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CC- 5 : HISTORY OF IDEAS

UNIT- 1: HISTORY OF IDEAS, ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL

KAUTILYA:- SAPTANGA THEORY OF STATE

The word “Saptang” indicates seven limbs, constituents or elements. Together, they constitute the State as an organism, “like a chariot composed of seven parts fitted and subservient to one another”. To an extent; the Saptanga theory of State finds elaboration in the Ancient Greek Political Philosophy. For instance: while comparing the State with the human body, Plato had argued that just as a cut in the finger causes pain in the body, similarly injury of one organ creates problems for the other organs of the body politic. Seven Angas, Prakritis, or elements were enumerated and elucidated by Kautilya for describing “the nature of the State” in its totality. As laid down in the first chapter of Arthashastra’s Sixth Book, entitled Mandala Yonih, these are:

1) *Swami (The Sovereign King)*

Subscribing to monarchy as the ideal form of state, Kautilya has accorded to the king “the highest place in the body- politic”. The Swami is the chief executive head of the state and, is, thus “the consummation of all other elements”. The word Swami is derived from the word swayam which refers to self-determining. The Swami, therefore, becomes a living and animate embodiment, which is subjected to be ruled by none, does not

follow any external rulings and is liable only to self- imposed restrictions. He is, thus, the symbol of legal and political authority and power. Kautilya gives a comprehensive list of four broad categories of qualities which constitute the ideals of a Swami: (i) Qualities of an inviting nature; (ii) Qualities of intellect and intuition; (iii) Qualities of enthusiasm and (iv) Qualities of self-restraint and spirit. This categorization of qualities supplements the usual notion of kingship being characterized by coercion and subordination of people. The king was, thus, not to be a despot, exercising power through sheer military force, but was to rule his subjects through affection.

Accordingly, the duties and functions that he is called upon to perform are of two types:

(i) Protective Functions- The king being the natural guardian and savior of his people, Kautilya expects him to perform the following protective functions that he should put down violence and maintain law and order, he should avert dangers and command the army, to redress people's grievances, to punish the wrong- doers and to administer justice impartially and in accordance with the sacred law, evidence, history and enacted law.

(ii) Promotive Functions- On the other hand, his promotive functions include the following that he should promote the moral and material happiness and welfare of his people, as in their happiness lies his happiness and in their welfare his welfare, to enable them to pursue freely their independent efforts in life, to maintain unity and solidarity, to reward virtue, to promote agriculture, industry and arts, to regulate the means of livelihood, especially of the laborers and artisans and to encourage education and help students.

In the exercise of these functions, Kautilya's king was all- powerful. The limits of his authority were imposed by the social and religious customs of his state.

2) Amatya (The Minister)- In its narrow sense, the term Amatya or Mantrin is used for the minister of the high grade. Kautilya describes an elaborate system of recruitment of the Amatyas and other officials who were to be morally and ethically pure, honest in financial matters and of good character. The Amatyas were expected to be natural born citizens, persons of noble origin, free from all vices, men of infallible memory, friendly nature, wisdom, patience and endurance. The king was expected to appoint only wise men to

these offices as they were to be his trusted advisers. These ministers were not only to advise the king whenever their advice was sought; they were also to maintain the secrecy of their deliberations.

3) Janapada (The People and The Territory)- This unique element of Saptanga is the symbol of State, which stands for a “territorial society”. Here, ‘Jana’ denotes people and ‘Pada’ is a symbol of territory where these inhabitants permanently reside. D.R. Bhandarkar and R.S. Sharma are of the view that Kautilya’s Janapada includes not only territory but also population. Kautilya prescribes the following requisites of a prosperous Janapada in terms of territory: (i) accommodate and support people; (ii) defend the state against enemies; (iii) find occupation of people; (iv) have manageable neighbours; (v) provide pastures; (vi) have arable land, mines, forest and (vii) provide good internal communication, i.e. rivers, roads, and outlet to sea.

4) Durga (Fortification)- Kautilya regarded fortification as essential for the defense and protection of the state. He wanted the state to fortify the territories from all sides. He has described four types of fortification which include Audak, Paarvat, Dhannvana and Vana. Of these categories, the first two are used for the protection of the territory and the remaining two are used for the protection of the farmers. These fortifications, thus, would not only protect the people and the capital, but would also be suitable for fighting purposes, i.e. for both defensive and offensive purposes.

5) Kosha (The Treasury)- The flourishing economy is essential for the existence of the State in all times and circumstances. That is probably why the philosophers of Ancient India looked at treasury as an essential element of the State. Though Kautilya wanted a prosperous treasury, he specifically directed the king to earn the wealth of nation only by legitimate and righteous means and in no way by unfair and immoral means. For the collection of revenues, Kautilya suggested the following legitimate sources: (i) various forms of land tax; (ii) duty levied on the sale of commodities in the market; (iii) tax on imports and exports and (iv) miscellaneous taxes.

6) Danda (The Army or The Force)- Kautilya accepted a strong and hereditary Kshatriya army, as the most important requisite of the state. He insisted on the hereditary army, as it would not only be skilled, well-

contended and obedient to the king's will, but also be free from duplicity. Such an army would serve both the defensive and offensive purposes of the king. Hence, it was obvious for Kautilya to pay great attention to the maintenance and organization of the army. For instance, in Arthashastra, we find him mentioning as many as half a dozen heads of departments namely the incharge of the armory, naval forces, cavalry, elephants, chariots and infantry.

7) Mitra (The Allies)- Having realized that “political isolation means death”, Kautilya proceeded to consider the Mitra or the ally as a vital factor. Kautilya recognizes two kinds of allies, namely Sahaja and Kritrima. The Sahaja or natural ally is the one whose friendship is derived from the times of King's father and grandfather and who is situated close to the territory of the immediately neighboring enemy. On the other hand, the Kritrima or the acquired ally is the one whose friendship is specially resorted to for the protection of wealth and life. Kautilya, however, preferred an ally who is traditional, permanent, disciplined, and enthusiastic and from whom the possibility of opposition or rebellion is minimum.

Conclusion

Kautilya's concept of 'State' is, however, vividly reflected in his description of angas or elements of the state. He did not specifically define the term 'State', as he was essentially a man of action, and not a theorist. His concern for and emphasis on the internal and external security of state was to save humanity from a sort of Hobbesian state of nature. The Saptang theory is a vivid manifestation of Kautilya's deeper understanding of not only the political nature of man, but also the functioning of his political institutions, especially the state.

