high official in the administrative set-up. The number of Amatyas, according to Kautilya, should be around thirty-seven to forty-two. They are officers or administrators to the state or a cadre of officials from which different functionaries were recruited to the state for the smooth functioning of the state. Kautilya talked about several kinds of Amatyas and explained how could they be recruited and how they could conduct their work. Kautilya mentioned four kinds of tests for recruitment - Dharmapada, Arthapada, Bhayapada, Lobhapada. Dharmapada is a test of justice. The people who became qualified in this test should be recruited in the judiciary. The people who were successful in Arthapada test should go to the treasury and the departments concerning with state revenues. Those who passed in the Bhayapada test, that is, the test of fear could be recruited in the Army or in the cadre of body guards that helped the king in his various matters. Finally the test of Lobhapada meaning thereby the test of greed. Those who passed this test should be recruited in the domestic activities or the different minute details of the home affairs of the monarchical state.

The third organ or the third prakriti is the Janapada. This third element of the state is not free from controversial interpretations. While some scholars equate

Janapada with the geographical territory of the state, others refer to population by a different connotation of the word. However, according to a modern interpretation of the Sanskrit text it seems that Janapada is a synonym both territory and population. According to Kautilya Janapada indicates principally the countryside where agriculturists and those who were engaged in the Pasuopalana activities, Kautilya, however, did not mention the exact size of the Janapada or its ideal size. But from a reading of the entire treatise we could surmise that Kautilya was always in favour of larger territory different from smaller principalities that were before the rise of Magadha.

The fourth prakriti or anga is Durga. Durga means the fortress. But Kautilya did not mention Durga only as a fortress, principally it is a fortified capital - that is the town. At that time the capital was the only town where different kinds of people were engaged in different kinds of activities and belonged to different social strata. The inhabitants of the Durga belonged to different Varnas also who lived in their respective demarcated territories. Kautilya stressed on an invincible fort, which according to him is the most important pillar on which the superstructure of the state stands. Kautilya referred to four kinds of forts - water fort, hill fort, desert fort and forest fort.

Regarding the vices of Janapada and Durga, Kautilya mentioned that when different kinds of people began to inhabit the Janapada that was a vice because there was in Janapada agriculturists lived with pasupalana people. If Durga people belonging to one kind of stratum began to live there then the Durga might not be in a position to tackle any external aggression or to check any internal security problem.

The fifth element of the Saptanga theory is the Kosha - the state exchequer or treasury. The Kosha must be rich in gold and silver, as well as big and variegated so that it might be capable of withstanding prolonged calamities. Industrial development, abundance of harvests and prosperity of commerce etc were sought by Kautilya for a strong treasury. And it would sustain the kingdom in proper manner. Regarding the Kosha Kautilya used two terms - Aiswariya and Baiswariya. The former means the sources from which different revenues come in the Kosha. The sources are chiefly different taxes, levies and others. The latter indicates principally the expenditure - that is the palace expenditure, the expenditure on army and warfare and so on. Kautilya also mentioned that at the time of emergency higher taxation could be imposed by Swamin. More levy on agriculture and cattle rearing could enrich the Kosha.

Prof. Binaykumar Sarkar pointed out in detailed manner how the Kosha could sustain the economy and the politics of the state, reminded him the issue of planned economy. Prof. Sarkar argued that Kautilya's Artha Sastra has one surprising element of planned economy in his discussion of the Kosha. In modern welfare state we generally discuss the concept of planned economy.

The sixth anga is Danda. Throughout the Artha Sastra the word Danda is used in different manners and connotations. It is the Sceptor in the hands of the ruler which signifies sovereignty of the ruler as well as that of the state. It signifies also the rule of law. It also means the coercive power of the state. In the Saptanga theory the Danda signifies the army upon which the coercive power of the state rests. The army is used for both internal security of the state as well as to start an expedition against the neighbouring countries or the neighbouring principalities. According to Kautilya, Danda comes next to Kosha because the success and the sustenance of Danda depends to a large extent upon how much the Kosha is filled up. Regarding the constitution of Danda Kautilya unlike his earlier masters told that all the four varnas of the society constitute the Danda. The inclusion of the Sudras within the Danda is really an admirable contribution of Kautilya.

Finally the last prakriti of the Saptanga is the Mitra. Kautilya was always in favour of expanding the kingdom of the state and for that purpose he said that Mitra is an important constituent. The Swamin needed the help of his allies whenever he wanted to start an expedition. This aspect is actually discussed in details in discussion of foreign policy of the state.

The seven prakritis or angas constituted what is called the Saptanga theory of the state which is considered the very major contribution of Kautilya towards the theoretical exposition of the ancient Indian political thought. #