

ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

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- All units have been written fresh according to the NEP course structure except Units 1, 5, 6, and 11. These four units were taken from CBCS study material and reframed according to NEP.
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SYLLABUS

Ancient and Medieval Indian Political Thought

Syllabus	Mapping
UNIT –I Foundations of Indian Political Thought • An Overview on Sources of Indian Political Thought • Cultural and Territorial conception of India • Distinctive Features of Indian Political Thought	Lesson 1: An Overview on Sources of Indian Political Thought (Pages 3-30) Lesson 2: Cultural and Territorial Concept of India and Distinctive Features of Indian Political Thought (Pages 31-50)
Unit II: Manu: • Authenticity of Manu smriti (Talking Point) • Social Laws and Conception of Justice	Lesson 3: Manusmriti: Relevance of the Study in the Present Context (Pages 53-86)
Unit III: Brihaspati: Statecraft, Justice, Inter-state Relations	Lesson 4: Brihaspati – Statecraft, Justice, and Inter-state Relations (Pages 89-107)
Unit IV: Shukra/Usana • Talking Point: Debate on the authenticity of Shukra-Niti • The Concept of Kingship and Statecraft in Shukra-Niti	Lesson 5: Talking Point: Debate on the Authenticity of Shukra-niti and The Concept of Kingship and Statecraft In Shukra-niti (Pages 111-128)
Unit V: Kautilya: Theory of State	Lesson 6: Kautilya: Theory of State (Pages 131-156)
Unit VI: Aggannasutta (DighaNikaya): Theory of Kingship	Lesson 7: Aggañña Sutta (Digha Nikaya): Theory Of Kingship (Pages 159-181)
Unit VII: Tiruvalluvar: Ethical Life and Politics	Lesson 8: Thiruvalluvar–Ethical Life and Politics (Pages 185-212)
Unit VIII: Basavanna	Lesson 9: Basavanna (Pages 215-235)
Unit IX: Adi Shankracharya: Advaita	Lesson 10: Adi Shankaracharya: Advaita (Pages 239-257)
Unit X: Kabir and Guru Nanak: Syncretism	Lesson 11: Kabir and Guru Nanak: Syncretism (Pages 261-283)
Unit XI: Abul Fazl: Monarchy Essential/recommended readings	Lesson 12: Abul Fazal: Monarchy (Pages 287-305)



CONTENTS

Unit I: Foundations of Indian Political Thought

Lesson 1	An Overview on Sources of Indian Political Thought	3-30
Lesson 2	Cultural and Territorial Concept of India and Distinctive Features of Indian Political Thought	31-50

Unit II: Manu

Lesson 3	Manusmriti: Relevance of the Study in the Present Context	53-86
----------	---	-------

Unit III: Brihaspati – Statecraft, Justice, and Inter-State Relations

Lesson 4	Brihaspati – Statecraft, Justice, and Inter-State Relations	89-107
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Unit IV: Shukra/Usana

Lesson 5	Talking Point: Debate on the Authenticity of Shukra-Niti and the Concept of Kingship and Statecraft in Shukra-Niti	111-128
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Unit V: Kautilya: Theory of State

Lesson 6	Kautilya: Theory of State	131-156
----------	---------------------------	---------

Unit VI: Aggañña Sutta (Digha Nikaya): Theory of Kingship

Lesson 7	Aggañña Sutta (Digha Nikaya): Theory of Kingship	159-181
----------	--	---------

Unit VII: Thiruvalluvar–Ethical Life and Politics

Lesson 8	Thiruvalluvar–Ethical Life and Politics	185-212
----------	---	---------



Unit VIII: Basavanna

Lesson 9	Basavanna	215-235
----------	-----------	---------

Unit IX: Adi Shankaracharya: Advaita

Lesson 10	Adi Shankaracharya: Advaita	239-257
-----------	-----------------------------	---------

Unit X: Kabir and Guru Nanak: Syncretism

Lesson 11	Kabir and Guru Nanak: Syncretism	261-283
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Unit XI: Abul Fazal: Monarchy

Lesson 12	Abul Fazal: Monarchy	287-305
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UNIT I: FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

**LESSON 1 AN OVERVIEW ON SOURCES OF INDIAN
POLITICAL THOUGHT**

**LESSON 2 CULTURAL AND TERRITORIAL CONCEPT
OF INDIA AND DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF
INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT**



LESSON 1

AN OVERVIEW ON SOURCES OF INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

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Structure

- 1.1 Learning Objectives
- 1.2 Introduction
- 1.3 Basic Premises of Indian Political Thought
 - 1.3.1 Basic Premises of Indian Political Thought: Political Ideas in the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Arthashastra*
- 1.4 Nyaya School of Thought
- 1.5 Charvaka School of Thought
- 1.6 Self
- 1.7 Summary
- 1.8 Glossary
- 1.9 Answers to In-text Questions
- 1.10 Self-Assessment Questions
- 1.11 References/Suggested Readings

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, students should be able to:

- Understand the rich, vivid, and popular traditions of India.
- Believe in the valuable practices emanating from civilisations.
- Understand the epistemological or 'Gyanmimansha' traditions of Indian political thought, which view the intrinsic nature of the subject of cognition and often delve into metaphysics or religion.

Self-Instructional
Material

3



NOTES

1.2 INTRODUCTION

We know that Indian political thought has a rich, vivid, and deep tradition of eulogising values, beliefs, and practices emanating from a lustrous civilisation since very ancient times. The thinking process and subsequent practices which developed in India are unique, unparalleled, unquestionable, and unfathomable in the entire world. The Indian thinking tradition has given the world a rich source of knowledge relating to enquiries into the existence of the God, purpose of human life, the unfathomable mysteries of outer space, the minute existent particle of earth, and even the universal value system. So rich is the Indian political thought tradition that it has earned enormous respect in the world and gathered several followers since ages. India, which had been a land of hermits, philosophers, and preaches has guided humanity since ancient ages. Whenever the world had faced crises and deviated from the path of humanity, India had shown the world right path. This was true during ancient times and even in modern times.

To understand the deep-rooted Indian political thought which can be often complex at times, it is necessary to understand its epistemic foundations so that clarity may emerge and the present generation may benefit from it. In understanding the knowledge tradition, epistemology plays a very important role. The word epistemology has been taken from the Greek lexicon, where ‘episteme’ means knowledge and ‘logos’ means reason. Therefore, Epistemology is a science of knowledge or a field of understanding knowledge. Epistemology studies the origin scope and frontier of knowledge and it arose from a strong human need to learn about anything, whether it was in the immediate vicinity, such as objects, or something that could not be seen but could be perceived, such as a supernatural power or entity. Epistemology which in India is called as ‘*Gyanmimansha*’ is also about cognition, which focuses on three vital issues: the object, which is cognised, the subject which cognises the object, and the tools of cognition like perception. The epistemological understanding of Indian political thought which views the intrinsic nature of the subject of cognition often delves into metaphysics or religion. Therefore, the Indian epistemology not only explains the basis of everyday common experience but by focusing on cognition, it also explains



the real nature of subject. Thus, epistemology in Indian political thought often depicts a knowledge form where the subject-object distinction may break down (Soni, Jayandra, 2003).

1.3 BASIC PREMISES OF INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

Knowledge as Pramana

Knowledge is a kind of cognition which is acquired through the right methods. Thereby, cognition is a phenomenon of consciousness which produces a belief system that is verifiable and genuine. In Indian political thought, cognition is always produced in a right manner. So, despite different theories of truth, knowledge not only reveals the truth but also emerges out of it. Knowledge cannot be acquired by whims and fancies or by sudden mishaps; neither it can be produced by mere speculation as the right methodology has not been followed. In the epistemology of Indian political thought, the knowledge source or the '*pramana*' becomes important as it is method of verifiable cognition determination. It is a means of accurate and valid knowledge.

In epistemology of Indian political thought, the means of knowledge or *pramana* which has emerged as a significant area of thought are *pratyaksa* (perception), *anumana* (inference), *upamana* (comparison), *sabda* (verbal testimony), *arthapatti* (presumption), *sambhava* (implication) and *aitihya* (tradition). The Mimamsa School has played a significant role in underlying the development of knowledge in Indian tradition. The scholars of Mimamsa School have played important role in establishing epistemology in Indian knowledge tradition. In this context, Kumarila and Prabhakara have rejected *sambhava* (implication) and *aitihya* (tradition) as valid forms of knowledge. Kumarila has accepted six *pramanas* which are *pratyaksa* (perception), *anumana* (inference), *upamana* (comparison), *sabda* (verbal testimony), *arthapatti* (presumption) and *anupalabdhi* (non apprehension). Prabhakara has though rejected *anupalabdhi* (non apprehension) as a valid source of *pramana*.



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***Pratyaksa* (Perception)**

Pratyaksa or perception talks about the knowledge which is present and can be perceived through eyes or whose presence is visible before eyes. *Pratyaksa* or perception is therefore considered as one of the most important forms of *pramana*. *Pratyaksa* is a type of cognition in which the most important aspect is the contact between senses and the object of perception. Thus, *pratyaksa* is knowledge about the existence of worldly phenomena through sense organs and experience of internal human cognition like happiness and sadness through mental abilities (Phillips, Stephen: 2019).

***Anumana* (Inference)**

The word *anumana* is derived from two words ‘anu’ meaning after and ‘mana’ meaning knowledge. Therefore, *anumana* means ‘after knowledge’ or ‘seeker of knowledge based on proof.’ Therefore, the knowledge obtained by *anumana* is not direct but indirect and has been inferred. For example, when smoke is observed on a distant hill, it is immediately inferred that there is fire, because smoke and fire are associated and there is previous knowledge about it. So, in *anumana* three features are important. They are ‘*Sadhya*’ (what is to be proved, i.e., fire), ‘*Hetu*’ (cause of inference, i.e., smoke), and ‘*Paksa*’ (which causes side or cause doubt, i.e., hill) (Ibid.).

***Sabda* (Verbal Testimony)**

Sabda or verbal testimony is the authoritative speech of a trustworthy person. It is the hearing of words through ears and believing it, as it emanates from a person whose integrity is unquestionable. A major part of knowledge has been imparted to humans through verbal usage of words by other people. So, *sabda* or words are extremely important in the development of cognitive ability of a person. *Sabda* or testimony has been well established as an important form of *pramana*. Also, the scriptural testimony develops cognition about objects which are not in contact of sense but are being developed by knowledge of words.



Upamana (Comparison)

Upamana means ‘comparison’ or ‘resemblance’. It produces a valid source of cognition by means of analogy. *Upamana* refers to comparison or association of something by virtue of its similarity to object that has been known from earlier times. For example, a person who has never seen a wild ox has been told that it resembles a cow. So, when the person observes a wild ox, the person observes that it is like a cow and so believes it to be a wild ox.

Arthapatti (Presumption)

Arthapatti means ‘presumption’ or ‘implication’. It is derived from two words ‘*artha*’ meaning fact and ‘*apathi*’ meaning ‘*kalpana*’ or supposition. *Arthapatti* resolves the conflict between two facts by solving the problem which occurs between two facts. *Arthapatti* solves the problem by presuming about the fact which may seem contradictory. For example, a person is fat and the person does not eat in the day. It therefore means that the person eats in the night.

Anupalabdhi (Non Apprehension or Non Perception)

Anupalabdhi (non apprehension) is a kind of *pramana* which informs about the nonexistence of an object or about the absence of the object. Objects that do not exist sometimes cannot be perceived through the senses and therefore another source of knowledge is needed. Therefore, *Anupalabdhi* happens when the non-perception of an object talks about its non-existence. For example, when a chair which must be in a room is not seen there, then the knowledge about nonexistence of the chair is determined through separate *pramana* which is *Anupalabdhi*.

The Indian political thought tradition includes various aspects of ancient moral philosophy like Purushartha, goals of liberation and theory of karma. These moral philosophies have given rise to two distinctive schools of thought depending on the acceptance of Vedas and religious rituals. These schools of thought are orthodox (*Astika*) schools and heterodox (*Nastika*) schools. The schools which accept the authority of the Vedas are classified as the orthodox schools and the schools which do not accept the authority of Vedas are classified as the heterodox schools. Among the



NOTES

orthodox schools of thought the Nyaya school of thought and among the heterodox schools of thought the Charvaka school of thought is important to understand the epistemic foundation of Indian political thought.

1.3.1 Basic Premises of Indian Political Thought: Political ideas in the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Arthashastra*

The political ideas found in ancient Indian texts such as the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, and *Arthashastra* provide a rich tapestry of governance, statecraft, and ethics. These texts offer profound insights into Rajdharma (the duty of rulers), the art of governance, and the intricacies of political strategy. Let us study these ideas as presented in the respective texts.

The *Ramayana*

The *Ramayana*, attributed to the sage Valmiki, is an epic narrative that centres around the life of Lord Rama. It provides valuable lessons on Rajdharma, or the duty of kings, through the actions and decisions of its characters.

Rajdharma in the *Ramayana*

- 1. Rama's Adherence to Duty:** Rama's life exemplifies Rajdharma, where he prioritises duty over personal desires. His decision to accept exile to honour his father's promise highlights the importance of keeping one's word and fulfilling one's duties irrespective of personal loss.
- 2. Justice and Fairness:** The *Ramayana* emphasises justice and fairness in governance. Rama's efforts to ensure the well-being of his subjects, even at personal cost, underline the ideal of a king being the protector and caretaker of his people.
- 3. Moral Integrity:** The epic underscores the necessity of moral integrity and righteousness (dharma) in leadership. Rama's actions reflect the ideal qualities of a ruler who embodies truth, compassion, and selflessness.



The *Mahabharata*

The *Mahabharata*, attributed to Vyasa, is another monumental epic that profoundly illustrates political philosophy and ethics. It presents complex scenarios and characters that present various facets of Rajdharma and statecraft.

Rajdharma in the *Mahabharata*

- 1. Yudhishtira's Dilemma:** The character of Yudhishtira personifies the conflict between moral duty and political necessity. His adherence to dharma, even when it leads to hardship, demonstrates the challenges of righteous rule.
- 2. Bhishma's Teachings:** The Anushasana Parva of the *Mahabharata* contains Bhishma's teachings on Rajdharma to Yudhishtira, where he outlines the responsibilities of a king, including protecting the weak, ensuring justice, and promoting prosperity.
- 3. Krishna's Counsel:** Lord Krishna's guidance to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita* (part of the *Mahabharata*) extends to the realm of political ethics, emphasising the importance of performing one's duty without attachment to results and advocating for righteous action in governance.

The *Arthashastra*

The *Arthashastra*, attributed to Kautilya (Chanakya), is a comprehensive treatise on statecraft, economic policy, and military strategy. It is a pragmatic guide to governance and administration. It outlines the primary duties of a ruler, including the protection of the state, administration of justice, and welfare of the people. It emphasises the ruler's role in maintaining law and order and ensuring the prosperity of the state. Kautilya provides detailed instructions on the organisation of the state's administrative machinery, including the roles of various officials, the management of finances, and the importance of efficient governance. The *Arthashastra* advocates for the use of espionage and strategic diplomacy to safeguard the state's interests. It includes methods for gathering intelligence, forming alliances, and dealing with enemies. The text underscores the significance of economic prosperity for a stable state. It advises on revenue collection, resource management, and trade policies. Kautilya also provides extensive guidelines



NOTES

on military strategy, including the organisation of the army, tactics for warfare, and the importance of maintaining a strong and disciplined military.

1.4 NYAYA SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

Sage Gautama is the chief proponent of the Nyaya school of thought. Nyaya in Sanskrit variously means justice, equality of all beings, rules, methods, or judgement. They are also called *Tarkashastra*, *Anvikshiki*, *Akshapada Vidya* and the Nyaya Vidya. The Nyaya school of thought has been attributed to the development of epistemology, methodology and theory of logic. The Nyaya School is religious as well as philosophical. It advocates bringing an end to human suffering as suffering results from ignorance of reality. Therefore, liberation from suffering can be achieved by right knowledge. The objective of the Nyaya School is to achieve true knowledge of the reality as inherent in metaphysics and investigation of those conditions which require correct thinking as evident in epistemology. The Nyaya school of thought advances the use of logical reasoning and critical thinking (Chatterjee, S C: 1939).

The Nyaya School of thought prominently emphasise four basic area, namely: (i) theory of knowledge, (ii) theory of physical world, (iii) theory of self, and (iv) theory of God. These four areas culminate from the study of Nyaya sutra. In Nyaya sutra, sixteen entities (*padartha*) are mentioned. These sixteen entities are (1) *pramana* (means of knowledge), (2) *prameya* (right knowledge), (3) *samsaya* (doubt or uncertainty), (4) *prayojana* (goal or purpose), (5) *drstanta* (factually correct example used in inference), (6) *siddhanta* (widely accepted doctrine), (7) *avayava* (components of syllogism), (8) *tarka* (counterfactual argument), (9) *nirnaya* (definite knowledge), (10) *vada* (consultation or discussion), (11) *jalpa* (finding fault in opponents argument to establish own argument by giving wrangling rejoinder), (12) *vitanda* (debating only to refute), (13) *hetvabhasa* (fallacy of inference), (14) *Chala* (unjust reply), (15) *jati* (reply by false analogy), and (16) *nigrahastha* (exposing opponent's argument and showing self-contradiction and inconsistency and thus defeating the opponent).



Pramana

Pramana is the effective depiction of true knowledge of the existence of an object. *Pramana* articulates an object the way object articulates itself. *Pramana* however articulates an object through true cognition which can be ascertained by inference. Therefore, without true cognition, the object cannot be realised. In *Pramana*, the object of knowledge, the knowledge itself and the one who knows, or knower gets linked to the object. It is only by *Pramana* that an object can be determined. So, one who generates practical response due to desire to possess the object is the knower. Therefore, *Pramana* is the way by which he knows the object. The object which is known is called *prameya* and the knowledge of the object is known as *pramiti*. Therefore, *Pramana* reveals the truth and emphasises the importance of cognitive process and its connection to the existence and non-existence of things. The Nyaya school of thought uses four different and independent means of knowledge. These four knowledge forms are: (i) Perception (*Pratyaksa*), (ii) Inference (*Anumana*), (iii) Comparison (*Upamana*), and (iv) Verbal Testimony (*Sabda*) (Bilimoria, Purushottama: 2017).

***Pratyaksa* (Perception)**

In this world it is believed that whatever is perceived by our senses is true. So, whatever we see by our eyes or hear is thought to be true because our senses create a definite perception of an object. Perception therefore is valid knowledge and the method of acquiring valid knowledge. In the Nyaya school of thought, perception is a kind of cognition that generates from contact of sense organ and the object. A perception comes into existence when the object encounters self, mind (*manas*) and sense organs. The contact happens in sequences where the self meets mind (*manas*), then the *manas* comes into contact with sense organs and then the sense organs come into contact with the object. The entire process produces cognition and the knowledge about an object becomes a perception.

The perception or *pratyaksa* means an object or something which is present before the eyes or sense organs which demonstrate direct or immediate knowledge of the object. By the term “object”, *Gautam* means three kinds of objects namely, the



NOTES

physical objects (table, chair, pot), specific objects (color, hard, soft), and internal objects (pleasure, pain, sorrow). Therefore, perception is a cognition which is always about the object. The cognition of objects that are externally present, for example table and chair is called external perception and those which are internally present as for example pleasure and pain are called internal perceptions.

It can be said that in the Nyaya school of thought the perception applies to those cognitions which are produced through contact between object and sense organ. This perception can be momentarily as the cognition is generated at that moment due to contact. However, in the deep study of cognition, there can be the existence of an eternal being who can perceive all the objects at all the times. In this condition the meaning of perception becomes difficult to comprehend. In Nyaya school of thought, *Gangesa* has attempted to loosen the complexity by defining perception in a more general sense by including the subject, object and eternal being. This brings focus of the 'contact' between different variables. Contact is the process by which an object gets into relationship with sense organ thereby producing a definite perception of that object.

In Nyaya school of thought, there are different kinds of contact between sense organ and the object. Udyotakara has shown six kinds of contact between sense organ and the object. These contacts are as follows:

- i. **Samyoga (Conjunction)** – In this kind of contact there is direct contact between the eyes and the object. As for example, a full view of table or a chair in a classroom.
- ii. **Samyukta Samavaya (Inherence in What is Conjoined)** – Here an indirect form of contact is established. The contact is established between the object and the sense organ through a third-party mediation which is related to both. As for example, the eyes encounter the color of pot through the pot kept in full view.
- iii. **Samyukta Samaveta Samavaya (Inherence in What is Inseparably Related to What is Conjoined)** – It is the kind of indirect contact which takes place with the help of mediation of two objects that are related. As for example a blackboard in a classroom is when looked at or is perceived,



the colour of the blackboard that is black is also perceived. Here the contact of the eyes with that of the colourness with help of mediation of two inseparable objects that is blackboard and colour takes place.

iv. Samavaya (Inherence) – This is related to sound. When a person hears a sound then a contact between sound and the sense organ that is ear is being made.

v. Samaveta Samavaya (Relation between Inherence and the Senses) – This is the contact between the sense and the object through another object that is inseparably related to both. As for example when a person perceives a sound, the ear is in contact with the soundness as the sound is inherence and that inherence is the virtue of the ear.

vi. Samyukta Visesanata (Absence of the Object) – In this kind of contact, the sense remains in contact with the object until the object reflects the virtue of the other object with the sense. As for example when a table is not seen in a classroom. The relation between the perception of nonexistence and the inherence is explained by this contact. So, when a table is not seen in a class, the visual sense has conjunction with the class, but the absence of the table is in the relation of the class.

The above mentioned six types of contacts (*Samyoga, Samyukta Samavaya, Samyukta samaveta samavaya, Samyukta samavaya, Samavaya, Samyukta visesanata and Samaveta samavaya*) are called ordinary or *laukika*. Apart from these, the Nyaya school of thought recognises three kinds of extraordinary contacts which are also known as *alaukika*. These three kinds of contacts are: (i) *samanyalaksana pratyaksa*, (ii) *jnanalaksana pratyasatti*, and (iii) *yogaja*.

i. Samanyalaksana pratyaksa – In this kind of contact, the quality of an object is perceived as the quality of all other individual objects. As for example when a person sees a tiger, the quality that is tiger-ness is also perceived. Therefore, tigerness becomes the mode of contact for all other tigers which would be seen in future.

ii. Jnanalaksana pratyasatti – In this kind of contact, the perception is extraordinary because the perception made by sense organ is not normally



NOTES

capable of perceiving and is not present at that moment. Therefore, perception is based on experience. For example, the coldness of the ice.

- iii. Yogaja** – This kind of contact is intuitive in nature and is observed among the yogi who by committed meditation has gained extraordinary powers to perceive phenomena of the past, present and the future.

In the Nyaya school of thought, the perception or the cognition takes place in two stages namely (i) *nirvikalpaka* cognition and the (ii) *savikalpaka* cognition.

- i. Nirvikalpaka cognition** – In this stage of cognition the first contact of sense organ takes place with the object. This is the primary cognition of an object without determinate knowledge of the characteristic and interconnection of the object. So, *nirvikalpaka* is a blunt knowledge of object in which merely the basic existence of object is perceived. As for example, when a person sees a mango, a contact between eyes and mango is made. At this stage, just the size, shape, and colour of the mango are noticed, not the mango itself.

- ii. Savikalpaka cognition** – This is generally considered as the second stage which produces determinate knowledge of the object. In *savikalpaka*, the person recognises the object due to attributes of its quality. The interconnection between several characteristics is easily drawn. As for example after seeing the mango the person can easily determine that it is a mango and can be edible. The *savikalpaka* cognition cannot take place without the occurrence of *nirvikalpaka* cognition as the interconnection between characteristics cannot be drawn without knowing that characteristic itself.

Anumana (Inference)

Inference or *Anumana* is one of the important parts of Nyaya school of thought as it deals with logic. Inference comes under *Pramana* which is a theory about knowledge. Inference not merely deals with valid thinking but also gives much emphasis on the mode of knowing. Inference as a means of knowing is called '*anumana*' while inferential cognition is known as '*anumiti*'. Inference is that form of knowledge which comes



after some other knowledge. So, it is a kind of knowledge which is indirect and is the result of past knowledge. As for example when a person sees smoke emanating from the hill, the person infers that there is fire on the hill. Therefore, the sight of smoke proves to be a benchmark for the inferring fire of the hill. The inference is further divided into two categories namely: (i) *svarthanumana*, and (ii) *pararthanumana*.

i. *Svarthanumana*– This is the inference for oneself. The inference therefore shows a psychological understanding about the process of knowledge. As for example a person has observed earlier that smoke is produced whenever there is fire. So, whenever a person sees smoke on a hill that person remembers that wherever there is smoke there is fire. Therefore, due to experience an inference is made that the hill is on fire.

ii. *Pararthanumana*– This kind of inference is based on logical reasoning. Hence syllogism plays an important role in determining the production of knowledge. *Pararthanumana* can be understood by five logical statements- (a) there is fire on the hill (the proposition that has to be proved, also known as *pratijna*), (b) because there is smoke (it states the reason for fire, also known as *hetu*), (c) wherever there is smoke, there is fire (*vyapti*), (d) as observed in kitchen (it is an example also known as *drstanta*), and (e) there is fire on the hill (this is the conclusion also known as *nigamana*). In this example, the first statement is the assertion, the second statement gives the reason, the third statement shows the unchanging conjunction (between smoke and fire), the fourth statement expresses the similarity as for example hill is like kitchen (due to presence of fire and smoke) and the fifth and last statement is conclusion which establishes the assertion made earlier.

***Upamana* (Comparison)**

Comparison or *Upamana* is the knowledge that is derived from the similarity between two objects. The word *Upamana* is derived from two words that is ‘*upa*’ and ‘*mana*’. *Upa* means similarity and *mana* means cognition. So it is that cognition that is produced by comparing the similarity between one object which is known to another object that is not known. The classic example is about wild ox. A person who has never seen a wild ox recognises it because he has been told that it resembles a cow and has seen a



NOTES

cow earlier. So, when the person sees a wild ox then he finds that it is like cow. Therefore, the person thinks that it must be a wild ox. The Nyaya school of thought says that this knowledge cannot be derived from by perception or by inference as it is based on the knowledge of similarity.

***Sabda* (Verbal Testimony)**

Most of the knowledge is transmitted from one human to another by the words spoken by an individual. This is also known as verbal testimony or '*sabda*'. However, all the words and sentences are not true and therefore are not valid knowledge. Only those authoritative verbal testimony (*aptavakya*) becomes *pramana* which are given by authoritative and trustworthy people because they know the truth and speak the truth. The statements of trustworthy people are reliable and are meaningful.

However, to derive knowledge from verbal testimony it becomes necessary to understand the words. The words are important as they form the sentences. The sentences may be verbal or in a written form. To convey knowledge the sentence must follow some conditions. These are (i) *akanksha* (expectation); (ii) *yogyata* (fitness or qualification); (iii) *sannidhi* (nearness); and (iv) *tatparya* (intention).

Simply grouping some words does not create a sentence and therefore it becomes meaningless. In the first instance if the group of words does not produce *akanksha* or expectation, the words do not make sense. As for example 'table, elephant, pot'. These words do not make sense as they do not produce expectation. As for the second condition the sentence has to be fit and non-contradictory to convey meaning. As for example 'boil the potatoes in soil'. Here the word boil produces an expectation while the word soil is not fit to fulfil. The third condition points out that the words must be near or spoken in quick succession to make sense. As for example if words are spoken with long pause it does not make sense. In the fourth condition the intention of speaker becomes relevant whereas several meaning of the word can be drawn at a time. As for example at cash counter when a person says that he needs change then it means that he needs money of small denomination and not a change in life. Therefore, it is necessary to know a person's intentions.

In Nyaya school of thought the *sabda* are of two kinds. These are *laukika* and *alaukika*. The verbal testimony under *laukika* are words of trustworthy and reliable



persons whereas verbal testimony under *alaukika* is divine in nature. Therefore, statements from wise people are *laukika* while words of Vedas or religious texts are *alaukika*. The *sabda pramana* plays a significant role in transmission of knowledge, generation of cognition and cultivation of values. Through *sabda*, knowledge about 'dharma', 'kartavya', 'dana', 'tyaga' etc. are cultivated.

Nyaya Padartha

In Nyaya sutra, Gautama has mentioned about sixteen entities or *padartha*. Of the sixteen, the "*pramana*" has already been discussed above. The rest of the fifteen *padartha* are discussed below.

Prameya– It talks about the object of true knowledge or reality. The Nyaya school of thought recognises twelve objects of true knowledge. These are (i) self (*atma*), (ii) body (here the organic activities takes place and feelings like pleasure and pain are felt), (iii) senses (taste, touch, smell, hearing and sight), (iv) objects of senses (the sensible qualities of taste, touch, smell, sound and colour), (v) cognition or knowledge (*buddhi*), (vi) mind (*manas* that can perceive pleasure and pain), (vii) activity (*pravritti*), (viii) mental flaws (*dosaa* or weakness like 'raga', 'dvesa' and 'moha'), (ix) rebirth after death (*pretyabhava*), (x) experience of pleasure and pain in life (*phala*), (xi) suffering (*dukkha*), and (xii) liberation from suffering (*apavarga*).

Samsaya– It is a condition of doubt and uncertainty. Here the mind gets puzzled in choosing an option due to the availability of several alternatives. This condition is exacerbated if contradictory explanation of similar things is available. As for example if two wise men offer contradictory meaning of life, then *samsaya* or doubt occurs. Doubt can be overcome by rational decision making.

Prayojana– It means goal to achieve something or purpose of some activity. It is related to a person's desire to achieve the goal or to shun it. This produces determination to achieve the desired goal. The primary purpose can also be to achieve happiness and remove pain.

Drstanta– This refers to factually correct example or an undisputed fact that can be used generally. As for example if smoke from the hill represent fire, then smoke from the kitchen also represent fire.



NOTES

Siddhanta– It is the widely accepted set of rules or conclusive views in a disciplinary area. The Nyaya school of thought accepts four kinds of *siddhanta*. These are: (i) *sarvatantra siddhanta*, (ii) *pratitantra siddhanta*, (iii) *adhikarana siddhanta*, and (iv) *abhyupagama siddhanta*. In *sarvatantra siddhanta*, the conclusive doctrine is not disputed. In *pratitantra siddhanta*, the conclusive doctrine is established by specific philosophers for a specific discipline. In *adhikarana siddhanta*, to establish the conclusive doctrine of a discipline, the conclusive doctrine of another discipline must be established first. In *abhyupagama siddhanta*, a discipline provisionally accepts the conclusive doctrine of another discipline as a hypothesis, in a hope that future scrutiny may nullify the conclusive doctrine.

Avayava– It is based on syllogism. Therefore, it is said to be a conclusion derived from logical argument. In Nyaya school of thought syllogism is based on five logical arguments known as *pratijna*, *hetu*, *vyapti*, *drstanta*, and *nigamana*.

Tarka– It refers to counterfactual argument to a given logical statement. It initiates a debate. A hypothetical argument is used to justify a conclusion. In *tarka* the use of hypothetical arguments to justify a conclusion can lead to absurdity. As for example if smoke can exist in a place which does not have fire, it will mean that smoke cannot be caused by fire. The given example leads to absurdity. However, *tarka* is useful in confirming *pramana*.

Nirnaya– It is a definite knowledge or a doctrine in a discipline. The doctrine has been produced after a detailed examination using *tarka*, ascertaining *pramana* and removing all doubts. The doctrine is therefore widely accepted in a discipline.

Vada– In this discussion or debate takes place between two opposing parties who have different views on a subject matter. The motive behind *vada* is to find out the truth. Hence in the discussion *tarka* is used and *pramana* is adhered to. The use of syllogism is a common practice.

Jalpa– In this a person finds fault in opponents' argument to establish own argument and therefore gives wrangling arguments. The aim here is to defeat the opponent and not to find out the truth. Hence, invalid logic is used.



Vitanda– In this a person tries to win a debate by refuting the arguments of other. Here the aim is not to establish one's argument but to win by refuting the arguments of the opponent.

Hetvabhasa– It is the fallacy of inference. Here the reason that is given in the statement is not the valid reason. It contains error and therefore difficult to get an inference.

Chala– In a debate when a person is unable to give a good reply to a strong argument of the opponent then the person gives irrelevant argument. The person takes opponents argument in a sense that was not intended.

Jati– In a debate it is a reply by false analogy. Here a futile argument is given by a person to counter the opponent. Therefore, instead of countering the argument the position of the opponent is destroyed. This kind of futile argument is based on similarity and dissimilarity between the objects.

Nigrahastha– This is the final part of the debate. Here a person shows self-contradiction and inconsistency in the opponent's argument. By doing this the person finally defeats the opponent.

In-Text Questions - 1

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. The word 'epistemology' is derived from the Greek words 'episteme' meaning _____ and 'logos' meaning _____.
2. In Indian epistemology, the term for non-apprehension is _____.
3. The Mimamsa School rejected _____ and _____ as valid forms of knowledge.
4. According to the Nyaya School, perception is a cognition produced through contact between _____ and _____.
5. Inference based on logical reasoning is known as _____ in the Nyaya School.

B. State True or False:

1. Epistemology in Indian political thought solely focuses on the subject-object distinction.



NOTES

2. Pratyaksa is considered the most indirect form of knowledge in Indian epistemology.
3. The Nyaya School attributes the development of epistemology to Sage Gautama.
4. In Nyaya, 'Samyoga' refers to a contact type where there is a direct connection between the eyes and the object.
5. Sabda or verbal testimony includes both human speech and divine texts according to the Nyaya School.

1.5 CHARVAKA SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

Among the heterodox (*nastika*) schools of thought, the Charvaka school of thought is the most important school of thought. It is a materialist school of thought. It heavily relies on the naturalistic tendencies of human life. Though it is influenced by spiritual schools' thought like Nyaya, it significantly refutes them by destroying their main premises of argument and ridiculing them (Chattopadhyaya, Debiprasad: 1992).

The Charvaka school is believed to be propagated by *Brihaspati* who teacher (Guru) of Gods (*Devta*) was. *Brihaspati* propagated Charvaka School or materialism to the *Daityas* (*Rakshasa*) to destroy them. It is also believed that Charvaka was a sage and a disciple of *Brihaspati* who propagated materialism. It is also believed that those people were called Charvaka who believed in the philosophy of 'eating, drinking and making merry' as the word 'charva' means to eat. Also, Charvaka means nice words to hear as 'charu' means nice and 'vaka' means word. Charvaka school is also known as Lokayata school as both are same.

The Charvaka School questioned the authority of the Vedas and dogmatic practices of the society by propagating the materialist arguments. In that process the Charvaka school refuted existing morality and ethics. They produced negative rhetoric for other school of thought which later on developed into a distinctive philosophy and thereby contributing to epistemic foundation of Indian political thought. Unfortunately,



no authoritative text of Charvaka School except for '*Tattvopaplavasimha*' has survived. Most of the knowledge about Charvaka School has been derived from those texts which heavily criticise and ridicule the Charvaka School.

Pratyaksa (Perception)

The Charvaka school believes that *Pratyaksa* (perception) is the only *pramana* or valid source of knowledge. So, anything that is available to sense perception is considered to be true and the rest of the things are considered doubtful. For Charvaka School, the things that could not be perceived do not exist.

Anumana (Inference)

The Charvaka School rejects *Anumana* (inference) as a valid source of knowledge. Charvaka School believes that there is no valid ground to determine the relation between objects in a statement or *vyapti*. The inference moves from a known premise to an unknown premise. So, if something is true for a specific phenomenon may not be true for another phenomenon. As for example, in Charvaka School the *vyapti* that wherever there is smoke, there is fire, is not true because it is difficult to determine its universal occurrence. So, Charvaka School rejects inference as relation between objects cannot be accepted universally.

Sabda (Verbal Testimony)

The *Sabda* or verbal testimony is also rejected as a valid source of knowledge by the Charvaka School as *Sabda* is based on inference. Even the Vedic testimony is also rejected by the Charvaka School as it considers issues like life after death, belief, *moksha*, and rebirth as having no meaning.

By constructing their philosophy based of refutation and rejection the Charvaka School has weakened its own philosophical premises. As for example by rejecting Inference (*anumana*) they have created problem for themselves because any validation of Charvaka School will require inference. So Purandara postulated that inference could be accepted to strengthen perceptual knowledge but cannot be used to determine knowledge which is not perceived by sense organs like life after death.



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Charvaka School therefore accepts *Pratyaksa* (perception) as the only *pramana* or the valid source of knowledge. Everything originates from the combination of four elements, namely, earth, water, fire, and air. Therefore earth, water, fire and air are the only realities of the world. Consciousness exists only due to the combination of these four elements. The Charvaka School postulates that 'self' or '*purusa*' is nothing but only body which has consciousness.

The Charvaka School does not consider ether (*akash*) as an important element as it could not be perceived by sense organs. The consciousness that exists in the body is due to the body and hence the property of the body. Consciousness is produced only due to a combination of the four elements. However, in relation to self or *purusa* the Charvaka School has shifted position upon criticism from the Nyaya school of thought.

The Nyaya school of thought argued that since earth, water, fire and air does not individually have consciousness, they cannot produce consciousness collectively. The Nyaya school of thought also argued that even when the body is unconscious, the self exists and there is no proof that the self is destroyed upon death. Everybody has *manas* and can feel pain or pleasure. However, the Charvaka School called *manas* to be subtle and hence cannot be perceived.

The Charvaka School of thought has been vigorously criticised by other schools of thought. It has been considered useless by humans and often ridiculed. The Lokayata has also been considered as 'the basis of the foolish and the profane world'. Despite criticism, the Charvaka School of thought played an important role by challenging the dogmatic belief and questioning other schools of thought. This way it enriched the epistemological foundations of Indian political thought.

1.6 SELF

In the Indian political thought, the 'self' has been given considerable importance. As the Indian political thought has inclination towards spiritualism the notion of self has been widely explained. The self has often been associated to *atman* and consciousness.

In the Nyaya school of thought the individual selves (*atman* or souls) who are finite



and the God (*parmatman*) which is infinite has been recognised. Self or (*atman*) is the all-knowing which is present in a person and experiences pleasure and pain through the sense organs due to ability of cognition. The *manas* or mind can know all these. The action or *pravritti* of an individual and certain defects or *dosas* like passion and attachment causes pain and pleasure. The self is in a constant journey and changes body until it achieves *moksha* (Chakrabarti, Kisor Kumar: 2001).

The Charvaka school of thought points out that the self is subtle and therefore cannot be perceived by sense organs. To know self is a difficult proposition. It is believed that the self is inferred from qualities like pleasure, pain, desire, hatred, effort, and consciousness. *Atman* and the *Parmatman* (the finite self and the infinite self) both experience qualities like desire, effort, and consciousness. Infinite selves alone experience hatred and pain. Both individual and God experience happiness, however individual's happiness is not eternal while God's happiness is eternal.

The Nyaya school of thought believes the self exists independently. Self is different from mind, body, senses, and consciousness. The self is eternal and cannot be produced or destroyed. Consciousness is a quality of self which however is not essential. Just like a sleeping individual has self but no consciousness. Therefore, the self can exist without consciousness. Self can attain consciousness when it comes in contact with mind, and the mind comes in contact with senses and senses with objects (Ibid.).

The *atman* or soul attains liberation or *moksha* when it is detached from the body. In this state, the soul is liberated from all worldly pain and suffering. If the soul is attached to the body, then the sense organs will come in contact with the worldly objects and give rise to pleasure or pain. Liberation brings freedom from pain and ends the cycle of rebirth, ushering the soul into eternal bliss.

To attain knowledge about self an individual should listen to the teachings of scriptures and reflect upon it. An individual should also meditate by practicing yoga. This way an individual will learn about self and understand that the self is different from body. Upon this realisation, an individual will not be attracted towards material things and worldly pleasures. This way the individual will eliminate punishment of past *karma*, get freedom from pain, detach the self from body and attain *moksha*.



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Conclusion

The epistemic foundations of Indian political thought are a culmination of those thought processes which have been developed by sages, philosophers, theoreticians and logicians since time immemorial. The thought process which developed in ancient India had enriched itself by various debate, discussions and practices. It is noteworthy that the thought process maintained its continuity and clarity.

By inclining towards spiritualism, the epistemic foundations have not merely drawn a link between the creator that is God and the worldly affairs but have also drawn authority from the God for activities in the world. This is how a King got recognition and this is how the state came into existence. The duties of the King and the purpose of the state were elaborated and with the passage of time it got consolidated. To guide the purpose and goal of a Kingdom, the philosophical foundations played an imminent role. Any deviation or complexity of the state was resolved by the knowledge gained from the various schools of thoughts.

Certain philosophical concepts of ancient India like *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha* are such deep rooted in Indian political psyche that statecraft has intricately aligned itself to these concepts. So, purpose of the state or of the politics in India is not merely to bring material development but also bring spiritual upliftment by following the path of righteousness.

In-Text Questions - 2

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. The Charvaka school is a _____ school of thought.
2. The Charvaka school accepts _____ as the only *pramana* or valid source of knowledge.
3. The Nyaya school believes that the self exists _____ of mind, body, and senses.
4. Charvaka rejects _____ as a valid source of knowledge.
5. In Indian philosophy, _____ refers to the liberation from the cycle of rebirth.



B. State True or False:

1. The Charvaka school accepts inference (Anumana) as a valid source of knowledge.
2. Charvaka believes that everything originates from the combination of earth, water, fire, and air.
3. The Nyaya school supports the idea that consciousness arises from a combination of elements.
4. According to Charvaka, verbal testimony (Sabda) is a reliable source of knowledge.
5. Moksha involves the liberation from worldly pain and the cycle of rebirth.

1.7 SUMMARY

- Indian political thought has a rich and deep tradition, addressing various aspects from divine existence to universal values.
- The tradition provides a significant knowledge base for understanding the world, guiding humanity through crises.
- Epistemology, derived from Greek, is essential to comprehend Indian political thought, studying the nature and scope of knowledge.
- Indian epistemology or 'Gyanmimansha' focuses on cognition, integrating metaphysics and religion, and sometimes blurs the subject-object distinction.
- Knowledge or 'Pramana' is acquired through verified methods and includes types such as perception, inference, comparison, verbal testimony, presumption, and non-apprehension.
- The Mimamsa School contributed significantly to epistemology, though it rejected certain forms of knowledge.
- Nyaya School was founded by Sage Gautama, it emphasizes epistemology, logic, and knowledge to alleviate suffering. It focuses on theory of knowledge, physical world, self, and God.



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- Pramana in Nyaya includes perception, inference, comparison, and verbal testimony. Different types of perception and inference are detailed, including ordinary and extraordinary perceptions, and svarthanumana and pararthanumana inferences.
- Nyaya distinguishes sixteen entities (padartha) including pramana and others like prameya, samsaya, prayojana, and drstanta.
- The Charvaka school of thought is a materialist and heterodox (nastika) philosophy that relies on naturalistic tendencies and rejects spiritual and moral premises of other schools.
- Believed to be propagated by Brihaspati and Charvaka, it questions the authority of the Vedas and traditional morality.
- The Charvaka School values Pratyaksa (perception) as the sole valid source of knowledge and rejects Anumana (inference) and Sabda (verbal testimony).
- They believe everything originates from the combination of four elements: earth, water, fire, and air, and consciousness results from this combination.
- The Nyaya school of thought criticizes Charvaka, arguing that consciousness cannot arise from a combination of elements and that the self (atman) exists independently.
- Despite heavy criticism, the Charvaka School contributed to challenging dogmatic beliefs and enriching Indian epistemological foundations.
- In Indian political thought, the concept of the self (atman) has been widely discussed, with the Nyaya school distinguishing between the finite self and the infinite self (God).
- Nyaya philosophy asserts the independence of the self from mind, body, senses, and consciousness, and believes in moksha (liberation) through detachment from the body.
- The concept of self and liberation involves reflection on scriptures, meditation, and the practice of yoga.
- The epistemic foundations of Indian political thought have developed through extensive debates and align closely with spiritual concepts like Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha.



1.8 GLOSSARY

- **Epistemology:** The study of knowledge, its origin, and scope.
- **Nyaya:** A school of thought emphasizing logic and knowledge.
- **Padartha:** Entities or categories in Nyaya philosophy, including means of knowledge and objects of true knowledge.
- **Charvaka:** A materialist school of Indian philosophy that rejects traditional spiritual and ethical norms.
- **Nastika:** Non-orthodox schools of Indian thought that reject the authority of the Vedas.
- **Brihaspati:** Mythical teacher of the gods who is believed to have propagated the Charvaka philosophy.
- **Nyaya:** An orthodox school of Indian philosophy that emphasizes logic and epistemology.
- **Vyapti:** The invariable concomitance or relation between objects in an inference.
- **Atman:** The self or soul in Indian philosophy.
- **Moksha:** Liberation or release from the cycle of rebirth and worldly suffering.

1.9 ANSWERS TO IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

In-Text Questions-1

- A. 1. knowledge; reason
2. Anupalabdhi
3. sambhava; aitihiya
4. sense organs; the object
5. pararthanumana



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B. 1. False

2. False

3. True

4. True

5. True

In-Text Questions-2

A. 1. materialist

2. Pratyaksa

3. independently

4. Anumana

5. moksha

B. 1. False

2. True

3. False

4. False

5. True

1.10 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. What does the term 'epistemology' mean in the context of Indian political thought?
2. Explain the meaning and nature of *Pratyaksa* (perception) in Indian political thought.
3. Discuss the chief features of *Sabda* (verbal testimony).
4. Critically examine the role of Charvaka School in shaping Indian political thought.
5. Delineate the basic premises of self.



6. What are the different types of 'Pramana' in Indian epistemology?
7. Describe the two stages of cognition according to the Nyaya School.
8. What are the four different means of knowledge in the Nyaya School?
9. What is the primary focus of the Charvaka school of thought?
10. Who is believed to have propagated the Charvaka school of thought?
11. What does the Charvaka School accept as the only valid source of knowledge?
12. How does the Nyaya school of thought criticize the Charvaka's concept of consciousness?
13. What does the concept of moksha entail in Indian philosophy?

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LESSON 2

CULTURAL AND TERRITORIAL CONCEPT OF INDIA AND DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

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Structure

- 2.1 Learning Objectives
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 Cultural and Territorial Concept of India
- 2.4 Concept of Dharma in Vedic Period
- 2.5 Dharmashastra in the Context of State and Politics
- 2.6 Contribution of Shamanic Philosophy to Indian Political Traditions
- 2.7 Islamic Political Tradition in India
- 2.8 Syncretic Political Tradition in India in the Context of Sufi and Bhakti Movements
- 2.9 Summary
- 2.10 Glossary
- 2.11 Answers to In-text Questions
- 2.12 Self-Assessment Questions
- 2.13 References/Suggested Readings

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, students should be able to:

- Discuss the religious traditions of India, and their association with Vedic traditions.



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- Understand the social, cultural, and political discussions around 'Dharma' which distinguish India from other traditions.
- Explain about the Dharmashastra in the context of state and politics, contribution of Shamanic philosophy to Indian political traditions and syncretic political tradition in India in the context of the Sufi and Bhakti movements.

2.2 INTRODUCTION

The political thought of India dates to the Vedic age. The social, cultural, and political life of India has been very diverse. From the Vedic age to the eleventh century, there has been an active development and expansion of Indian thought. During this period, most of the subjects of Indian society were associated with religion and some traditions for their rendering. There have been mainly two systems of religious traditions in Indian thought and society, Brahmin and Shaman. Brahmins have been present in India since the Vedic period, and Shamans have been present since about the 6th century BCE. Mainly those who could not agree to the lifestyle and traditions of the Brahminical system left the world, which is called Shamanic. Later in this period, from a religious point of view, other two traditions came to the fore, Islamic and syncretic. In these religious traditions, there have been social, cultural, and political discussions around 'Dharma'.

2.3 CULTURAL AND TERRITORIAL CONCEPT OF INDIA

The concept of India as a cultural and territorial entity has evolved over millennia, shaped by its diverse geography, historical developments, and the rich tapestry of cultures, religions, and traditions that have flourished on the subcontinent. This synthesis of cultural and territorial elements forms the essence of India's identity and unity.



Cultural Concept of India

India's cultural concept is deeply rooted in its history and the continuous interplay of various civilizations. The Indus Valley Civilization, one of the world's earliest urban cultures, laid the foundations of Indian society with its advanced urban planning, trade networks, and social organization. This was followed by the Vedic period, which introduced the Indo-Aryan culture and the Sanskrit language, significantly influencing Indian philosophy, religion, and societal norms.

The Indian subcontinent has always been a melting pot of cultures, with significant contributions from the Mauryan, Gupta, and Mughal empires. Each era brought with it a confluence of ideas, art, and architecture, enriching the cultural landscape. The spread of Buddhism and Jainism, followed by the advent of Islam and later Christianity, further diversified the religious and cultural milieu. The Bhakti and Sufi movements emphasised devotional aspects of spirituality, transcending religious boundaries and fostering a sense of cultural unity.

Indian culture is also characterised by its linguistic diversity. With over 1,600 languages spoken, India's linguistic heritage is unparalleled. However, Sanskrit, Tamil, Persian, and later English have served as important cultural and administrative languages, promoting intercultural communication and understanding.

Territorial Concept of India

Geographically, India occupies a strategic position in South Asia, bounded by the Himalayas to the north, the Indian Ocean to the south, the Bay of Bengal to the east, and the Arabian Sea to the west. This geographical diversity has played a crucial role in shaping the territorial concept of India.

Historically, the notion of *Bharatvarsha*, as mentioned in ancient texts like the *Mahabharata* and *Puranas*, referred to the land stretching between the Himalayas and the oceans, encompassing various kingdoms and cultures. The Mauryan Empire under Ashoka was one of the earliest political entities to unify large parts of the Indian subcontinent, setting a precedent for subsequent empires like the Gupta and Mughal dynasties.

The British colonial period further defined the territorial boundaries of modern India. The British unified diverse princely states and regions under a central administrative

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system, although this was primarily for their economic and political benefit. The concept of a unified India gained momentum during the Indian independence movement, with leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru advocating for a single, sovereign nation-state that transcended regional and cultural differences.

Post-independence, the territorial concept of India was formalized with the adoption of the Constitution in 1950, defining India as a Union of States. The reorganization of states based on linguistic lines in the 1950s further cemented the territorial boundaries, accommodating India's vast cultural and linguistic diversity within a federal structure.

Integration of Cultural and Territorial Concepts

The integration of India's cultural and territorial concepts is evident in its national symbols, institutions, and policies. The Constitution of India embodies this synthesis, promoting secularism, democracy, and unity in diversity. Institutions like the Archaeological Survey of India and the Sahitya Akademi preserve and promote India's cultural heritage.

Various festivals are celebrated across different regions, which reflect the cultural unity amidst diversity. The Indian diaspora globally also plays a vital role in preserving and propagating Indian culture, reinforcing the idea of a culturally unified yet territorially diverse nation.

2.4 CONCEPT OF DHARMA IN VEDIC PERIOD

Ancient Indian political thought is an integral part of Indian philosophy. If we talk mainly about the Vedic period, all the rules and laws related to religion and society were contained in the 'Dharmashastra'. Dharma means one's duty, i.e., to adopt the path of virtue and truth. It is a moral and natural law. It is a complete social system. In Vedic India, it is believed that one should lead one's life according to Dharma, that is, follow the right path and perform one's duties. In the Vedic period, the villages were self-supporting, and everything they needed was present within the villages. In this age, society was divided into four varnas: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras based on karma and livelihood. Any person could enter another varna by changing his



karma because of his knowledge, ability, etc. For example, the descendants of Sage Bhrigu were carpenters who were skilled in making chariots. During the Vedic period, *Indra*, *Varuna*, *Agni*, *Surya*, *Chandrama*, *Prithvi*, and *Vishnu*, were praised, and religious learnings and rules were expressed by the ‘*Rit*’. Varuna was considered a peace-loving deity and the guardian of moral rules called *Rit*, which even the gods had to follow.

Concepts of Dharma and Danda in the Post-Vedic Period

The later Vedic period can also be called the Brahminical period. During this period, the varna system had become birth-based, not karma-based. The idea of *Rit* had lost its importance. During this period, the religion of every individual was fixed. Everyone must perform their duties in accordance with the dharma and the Brahminical texts, in which the Vedas and Upanishads were composed. These epics were composed during the period of Ramayana, when religion gained maximum popularity. During this period, society used to expand their faith and belief through Puranas, folk songs, and stories. Kautilya accepted the views of the Brahmas and Upanishads about dharma. According to Kautilya, the dharma mentioned in *Rigveda*, *Samaveda*, and *Yajurveda* keeps the four Varnas and Ashrams vested in their duties. In Kautilya’s Arthashastra, describing the duties of the four varnas, it is said that the work of a Brahmin is to study religion, perform sacrifices, take, and give charity. The dharma of a Kshatriya is to study, perform Yagya, earn a living with strength and weapons, and protect all beings. Vaishya’s dharma is study, perform Yagya, agricultural work, animal husbandry, and trade. Similarly, Shudra’s dharma is to serve Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, farming, animal husbandry, business, crafts, singing, playing, etc. (Shastri, 2016)

Manusmriti’ had an important place in ancient times. Manu’s dharma refers to those qualities which keep the four varnas and the conduct as their distinctive qualities. According to Manu, dharma is the discipline of society and the state. It is also subject to it. The dharma described by Manu is comprehensive and full of the rules of morality for the individual, society, time, and state. (Mandlik, 2015)

Dharma and Danda are both interrelated, and both are dependent on each other. The word *danda* means discipline, force, restraint, and compulsion. Where the fear of punishment exists behind the duty. The performance of duties in the form of

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karma is dharma. But if one does not follow this dharma, they will be liable to punishment. By this, we can say that duties in society are enforced by punishment.

2.5 DHARMASHASTRA IN THE CONTEXT OF STATE AND POLITICS

We know that the state is a system which has been studied by various Indian thinkers from ancient to community. Every thinker has defined this system as the land, boundaries, and membership of the community. The idea of the state can be seen in Kautilya's Arthashastra in ancient Indian literature. Where a detailed description of the origin, nature, development, objectives, functions, or justification of the state is found. The ancient Indian political system was based on the religious state, which was a completely secular idea. According to V.K. Sarkar, the political history and philosophy in India have always been outside the domain of religion. No priest had the authority to interfere with the affairs of the civil administration. But this does not mean that there is no relationship between religion and politics. According to Kautilya, if any conflict arises between Dharmashastra and current practices or between religion and state, the state's decision is based on dharma. In this period, there were only two sources of law considered– Dharmashastra and Arthashastra. In case of conflict between the two, the duties under dharmashastra should be followed. In Kautilya's Arthashastra, it is written about the state that 'it is the duty of the state that it should not allow the subjects to be corrupted by the path of dharma and make everyone follow their respective dharma and get a place in the hereafter. (Mandlik, 2015). If a state successfully performs the duties of dharma and maintains a just state, then it gets a place in the hereafter.

Along with the relation of religion and politics, ethics is also closely related to them. Ethics makes a distinction between the right and wrong of action. The right actions were encouraged by the state, and the wrong actions were punished by the state. It was the duty of the king to implement these moral actions in a policy-oriented manner. It was the Dharma of a person to perform one's duties according to the rules of the state, keeping a sense of right and wrong.



There was a close relationship between religion and politics in ancient India. The cultural traditions of Vedic India gave more importance and respect to dharma than the king. The state was not superior to dharma. Although Kautilya entrusted the king with the right to make a new law or religion, Manu did not give any authority to the king. Rules have also been made for the king who violates the dharma. When the duties and rights of the king are described in Dharmashastra and other Indian texts, it is given the name of Rajdharma.

Other Distinctive Features

In addition to the appropriate features, Professor Bhikhu Parekh has mentioned some other distinctive features of Indian political traditions, as follows:

- First, the Indian tradition is egalitarian. Although it developed the idea of the moral equality of all individuals, it never developed social, legal, or political groups.
- Second, the Indian tradition of thought is pluralistic in orientation. Indian political writers recognised the autonomy of social groups from the very beginning.
- Third, thought in early India was critical of the very established social order. Most of the writings justified the caste system.
- Fourth, writers wrote mainly for the attention of the rulers. His works are largely ethics or manuals of administration; therefore, to a greater extent, they are didactic and practical.

Origin of State

The origin of the state is a fundamental topic in political theory, exploring how and why organised political communities emerged. Theories explaining the origin of the state can be broadly categorised into several perspectives: divine right, social contract, evolutionary, and conflict theories. Each provides a different lens to understand the development of political states.

- **Divine Right Theory:** The divine right theory posits that the state is established by divine will, and rulers are chosen by a higher power. This perspective was prominent in many ancient civilizations and medieval Europe. According to this



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theory, the legitimacy of the ruler is derived from divine sanction, and obedience to the ruler is seen as a religious duty. This idea is evident in ancient texts such as the Vedas in India and the Bible in the Christian tradition.

- **Social Contract Theory:** The social contract theory suggests that the state arises from a voluntary agreement among individuals to create a governing body. Key thinkers like Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau developed this theory during the Enlightenment. According to Hobbes, in the “state of nature,” life was “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short,” prompting individuals to surrender certain freedoms to a sovereign authority in exchange for security and order. Locke, on the other hand, argued that individuals consent to form a state to protect their natural rights to life, liberty, and property. Rousseau believed that the social contract should establish a direct democracy where sovereignty lies with the people.
- **Evolutionary Theory:** The evolutionary theory views the state as a product of gradual development over time. This theory posits that the state evolved from primitive social structures, such as family and tribal systems. As human societies grew in size and complexity, more formal and organized structures of governance emerged. Key stages in this evolution include:
 - **Kinship and Tribal Societies:** Early human societies were organised around kinship and tribal affiliations, with leadership often based on family ties and age.
 - **Chiefdoms:** As societies grew, they formed chiefdoms, with centralised leadership under a chief who wielded authority over multiple tribes.
 - **City-States:** Further development led to the formation of city-states, characterised by a central urban centre and surrounding territories.
 - **Nation-States:** Modern nation-states emerged with defined territorial boundaries, centralised governments, and complex institutions.
- **Conflict Theory:** Conflict theory argues that the state originated through conquest and domination. This theory posits that states were formed when one group imposed its will on another through force. The ruling group established institutions to maintain control and exploit resources. Thinkers like Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels viewed the state as a tool of the ruling class to perpetuate



its dominance and suppress subordinate groups. According to this perspective, the state is a product of power struggles and economic exploitation.

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Other Theories

Several other theories also contribute to understanding the origin of the state as given below:

- 1. Patriarchal Theory:** It suggests that the state originated from the patriarchal family structure, where the father figure extended his authority over larger social groups.
- 2. Economic Theory:** It proposes that the state emerged to regulate and manage economic activities, ensuring stability and facilitating trade.
- 3. Cultural Theory:** It argues that the state arose from shared cultural, religious, and ideological beliefs that unified people and necessitated governance structures.

Composition and Functions of State

Indian political thought traditionally views the state as a key institution for ensuring order, justice, and prosperity. In texts like the *Arthashastra*, the state is described as an organised polity with a structured administration and clearly defined roles for the ruler and officials. The state's functions include:

- 1. Protection of the State:** Ensuring external security and defense against invasions.
- 2. Maintenance of Law and Order:** Implementing justice and upholding social harmony.
- 3. Economic Regulation:** Overseeing trade, agriculture, and taxation.
- 4. Welfare Activities:** Providing public services like education and healthcare.

Principles of Administration

The principles of administration in Indian political thought emphasise ethical governance, competence, and accountability. Key principles include:

- 1. Dharma:** The king and administrators must adhere to dharma, ensuring justice, fairness, and ethical conduct.



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2. **Efficiency:** Effective and competent administration is crucial. Officials are selected based on merit and ability.
3. **Accountability:** The ruler and officials are accountable to the people and must act in the public interest.
4. **Decentralisation:** Administration is often decentralised, with local governance structures like village councils (panchayats) playing a significant role.

Kautilya's Arthashastra outlines a detailed administrative framework, including the roles and responsibilities of various officials, taxation policies, and measures for ensuring internal security.

Foreign Policy

Indian political thought on foreign policy, as reflected in texts like the *Arthashastra*, emphasises realism and pragmatism. Given below are the key aspects:

1. **Realpolitik:** Foreign policy is based on the principles of power, strategic alliances, and national interest.
2. **Mandala Theory:** Kautilya's Mandala Theory suggests a geopolitical strategy where neighbouring states are viewed with suspicion, while states further away can be potential allies.
3. **Diplomacy:** Emphasis on negotiation, treaties, and alliances to achieve political and economic goals.
4. **War and Peace:** Warfare is considered a last resort, and peace is preferable, but the state must always be prepared for conflict.

Role of Subjects/Citizens

In mainstream Indian political thought, the role of subjects (citizens) is integral to the functioning of the state. The following points illustrate the role of citizens:

1. **Participation in Governance:** Ancient texts emphasise the involvement of citizens in local governance through assemblies and councils.
2. **Rights and Duties:** Citizens have rights to protection, justice, and welfare, but they also have duties to pay taxes, serve in the military, and adhere to the laws.



- 3. Moral Conduct:** Citizens are expected to uphold dharma, contribute to social harmony, and engage in ethical behaviour.
- 4. Accountability of Rulers:** Citizens have the right to hold rulers accountable, and unjust or tyrannical rulers can be challenged or overthrown.

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In-Text Questions - 1

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. The political thought of India dates back to the _____ age.
2. During the Vedic period, society was divided into four _____ based on karma and livelihood.
3. In the Brahminical period, the varna system became _____-based.
4. Danda means _____, force, restraint, and compulsion.
5. The concept of Rajdharma refers to the duties of the _____.

B. State True or False:

1. The concept of Dharma in Vedic India involved leading life according to moral and natural law.
2. In the Vedic period, the Varna system was birth-based from the beginning.
3. Danda is unrelated to the concept of Dharma.
4. Kautilya's Arthashastra emphasizes the state's duty to uphold Dharma.
5. Bhikhu Parekh described Indian political traditions as authoritarian and monolithic.

2.6 CONTRIBUTION OF SHAMANIC PHILOSOPHY TO INDIAN POLITICAL TRADITIONS

Shamanic philosophy is considered the first atheist philosophy in India, advocating a logical approach based on direct evidence. It posits that earth, water, fire, and air are composed of four elements, and the human body is similarly constructed. Rejecting divine power as a fantasy, Shamanic thinkers are materialists who rationally oppose the concepts of heaven and hell. They also stand against traditional Hindu practices

*Self-Instructional
Material*

41



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like sacrifices, idol worship, and *yagyas*. Buddhism and Jainism, ancient religions founded by contemporaries Gautam Buddha and Mahavira, respectively, align with Shamanic philosophy. Both religions arose during a time of instability in Indian thought, criticising the prevailing ritualistic and caste-based practices.

Jainism and Non-Violence

Jainism specifically opposes the sacrificial system, advocating non-violence (*ahimsa*) as the ultimate religion. According to Jain philosophy, all living beings exist in elements like water, air, and soil, and protecting them is a fundamental duty. This belief profoundly influenced Hinduism, promoting the welfare of all living beings and a non-violent approach to life.

Origin of Kingship in Buddhist Thought

Buddhist literature presents a different perspective on the origin of kingship compared to Brahminical literature. It rejects the doctrine of divine origin, as detailed in the Jatakas, which describe the election of kings based on merit rather than birth right. Notably, these texts mention instances where individuals from various castes, including Brahmins and even low-caste individuals, were elected as kings. This election process underscores the importance of merit and the collective rights of people, who maintained their privileges through numbers and organisation.

Theory of the Origin of the State

The theory of the state's origin is found in the Digha Nikaya, which describes a golden age of harmony and bliss where virtuous people lived peacefully. Over time, greed and selfishness emerged, leading to societal corruption. To address this, people elected the best person among them to punish wrongdoers in exchange for a portion of their crops, creating the role of Mahasammata, or 'Great Elect.' This theory challenges the Brahminical notion of divine social order creation.

Role of Punishment and Dharma

The state emerged to curb societal corruption, but crime persisted. In the *Anguttara Nikaya*, Buddha emphasised the deterrent effect of harsh punishments by rulers.



Although punishment (Danda) was also crucial in Vedic society, Buddhist literature does not centralize it, preferring to maintain social order through positive religiosity, akin to the Western concept of virtue. Unlike the Brahminical view, which differentiates between the moral duties of kings and common people, Buddhism applies the principle of righteousness uniformly. The Mahabharata's concept of Rajdharma outlines the distinct duties of a king, but Buddhism insists that the state's primary objective is to protect social order through righteousness in both internal and external policies.

2.7 ISLAMIC POLITICAL TRADITION IN INDIA

During the medieval period, Islamic tradition influenced Indian political thought significantly. Muslim rulers, although legitimised by the Khalifa, had to adapt to the socio-political realities of India. Unlike Hindu political ideas, Islamic traditions had a less profound impact on politics. However, key works from this era highlight the views of Muslim rulers.

Ziauddin Barani, a prominent thinker during the reign of Alauddin and his successors, was a staunch Sunni who believed only Sunnis deserved a dignified life. His work, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, discusses the nature of the state, the divinity of kingship, and state duties. Barani considered Mahmud Ghaznavi as the ideal ruler and believed that while earthly emperors were sent by Allah, the real ruler was Allah.

In contrast, Abul Fazl, another medieval thinker, promoted a more inclusive and peaceful approach. His works, *Ain-i-Akbari* and *Akbarnama*, reflect a belief in the king's duty to foster an environment of free thought among scholars of different religions. Fazl distinguished between true and selfish kings, advocating for rulers who focus on eliminating oppression rather than amassing power.

Nature of the State

In the Islamic state, rulers adopted a dual policy towards co-religious and non-Muslim subjects. While the state protected Muslim life and property, non-Muslims paid a special tax, Jizya, for security. Abul Fazl believed in no enmity between Hindus and Muslims, emphasising cooperative policies.



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Divinity of Kingship

Barani's views emphasised the divine nature of kingship, asserting that a ruler must embody Allah's qualities and follow Sharia. Conversely, Abul Fazl viewed religious persecution as futile, advocating for political measures to foster religious harmony and intellectual freedom.

Religious Ideas

Barani's religious fanaticism is evident in his belief that Hindus should be impoverished if not converted to Islam. In contrast, Abul Fazl, often criticised for his secular and inclusive views, promoted peace and criticized reliance on old religious texts. His works reveal a free-thinking approach that was ahead of his time.

**2.8 SYNCRETIC POLITICAL TRADITION IN INDIA
IN THE CONTEXT OF SUFI AND BHAKTI
MOVEMENTS**

Sufism as an ideology or devotion first developed in central and western Asia. It expanded in various directions from there. Most of the Sufis had a deep devotion to God and many of them insisted on a simple life away from obscene displays of wealth. Sufism in India existed in the form of several Sufi sects or Silsilas (orders), such as the Chishti, Suhrawardi, and Naqshbandi Silsila. The founder of the Chishti sect was Mu'in-al-din Chishti. There is much contradiction between religious traditions in tomb worship, especially in Sufi Islam. The Sufi saint and his mausoleum bring humans from different communities into forms of unity that promote peace and reconciliation (Van de Veer et al. 2015, 410). Syncretism is the most important means of dealing with diversity.

Bhakti is defined as devotion to an individual deity and has its origins in Vaishnavism or Bhagwatism, developed after the Maurya period. According to them, the objective of the soul is to reunite with God through a process called *Mukti*, *Moksha*,



or *Nirvana*, i.e., salvation from the cycle of birth and rebirth. Bhakti sages like Ramananda, a Vaishnava, opened doors to all and allowed devotees from the lower castes. Kabir renounced Sanskrit and composed his hymns in local dialects. He denounced idol-worship, caste system, pilgrimage, rituals, and external symbols of religious life in a very radical form. He refuted not only orthodox brahminical practices but also Islamic practices like offering prayers, visiting mosques, etc. Kabir said that the Lord resides in the heart of the devotee, so a simple life, purely, is enough to know him.

Both Sufism and the Bhakti movements have attempted to redefine social and religious values as reform movements. Saints like Kabir and Guru Nanak emphasised the reorganisation of society on egalitarian lines. The conversation between Bhakti and Sufi saints had a great impact on Indian society. The Sufi doctrine of *Wahdat-al-Wujud* (the Unity of Existence) was remarkably like that of the Upanishads. The importance of Bhakti and Sufi saints lies in the environment they created, which continues to influence the social, religious, and political life of India in later centuries as well.

In-Text Questions - 2

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. Shamanic philosophy is considered the first _____ philosophy in India.
2. The Jataka tales in Buddhism describe the _____ of kings based on merit.
3. Jainism promotes _____ as the ultimate religion.
4. The term _____ refers to the “Great Elections” in Buddhist texts.
5. The Sufi doctrine of *Wahdat-al-Wujud* is the Unity of _____.

B. State True or False:

1. Shamanic philosophy accepts the concept of divine power.
2. Jainism opposes the practice of animal sacrifices.
3. In Buddhism, kingship is established through hereditary succession.
4. The Jizya tax was levied on Muslims in the Islamic state.
5. Sufism and Bhakti movements aimed to promote social unity and reform.



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2.9 SUMMARY

- Indian political thought dates back to the Vedic age and has evolved over time, integrating social, cultural, and religious aspects.
- Two primary religious traditions in ancient India were Brahmin and Shamanic.
- The concept of Dharma in the Vedic period involved moral and natural law, guiding individuals to follow the right path and perform their duties.
- Varna system in Vedic India was initially based on karma and livelihood but later became birth-based in the Brahminical period.
- Dharma and Danda (discipline and punishment) are interrelated, with duties enforced by the fear of punishment.
- In the context of the state, Dharmashastra and Arthashastra provided guidelines, with the state making decisions based on dharma.
- Ethics in ancient Indian politics distinguished between right and wrong actions, which the state had to enforce.
- The relationship between religion and politics was close, with the state upholding dharma as superior to the king's authority.
- Bhikhu Parekh highlighted Indian political traditions as egalitarian, pluralistic, critical of established order, and primarily practical and didactic in nature.
- Shamanic philosophy in India pioneers atheism, advocating a materialistic worldview and rejecting divine concepts, rituals like sacrifices, and idol worship.
- Buddhism and Jainism, part of this tradition, promote non-violence and rationality, challenging Brahminical practices.
- Buddhist texts like the Jatakas present kingship based on merit rather than caste, offering a secular alternative to Brahminical divine order.
- The Digha Nikaya proposes a theory of state origins, suggesting governance emerged as societal corruption increased, challenging Brahminical notions of a divine social order.



- Islamic political thought in medieval India introduces dual policies for Muslims and non-Muslims, with scholars like Barani and Abul Fazl offering differing views on kingship and state nature.
- Sufism and Bhakti movements emphasize devotion, simplicity, and social reform, influencing Indian religious and political thought profoundly.

2.10 GLOSSARY

- **Vedic Age:** The period in ancient Indian history marked by the composition of the Vedas.
- **Brahmin:** The priestly class in Vedic society, associated with religious and spiritual duties.
- **Shamanic:** Religious traditions that emerged around the 6th century BCE, often in opposition to Brahminical practices.
- **Varna:** The classification of society into four groups: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras.
- **Rajdharma:** The duties and responsibilities of a king as described in ancient texts.
- **Shamanic Philosophy:** Atheist philosophy focusing on materialism and logic.
- **Jizya:** Tax levied on non-Muslims in Islamic states for protection.

2.11 ANSWERS TO IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

In-Text Questions - 1

- A. 1. Vedic
2. varnas



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3. birth
4. discipline
5. king

- B.** 1. True
2. False
 3. False
 4. True
 5. False

In-Text Questions -2

- A.** 1. atheist
2. election
 3. non-violence
 4. Mahasammata
 5. Existence
- B.** 1. False
2. True
 3. False
 4. False
 5. True

2.12 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Mention the salient features of pre-colonial Indian thought.
2. Explain the concept and importance of religion and punishment.
3. What was the place of the theologian in ancient Indian thought? Explain.



4. What are the two primary religious traditions in ancient Indian political thought?
5. How was the Varna system originally determined in Vedic India?
6. What are Dharma and Danda, and how are they related?
7. In the context of state and politics, what two sources of law were considered in ancient India?
8. Who highlighted the distinctive features of Indian political traditions, such as egalitarianism and pluralism?
9. What elements do Shamanic philosophers believe make up the earth and human body?
10. Which two religions fall under Shamanic traditions?
11. How does Buddhist literature describe the origin of kingship?
12. What is the significance of the Jizya tax in the Islamic state?
13. What principle do both Sufism and Bhakti movements emphasize in their teachings?

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UNIT II: MANU

LESSON 3 MANUSMRITI: RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY IN THE PRESENT CONTEXT



LESSON 3

MANUSMRITI: RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY IN THE PRESENT CONTEXT

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Structure

- 3.1 Learning Objectives
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 Authenticity of *Manusmriti* (Talking Point)
- 3.4 Manu's Political Thought
 - 3.4.1 Divine Theory of Origin of the State
 - 3.4.2 Theory of Saptanga: The State Structure
 - 3.4.3 Limits of State Activity
 - 3.4.4 Can a King be Autocratic?
- 3.5 Social Philosophy of Manu
 - 3.5.1 Social Aspect of Manu Code
 - 3.5.2 Concept of Justice
 - 3.5.3 Caste System
 - 3.5.4 Manu's Ashram System
 - 3.5.5 Types of Marriages and Law of Inheritance
- 3.6 Manusmriti and Women
 - 3.6.1 Manu's Views Related to Women
- 3.7 Summary
- 3.8 Glossary
- 3.9 Answers to In-text Questions
- 3.10 Self-Assessment Questions
- 3.11 References/Suggested Readings



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3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, students should be able to:

- Search for different texts available on Manusmriti
- Study the Hindu social policies and rules written in Manusmriti
- Analyze the philosophical thinking of Manu
- Explain the Hindu social system mentioned in Manusmriti

3.2 INTRODUCTION

Many texts have been composed from time to time to control and smoothly run Indian society and to regulate all social activities. These are known as Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, Smriti, Samhita etc. and descriptions of various dynasties are also found in these texts. All these texts were divided according to subject and type as Dharma Sutras, Dharmashastras and commentaries (explanations). When we talk about Smriti, it comes below Shruti and is considered to be man-made. Veda does not come in the category of Smritis. In India, the number of Smritis is considered to be 18 such as Manusmriti, Yajnavalkya Smriti, Atri Smriti, Vishnu Smriti, Haarit Smriti, Parashar Smriti, Vyas Smriti, Gautam Smriti, Daksh Smriti, and Brihaspati Smriti.

On this basis, Manu is considered the founder of rules and laws. He is considered as the first man of the world and on the basis of that all human beings are called the children of Manu. It is because we are the children of Manu that we are called (मानव) Manav or humans. Manu himself is said to be the Manas Putra 'Mind-born' or existed from the thoughts of Brahmaji. The rules and principles given by Maharishi Manu are so broad and far-sighted that they can be applied according to different periods of time. The views presented by Indian political thinkers on Manusmriti are very important for political science, due to which this subject turns towards a new direction of thinking.



3.3 AUTHENTICITY OF *MANUSMRITI* (TALKING POINT)

Despite *Manusmriti* being the basis of Hindu religion-related laws, rules and regulations, socio-political, ideals, etc., there are many opinions regarding the time of its composition. Who was Manu and what was he? Regarding this, there have been differences between different thinkers and each other. It is believed that there are 14 Manus including the Swayambhu Manu, and eight Manus are also mentioned in Shanti Parva of Mahabharata. Thus, many Manus are mentioned in Hindu Scriptures. One group believes that because the rules and laws were established by Manu for a proper-functioning of society, it is also inferred that Manu was the terminology used for jurists and perhaps it was used for a group of lawyers who, from time to time made rules and regulations so that society could function smoothly.

The time of creation of *Manusmriti* was 300 BC. to 200 B.C, as it is believed. Dr. V.C. Sarkar dates *Manusmriti* to 150 BC. Maxmuller dates it to the fourth century and Dr. Hutter dates it to 600 BC. Some scholars consider it to be from the Ramayana and Mahabharata period or even before that period. According to Kalidas, Raghuvanshi kings followed the principles propagated by Manu in letter and spirit. Regarding *Manusmriti*, there is a doubt whether *Manusmriti* is the creation of any one person or whether different jurists of different times have been involved in preparing it.

There is no original copy of *Manusmriti* available. In today's time, the copy of *Manusmriti* is discussed as its basis or the Kulak Bhatt, which was considered by the British as the basis for making laws for Indians, and was compiled in the 15th century.

Manusmriti is considered to be the first Sanskrit text to be translated into British, English language, by Sir William Jones in 1794, which was then also studied out of India. Subsequently, work was also done on this subject by foreign scholars Max Muller, Georg Buhler and Patrick Olivelle. In 1886, Maxmullar's book series 'Secret Books of the East' dealt with this subject in detail. The total number of chapters in *Manusmriti* is 12 and the number of verses is 2694 (the number of verses has also



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been stated differently by different scholars). In these verses, all aspects of the royal society have been discussed in detail.

In *Manusmriti*, along with a detailed explanation of the king's state and public duties, it is also said about how the king should behave with the neighboring enemy nation and what policies he should adopt. What should be the duty of all the classes? What should be the punishment given by the king for not following it?

Chapter-1 of *Manusmriti* describes the origin of creation, Chapter-2 describes Sanskar, fasting, etc., Chapter-3 describes Shraddhakalpa, Chapter-4 describes Vritikalshana, etc., Chapter-5 describes Bhakshyabhakshya, Chapter-6 describes four Ashrams, Chapter- 7 describes royal religion, Chapter-8 describes about governance, Chapter-9 describes about male-female religion, Chapter-10 describes about Chaturvarna religion, Chapter-11 describes about atonement and Chapter-12 describes quotations of verses related to attaining salvation has been given.

3.4 MANU'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

3.4.1 Divine Theory of Origin of the State

The seventh chapter of *Manusmriti* mainly mentions matters related to the king. On the basis of origin, both the state and the king are considered a divine institution.

इन्द्रानिलयमार्काणामग्नेच्च वरुणस्य च ।

चन्द्रवित्तेशयोच्चैव मात्रा निर्हत्य शाश्वतीः ॥ (मनु. 7/4)

Manu and Brihaspati believe that God had created the king from the parts of these eight Gods: Indra, Vayu, Yama, Surya, Agni, Varun, Moon and Kuber. Due to the presence of the essence of Gods in the king, the king's position becomes higher than the Gods and he is considered to be the supreme God because he is versatile also. The king is believed to take five forms according to the circumstances, Agni for satisfying others with the anger and glory of the king, Indra for conquering the enemies



by attacking them, Soma for speaking politely to the people, Yama for doing justice and Kuber for providing wealth and resources to the needy.

अराजके हि लोकेऽस्मिन्सर्वतो विद्रुते भयात् ।

रक्षार्थमस्य सर्वस्य राजानमसृजत्प्रभुः ॥ (मनु. 7/3)

In the initial stage, when there was no king, fear and unlawfulness across the society were prevalent. Powerful and tyrannical people used to abduct the weak and the weak were suffering, they had no protector. There was no arrangement of law and order in the society. To free the earth from fear and anarchy, God has created the king.

बालोऽपि नावमन्तव्यो मनुष्य इति भूमिपः ।

महती देवता यदृषा नररूपेण तिष्ठति ॥ (मनु. 7/8)

Therefore, even if the King is a child, he is respectable, and insulting him is an insult to the God. In this way, an attempt has been made to direct the people to follow all the orders of the king. The king is expected to discharge his responsibilities in a manner consistent with divinity. He should protect all his subjects in every way and should give appropriate punishment to those who behave contrary to the social order. (Verse 7/14 and 17) Manu believed that before the state, God had created the penal system. This punishment is actually the state. Therefore, the state is subject to divine penal legislation and has the means to enforce divine punishment. If a king does not do social welfare work even after collecting taxes from his subjects, he is destined for hell.

3.4.2 Theory of Saptanga: The State Structure

The Saptanga state theory propounded by Manu is very popular in Indian political philosophy. According to him, the state is like a body which has seven parts. All these parts are the nature of the state body without which it is difficult to imagine the functioning of the state. The seven parts of the state have been described in Chapter 9, Verse 294 of Manusmriti. Various theories regarding the state have been propounded by Indian political thinkers in the past, which hold their special place in the field of political science even in the present time. The state has been considered organic by Manu, that



NOTES

is, there are seven parts of the state, which is also called Saptanga principle. All these seven organs fulfill their responsibilities and make the state system smooth and successful. Just as if any part of the body gets damaged then its working capacity is affected, similarly if any part of the state does not function smoothly then the collapse of the state is certain. These seven parts are-

- (a) Swami (King)
- (b) Amatya (Minister)
- (c) Pur (Capital)
- (d) Rashtra (Nation)
- (e) Kosha (Funds)
- (f) Danda (Penalty)
- (g) Mitra (Friend)

(a) **Swami** – Manu uses the word Swami for the king. All the powers of the state are vested in the king only. The king should have moral qualities, and administrative ability and discharge his responsibilities. A state without a king cannot be imagined. The king should strive for the unity and integrity of the state and the king is responsible for every activity of the state.

(b) **Amatya or Minister** - It has been propounded by Manu as the governance system of the king's state. He is supreme in power, but still he cannot run the governance system well without skilled ministers. In a way, the cabinet puts a stop to the misuse of powers by the king because Manusmriti considers the powers of the king not as his personal power but as institutional power. Therefore, he should appoint capable ministers and seek their advice in every work and appoint appropriate ministers for the proper functioning of every department. In Manusmriti, not only the king but also the qualities and qualifications of the ministers have been described in detail. The king should provide autonomy to various departments by judiciously transferring powers to them and he should also take care that the power should not be misused by the ministers. The actions of the cabinet should be monitored by the king. The decentralization of powers has also been described in Manusmriti.



- (c) **Pur or Capital City** – In Manusmriti, the word Pur means capital, fort, etc. The idea is that the capital should be completely safe in every way. Hence, for its construction such a place should be selected which is inaccessible and it becomes difficult for the enemies to attack here. Manu has emphasized the need for a fort in the capital and has also mentioned different categories of forts, like Dhanvan fort, human fort, tree fort, water fort, Mahidurg, Giri fort, etc.
- (d) **Janapada**- Manu has used the word Janapada for the land falling within the boundaries of the state and the people living in it. Like Manu, Kautilya also divided the Janapadas. It has been considered a part of the state and it has been said that the district should be such where the climate is good, there is pasture for animals and the land is fertile. There should be forts, mountains, forests, etc. in the middle and on the borders of the district, so that they can be used to protect the citizens in times of disaster.
- (e) **Treasure** - The money collected according to religion to carry out the administrative work of the state is called Manu Treasury. Manu has considered the treasury as a very important part of the state. All the welfare works of the state can be accomplished only through money and even the army cannot function to protect the people due to lack of money. If the state does not have funds then the existence of the state may be in danger. According to Manu, the state should always strive to increase its treasury through a just path.
- (f) **Punishment** - Manu's punishment refers to the army that protects the state. It is very important for the army to be powerful. In the absence of a powerful army, the state cannot survive nor protect its citizens during attack. The king should keep trying to make his service more resourceful. Manu has included elephant army, chariot army, horse army, infantry and water army in the army.
- (g) **Friend** - Friend is an important part of Manu's Saptanga Theory. Manu believes that no state can exist completely alone. Therefore, for the conduct of international relations, any state should have friendly relations with other states. This helps in achieving the defense and development objectives of the state. A friend should be someone who supports you in adverse circumstances and a friend should not be artificial but should be natural.



NOTES

In this way, the organs of the state described in the Saptanga principle propounded by Manu are similar to those of modern states and all these organs are necessary for the smooth functioning of the structure and activities of the state.

Manu has mentioned Mandal and Shaadgunya Niti for foreign policy or establishing relations with other nations. Under the Mandal principle, the state should always be ambitious and strive for its expansion. The king had to establish his relations with other states on the basis of the Mandal principle. This principle shows the area of influence of the king. In this theory, there is a mandal of 12 states that wants to establish different types of relations with different states and at the center of it is Vijigishu (the state that desires to conquer. Such king should use policies like Sama, Daam, Dand, Bheda, etc. together or separately and try to conquer enemy nations and bring them under his control.

In war, both the parties have to suffer loss, hence before the war, these six measures which are called Sandhi, Vighraha, Yan Asana, Dwaidhibhava and Sanshraya should be used. The king should also establish political relations by sending ambassadors to other states and the defeated state should be treated with respect. Manu believes that the king should always protect and affirm his national interests by keeping them paramount and for this he should not hesitate to use force as necessary. This is where the king behaves righteously.

3.4.3 Limits of State Activity

The state was originated with the objective of human welfare and removal of social instability. Therefore, whatever ideas have been given in Manusmriti regarding the functions of the state, the all-round development of humans and society lies at its core. Internal and external security of the state, provision of justice and rights of citizens for the continuity of social rules, etc. are included in Manusmriti as essential tasks and education for the society, construction of public places and their maintenance, provision of means of entertainment, etc. have been kept in the category of voluntary functions of the state. In this way, in the system made by Manu, all the social, economic, political, religious etc. activities of the subjects are included within the scope of work of the state, through the use of which the subjects can achieve the goal of a happy life and all-round development. Manu expected the state to not only protect the people from



Manusmriti: Relevance of the Study in the Present Context

external attacks but also protect the citizens from internal enemies like dacoits, robbers, thieves, etc. It is also the responsibility of the state to settle their mutual disputes, punish the corrupt government employees who abuse their powers and commit atrocities on the people and suppress those who conspire against the state system or the king, etc. In Manusmriti, the state is expected to do the following acts in order to maintain order in the state-

- Make all sections of the society perform their duties
- Maintain such a system in the state that rules and regulations are followed by everyone
- Maintain internal peace in the State
- Keep the States free from control and fear of external powers
- Take strict action against corruption
- Maintain control over the treasury
- Treat people like their son

Apart from this, it is also expected from the state that it should ensure that no one is being harassed by anyone, that the social system continues to operate following hierarchical duties and that the responsibilities of trade, agriculture and animal husbandry are performed well by the Vaishyas. It is also the duty of the state to control market prices for the supply of essential commodities in the society. The state should also ensure the provision of service to the other three classes by the Shudras. Providing education, giving donations to Brahmins, punishing criminals, protecting and helping the disabled, women, minors, etc. are considered other essential functions of the king.

Manu has accepted that the arrangement and continuity of the treasury is one of the main responsibilities of the State. For this, he should work for the economic progress of the state because he collects money only through taxes paid by the people. The state should try to achieve what it has not achieved and whatever has been achieved by the state should be protected and enhanced. The state should acquire land and money as per need and should provide money or land as gift to the deserving ones. The state should consider the happiness of the people as its own happiness and should make every effort to increase the happiness and prosperity of the people.

NOTES



NOTES

In Manusmriti, the king is expected to establish peace in the entire world. Hence many practical advices to the king have been given in this book. The king is expected to establish friendly relations with other states by appointing ambassadors. He should appoint capable and efficient diplomats because they help their king to make the ruler of another state his ally. Manusmriti advises states to adopt the policy of first reconciliation and then Daam or bribery towards a powerful enemy. Force should be used only when all three diplomacy, Sama, Daam, and Bheda failed. The supreme duty of the king should be to protect the people. Hence, the king avoided war but should always be prepared to face every situation. Before war, information about all the weak points of the enemy should be obtained and one should not hesitate to use all types of diplomatic measures. A weak king should keep a trustworthy friend. If there is no possibility of winning a war then one should not fight it. However, if the enemy is very powerful and war has become inevitable, then the king should take refuge in one of his friendly nations. In the case of winning the war, one should focus more on making friends instead of acquiring land and looting money.

Duties of the King

There is also a proper description of the qualities and duties of the king in Manusmriti. Manu has told the king that a Kshatriya king who is educated in the Vedas should protect all the people living in his kingdom with justice in every way. The ruler should be religious because a rule based on religion is not violent. A king should have purity, humility and proficiency in knowledge related to governance. He should be Jitendriya because only he can keep the people under control. The king should be free from all the vices and addictions that arise from lust, anger, attachment and greed. The king should attend the Raj Sabha only after performing daily religious activities and taking blessings from the Brahmins and should carry out his administrative work as per the discussions of the ministers.

- **Executive-** In Manusmriti, the king has been made the head of all executive systems. Due to which he is expected to perform tasks related to the management and security of the state. He should make such arrangements of employees for all the works, so that proper division of tasks and responsibilities can be ensured and the set objective can be easily achieved. Therefore, the question arises that



how should the work be divided and how should the various units of work be grouped? Aristotle has described two types of division of work – first, division of work according to categories of humans and second, division of work according to service. Similarly, Smriti writers have created their system on the basis of a complete varna system according to tasks and responsibilities.

- **Judicial-** In Manusmriti, just conduct is expected from the king, and justice is the basis of punishment. Manu believed that people's behavior was controlled only because of the fear of punishment. It is the duty of the king to give just punishment to the criminal after considering the place, time, seriousness of the crime, etc. Before giving punishment, all the evidence should be seriously considered and discussed with enlightened people. The people should not feel that they are not getting justice. The judicial system should be according to Dharma.
- **Legislative-** Kings used to conduct and administer only according to the path shown in ancient religious texts. Nevertheless, Manu arranged for a council for law making whose determination was based on intellectual capacity. In this, there should be one Nirvakta, three knowledgeable in Vedas, one Mimamsakar, one knowledgeable in theology, one Niskat and three people who should be mainly related to business.
- **Administration-** While giving instructions related to the administrative system, Manu said that the king should establish his kingdom in between two-three, five and a hundred villages and to maintain peace and order there, qualified employees should be appointed for each area. The king should appoint a capable cabinet to assist him and should keep visiting the state himself and taking information about the officers and employees of the state through spies.
- **Upshastriy-** It was a very important task of the king to ensure that religion remained established in the secular society and that every person in the society followed it. For this, it was necessary for the king himself to be proficient in the Vedas and scriptures. The king also had to appoint a capable and excellent person as his advisor. For this he used to appoint Brahmins to various posts. Manu considered the inclusion of Brahmin and Kshatriya qualities necessary for good governance of the state.



NOTES

- **Revenue-** Maharishi Manu has given great importance to the treasury for the administrative work of the state. He pointed out the deep connection between politics and economics. According to him, excessive taxes create a feeling of dissatisfaction among the public, whereas low taxes are harmful to the state and the king. Manu has arranged tax collection in such a way that it was according to the economic condition of both the poor and the rich. He gave principles for collecting taxes for revenue, protection of people, tax on profit, national planning, relief from suffering etc. and prohibited excessive taxes. They gave provision for separate parts and amounts in form of different taxes.
- **Army-** According to Manu, being the supreme commander, it is very important for the king to have leadership skills so that the army can follow him. A king must be courageous and proficient in warfare skills. He should not abandon courage and righteous conduct under any circumstances. The king should equip his army with necessary weapons to strengthen it and reward the best soldiers. The role of the army is important in the outcome of the war. Therefore, he should include elephants, horses, chariots and infantry in his army.

3.4.4 Can a King be Autocratic?

In Manusmriti, the divine theory of the origin of the king has been given and the king is considered to have originated from the part of a deity and has been given a higher position than the deity and on this basis, he gets unlimited power and authority. Yet the king's autocracy has not been supported. A provision has been made to curb the power of the king in a logical manner through various measures. The king has been subordinated to religion and it is expected from him that he will always protect the people by practising religion. The king is always expected to follow the royal dharma and make efforts for the people. The cabinet also advises the king in institutional matters and prevents him from being arbitrary. In the nine chapters of Manusmriti, Manu has made both the ruler and the ruled subject to punishment i.e. the justice system. If the king does not use punishment judiciously, he himself becomes liable to punishment. In order to prevent the king from deviating from his path, his daily routine has been set in such a way that he cannot do anything that goes against the public



Manusmriti: Relevance of the Study in the Present Context

interest. The king is also responsible for the subjects and he receives authority from the subjects. If the king turns away from public welfare, he should be abdicated.

In this way, Manu's king, despite being divine and having all the rights, is not autocratic but is committed to the welfare of the people.

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In-Text Questions - 1

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. Manusmriti is believed to be the first Sanskrit text translated into _____ by Sir William Jones.
2. Manu's rules and principles are considered broad and _____.
3. The Manusmriti outlines the _____ theory, describing the state as having seven parts.
4. According to the Manusmriti, the king is created from parts of eight _____.
5. The divine theory in Manusmriti states that the king's position is _____ than the gods.

B. State True or False:

1. The Manusmriti is considered part of the Vedas.
2. Manu is regarded as the first man and the progenitor of humankind in the text.
3. The Saptanga theory describes the state as having six parts.
4. Manusmriti suggests that the king's power should be unchecked and absolute.
5. Manusmriti has chapters dedicated to the duties of kings and the classes in society.

3.5 SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF MANU

3.5.1 Social Aspect of Manu Code

Manusmriti not only mentions Rajdarshan but also elaborates its views on social philosophy. Also, Manusmriti sheds a light on how society should be organized. The social system and social conduct of people are the central themes of Manusmriti.

Self-Instructional
Material

65



NOTES

Manusmriti contains detailed explanation of the principles of social organization, the functions of different varnas and the responsibilities of the state and the king in the social system. Many respected historians claim that the Book of Manu is reflected in the form of a discourse on issues such as laws, duties, behavior and other essential beliefs of everyday life. It outlines a set of moral principles for human society.

Manusmriti, also known as the Laws of Manu, is considered one of the most authoritative texts in the Brahmanical tradition that outlines essential social and civil rules and codes of conduct. The rules and laws related to marriage, rituals, caste, morality, religion, etc. given in Manusmriti are still a basis of Indian Hindu religion. It encompasses all systems within itself.

3.5.2 Concept of Justice

There is a convention of jurisprudence in any system. In the Indian stream of thought, many sages have analyzed the judicial system from a comprehensive perspective. In this sequence, Manu has given a detailed description of the judicial system in Manusmriti. Punishment or legal punishment is a part of the state. In the absence of strength, the political system degenerates. Punishment is the pivot of the state, punishment is the basis of the state. Manu has included the word punishment in a broader sense. Dand means law. It also means justice system and punishment.

All explanations of law come under the penal theory. Manu expanded the penal code and described it. He has made provisions for different types of punishments for different types of crimes. Manu has made it clear that the king is bound by all the rules and laws. He is special but suffers punishment like ordinary people. He says that if a common man is punished for a crime by one pana, then if the king breaks the rule, he should be punished with a hundred pana because the king is more learned and capable. Similarly, for any punishment, if the culprit is a Brahmin, then the punishment for him is many times more than that of a Shudra, Vaishya and Kshatriya. Manu explains the laws to punish Vaishya more than Shudra, Kshatriya more than Vaishya and Brahmins much more than Kshatriyas.

He said that there are mainly two reasons for conflict and dispute to arise - first, disputes arising due to violence or crime and second, disputes arising due to land and money.



Manusmriti: Relevance of the Study in the Present Context

NOTES

It is noteworthy in Manusmriti that the responsibility of the king is to do justice. But if the king does not do justice himself, then he should appoint a learned man as a judge to do justice. Judges appointed by the king, along with other people, decide disputes in the court. Judges should decide all disputes impartially and neutrally. In a court whose decisions are not based on truth, its members are destroyed by sin. Regarding the qualification of a judge, Manu says that under no circumstances should an unqualified person be made a judge. A judge should be a person who can determine the inner feelings of humans from external symbols like sounds, characters, signals and other gestures.

The evidence presented in these disputes has been divided into two parts in Manusmriti, one is human evidence and the other is divine evidence. Three types of human evidence have been described – written, device and witness. Manu has written that evidence written by judges should be given more importance but articles written by force should be invalidated. It is considered a reliable evidence as it has been seen with direct eyes, but the statements of people who tell lies, servants, enemies, ascetics and lepers should not be believed. There should be a provision for oath before presenting evidence and there should be a provision for strict punishment for those who give false evidence. Evidence should be taken from women regarding women. Utmost importance should be given to eyewitness testimony.

Manu considers punishment as very important in the justice process. According to Manu, punishment is the king because punishment gives the power to rule, which is also the purpose of religion. The king should make arrangements for fair punishment in the state. It has been said that taking away the enemy's wealth, inflicting physical pain and killing him are the three types of punishments. Apart from this, while distinguishing between two other types, they mention 'Prakash Dand' and 'Aprakash Dand'. In this way, Manusmriti has given a detailed description regarding punishment and justice.

The immediate penal code was propounded by Manu Maharaj keeping in view the political and social systems of that time, which is not necessary to be 100% relevant in today's situation. But the modern penal code also includes its fundamental and theoretical aspects because many principles are beyond the limits of time. Thus, Manu's penal code needs to be seen in a balanced view. Among the oldest penal principles in the world, the penal principle propounded by Manu is an eternal principle.

Self-Instructional
Material

67



NOTES

3.5.3 Caste System

The caste system in India and its origin is a topic which has always been a subject of discussion in different ways. The caste system is the basis of social behavior and social life in India. Many Indian and foreign thinkers have done research on the caste system of India. Many scholars praised the caste system, and many have condemned the caste system in their writings and considered it difficult. Many people also believed that the caste system has been invented by Brahmins to establish their dominance in the society.

शूद्रो ब्राह्मणतामेति ब्राह्मणश्चैति शूद्रताम् ।
क्षत्रियाज्जातमेवंन्तु विद्याद् वैश्यात्तथैव च ॥ (मनुस्मृति 10/65)

Due to his qualities and deeds, a Brahmin becomes a Shudra and a Shudra becomes a Brahmin. The same sequence is applied for Kshatriya and Vaishya also. Following this tradition, Lord Krishna had said in the Gita that I have created four varnas on the basis of qualities and deeds, not on the basis of caste. The caste is not Varna. Caste shapes a person, and qualities and actions make him a human being. Varna is related to those actions by which a person earns his livelihood. A person without qualities cannot do anything except service. A person who is devoid of knowledge and special deeds is called Shudra. While establishing the excellence of service religion, Manu has said that Vayovruddha Shudraah Pujyaah means if a Shudra is older in age then he is venerable.

If we discuss ancient times or the Vedic period, then instead of the birth-based caste system in India, there was a karma-based caste system in which people were placed in different classes not on the basis of their birth but on the basis of their qualities and deeds. This varna system was carried forward by Manu and the duties and conduct of people of each varna were determined. Dr. P.V. Kane writes in his book *History of Dharmashastra* that 'In the Rig Veda period, there were two opposing groups, Arya and Dasyu (slaves), who were different from each other in skin color, worship practice, speech and appearance. Therefore, in very ancient times, the word varna was related only to slaves and Aryans. Although the words Brahmin and Kshatriya have been used frequently in Rigveda, the word Varna had no connection with them. (Page no. 110)



कारुरहं ततो भिषगुपलप्रक्षिणी नना ।
नानाधियो वसूयवहऽनु गा इव तस्थिमन्द्रायहन्दो परि स्रव ॥
(ऋग्वेद 9/11/2/3)

In this verse of Rigveda, it is said that I am a praiser, my father is a physician and my mother grinds flour on wheels. We want to earn money through various activities. This shows that different people of a family used to do the work done by different classes according to their ability.

The explanation of the verse (3/44/5) of the Rigveda is as follows: O Indra, the drinker, will you make us a protector or a king? Will you make me a sage who remains happy after drinking Soma or will you give me infinite wealth? This clearly shows that a person can join any varna. It is seen that earlier there were enemies of the Aryans who were different from the Aryans and were black in colour, whom the Aryans had defeated and enslaved. Later, he joined the Shudras but his position in the society remained low. In Taittiriya Samhita, where Shudras are not considered worthy of performing Yagyan, it is said that:

रुचं नो धेहि ब्राह्मणेषु रुचं राजसु नस्कृधि ।
रुचं विश्येषु शूद्रेषु मयि देहि रुचा रुचम् ॥ (5/7/6/3-4)

That is, bring light to our Brahmins, fill light to our kings, and fill light to Vaishyas and Shudras. From this it appears that Shudras were also a part of the society and were equal to the other three castes in receiving enlightenment from God.

The caste system talked about in Manusmriti was not propounded by Manu but was already present in the society. In Purushasukta of Rigveda, it is described in the verse (10/90/12) that the different classes of the society originated from different parts of the body of Brahma. Brahmins were born from Brahma's mouth, Kshatriyas from his arms, Vaishyas from his abdomen and Shudras from his feet. According to Manu, all men were not of equal capacity, since they had different executive abilities, so they should ordinarily perform the tasks for which they were suited. In Manu's words, the determiner of this standard was a person's ability and not his birth formula. Brahmins were virtuous and were there to impart knowledge. Kshatriyas were dedicated to protecting and providing security to others because they were brave and courageous.



NOTES

Vaishyas were dedicated to the production of goods and services and to providing services to people with less intelligence.

Brahmins were considered superior to other people because they were pure in character, virtuous and educated in the Vedas and hence had complete knowledge of religion. A Brahmin was not only a person dedicated to knowledge, but was also pure and selfless in nature and behavior. Kshatriyas were placed second in this hierarchy because they had a sense of duty to provide protection to others, but were not devoid of personal interests and ambitions. The Vaishyas ruled with the motive of profit and were guided by desires and self-interest. Manu 'prescribed a strict code of conduct for each Varna with a clear priority to merit. He said that the name of Brahmins should be selected in such a way that it symbolizes knowledge, the name of Kshatriyas should symbolize power, the name of Vaishyas should be such that it symbolizes wealth and the name of Shudras should be such that it symbolizes ability. The privilege and reverence for sages is such that even if a king is 100 years old, he should respect a 10-year-old sage like his father. Even an uneducated sage could guide the king and preach him the laws. With time, perhaps this system became birth-based.

लोकानां तु विवृद्ध्यर्थं मुखबाहूरुपादतः ।

ब्राह्मणं क्षत्रियं वैश्यं शूद्रं च निरवर्तयत् ॥ (मनुस्मृति 1/31)

It is described in the verse that for the special growth, peace, prosperity and progress of the people i.e. the society, God created the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra castes respectively as per the comparison of the mouth, arms, abdomen and legs, i.e. the society was transformed into human body. Considering it as a society, these four varnas were created to make it run smoothly. This caste division in the society reflects the division of functions in the society. Manusmriti's verse-

विप्राणां ज्ञानतो ज्यैष्ठ्यं क्षत्रियाणां तु वीर्यतः ।

वैश्यानां धान्यधनतः शूद्राणां एव जन्मतः (मनुस्मृति 2/155)

The explanation of which is as follows - Brahmin was superior by knowledge, Kshatriya by force, Vaishya by wealth and Shudra by birth. This division became based on birth instead of deeds, yet there seems to be a possibility of mobility in it. It



Manusmriti: Relevance of the Study in the Present Context

is also mentioned in Manusmriti that the first three varnas are dwijati and the fourth varna is a caste because it is not allowed to undergo Upanayana Sanskar and apart from this there is no fifth varna (Manusmriti 10/14). According to Manusmriti, the birth of a Brahmin is considered as an eternal embodiment of religion, that is, his body itself is the visible embodiment of religion. He becomes eligible to attain salvation by being born for the growth of religion. Thus Brahmin has been considered the best in Manusmriti. It is also said that a Brahmin eats his own food, wears his own clothes and gives his own donations. Others consume all things only because of the mercy of the Brahmin (Manusmriti 1/102).

In Manusmriti, where Brahmins have been described as superior, arrangements for strict conduct have also been made for them. A Brahmin should study the scriptures diligently and a Brahmin who follows the best fast never indulges in mental, verbal and physical defects (Manusmriti 1. 103-104). In this, Brahmins are expected to live a simple life, have high thoughts and protect their religion and culture. The rule laid down for Brahmins is that they should receive only that much money which can support their family and perform their religious activities without hurting anyone (Manusmriti 4/2-3). They were expected to take only one potful of food. If he is unable to earn his living, then he should collect the rice ears that fall in the field after the crop is harvested and eat them. Manus has termed this process as Rita. If a Brahmin is suffering from hunger then he should take the help of the king, his disciple or any person of good conduct, failing which he should take charity from another worthy second caste or a worthy person and if this is not possible then he should take charity from a Shudra. But he cannot use the donation received from a Shudra in Yagya or Agnihotra, otherwise he will have to become a Chandala (Chandalas were not Shudras and were considered to be outsiders who did not get any place in the four varnas). He should not take donation to him from any unjust king or person. The provision of livelihood for the Veda-knowledgeable and the poor Brahmin is considered the duty of the king. It is also mentioned in Manusmriti that giving charity to a Brahmin who has not studied the Vedas, is deceitful or greedy, is not only useless but doing so leads to hell (Manusmriti 4/192 - 194). If a Brahmin was not able to support his family through teaching and priestly work, then he was allowed to adopt Kshatriya or Vaishya work, but the other three varnas were not allowed to adopt Brahmin work.

NOTES



NOTES

Even after giving the best position to the Brahmins, Manu does not make them autocratic, and if any Brahmin, due to his dominance or greed, makes the Dwijans who are blessed with Yajnopavita perform servile work without their wish, then there is a provision of punishment of six hundred paces on him.

In the Varna system, Kshatriyas come after Brahmins, and protecting the weak is considered equivalent to punishment for them. Manu has made arrangements for the Kshatriyas to protect the state, perform charity, recitation of Vedas and not get attached to addictions. Vaishya comes third in the Varna system, whose work along with giving of charity is said to be agriculture, animal husbandry and commerce. There is also a provision in Manusmriti that if a Kshatriya is not able to earn his living from his own work, then a Kshatriya can work as a Vaishya and the Vaishya can leave the prohibited works and adopt the Shudra profession. If a Shudra is not able to do his work and his wife and son are suffering from hunger, then he can turn to artisanship to earn his living. This shows that the facility to change occupation as per need was prevalent in the society.

Manu does not consider Shudras as untouchables, but if a person born in a Brahmin, Kshatriya or Vaishya family is not able to move towards knowledge after getting education, then he is a Shudra. Even though a Shudra may not attain education, he can be a person of good character and a religious person. Manu places morality above all and calls it the root of religion. If the penal system described in Manusmriti is studied adequately, then it becomes clear that it is not at all appropriate to say that Manu has made harsh penal laws for the Shudras and has provided privileges and special facilities to the Brahmins. The criteria of Manu's penal system are - merits and demerits and basic elements - intellectual level, social level, position, and effect of crime.

If Manu gives more respect and social status to the higher varnas on the basis of merit-work-merit among the varnas, then he also gives more punishment for committing crimes. Thus, in Manu's system of just punishment, the least punishment is for Shudras, Brahmin has the most, and the king even more. This is Manu's universally accepted penal system, which applies to all penal places –

अष्टापाद्यं तु शूद्रस्य स्तेये भवति किल्बिषम्
षोडशैव तु वैश्यस्य द्वात्रिंशत् क्षत्रियस्य च ।।



ब्राह्मणस्य चतुःषष्टिः पूर्णं वाऽपि शतं भवेत् ।

द्विगुणा वा चतुःषष्टिः, तद्विषगुणविद्धि सः ॥

(मनुस्मृति 8.337–338)

NOTES

In these verses, it has been said that a Brahmin should be given a hundred times more punishment than the punishment given to a Shudra for theft. No matter who is guilty, it has been said that he will not be given any exemption in punishment.

3.5.4 Manu's Ashram System

Indian cultural philosophy fundamentally envisages the complete upliftment of human life. Our sages have created such a system that human life should be orderly, progressive, and compatible with the consciousness of nature and inspired by the welfare of all living beings.

The Ashram system in the ancient Indian school of thought is one such structure that was created by our sages to live a balanced life between materialistic pleasures and the joy of spirituality which is based on a balanced approach with both the worldly and transcendental systems. This system was essentially designed to be followed by humans of divine nature. This system is divided into four divisions – Brahmacharya Ashram, Grihastha Ashram, Vanaprastha Ashram and Sannyasa Ashram. If the complete lifespan of a human being is imagined to be 100 years, then the first phase of life is in the form of Brahmacharya Ashram, and it lasts from birth till the age of 25 years. In this age group, it was mandatory to stay in Guru's Gurukul and receive education. In a Gurukul, a person lived under the discipline of the Guru and the Gurukul. Under the guidance of the Guru, all types of knowledge were imparted here. Here the student had to stay away from material pleasures and live like an ascetic. Here food was also collected as alms. Education in agriculture, cow rearing, service, weapons and scriptures was given to the students. During this period of celibacy, the brahmachari or student was made completely adept in knowledge, science, and all the disciplines.

After successfully completing the Brahmacharya and Vidya study phase of the Ashram system, a person was given entry into the second phase of the Ashram which was called Grihastha Ashram. This period was from 25 to 50 years of age, during which a person is expected to get married and have children and contribute to the



NOTES

society as per the law of creation. During this period, one was allowed to enjoy worldly pleasures and perform all his duties related to his family and society with a spirit of dedication. Manu has mentioned about 16 Sanskars which a person has to undergo throughout his life. Manu has mentioned these thirteen rites in his texts - Garbhadhan, Punsavan, Seemantonnayan, Jaatkarma, Naamkaran, Nishkraman, Annaprashan, Chudakarm, Karnavedha, Upanayan, Vidyarambh, Kesharambh, Keshant, Samavartan, marriage and Antyeshthi. He has also mentioned various types of marriage rites which were followed in the immediate ashram system. Among the forms of marriage, Brahma Vivah, Dev Vivah, Arsha Vivah, Prajapatya Vivah, Asur Vivah, Gandharva Vivah, Rakshas Vivah and Pishach Vivah were accepted and prevalent in the society.

After the age of fifty years, the third stage of human life was the arrival of Banaprastha Ashram, which continued for the next 25 years where the person transferred all his duties and responsibilities to his next generation and lived the last stage of life with his wife. Here they were expected to live a spiritual life by following religious duties. His diet and life were completely simple.

The final stage is Sannyasa Ashram, where upon reaching a man becomes the embodiment of religion and spirituality in the fullness of God's consciousness. Before entering this stage, a man becomes free from all kinds of debts including his debt to God, debt to Rishis, debt to his parents, debt to his people and satisfying his life, society, family, and ancestors and attains the ultimate goal of life - salvation. At this stage of the journey, he leaves the world with the fruits of his actions in a lonely feeling. In this way, this system makes a man a superior human being and merges him with divine power. This is the highest excellence of our Ashram system which is not available in any other culture of the world.

3.5.5 Types of Marriages and Law of Inheritance

Manu's social philosophy categorises marriages into eight distinct types, each with specific rituals and implications.

- 1. Brahma Marriage:** In this type of marriage, the father of the bride marries off her daughter to a man who has studied the Vedas and possesses good character.



2. **Daiva Marriage:** This occurs when the bride's family marries off her daughter to a priest. It is seen as a union blessed by divine intervention.
3. **Arsha Marriage:** In this type, the groom gives a cow and a bull or other gifts to the bride's family as a token of appreciation, symbolising the union.
4. **Prajapatya Marriage:** Here, the bride's father marries off her daughter to the groom with a blessing for them to perform their household duties together. This type emphasises mutual duty and companionship.
5. **Gandharva Marriage:** This is a union based on mutual love and consent between the bride and groom.
6. **Asura Marriage:** In this type, the groom offers wealth and gifts to the bride's family, and the marriage is conducted with their consent. It emphasises the groom's responsibility to provide for his new family.
7. **Rakshasa Marriage:** This type of marriage involves the groom taking the bride away from her family, typically in a context of conflict or battle.
8. **Paisacha Marriage:** This involves the union of a couple without the bride's prior consent or knowledge.

Law of Inheritance

Manu's law of inheritance outlines detailed rules for the distribution of property among heirs, focusing on maintaining family lineage and ensuring fair division.

1. **Primacy of Sons:** Sons are considered the primary heirs to their father's property. The eldest son often receives a larger share due to his role in performing religious rites.
2. **Equal Division:** Generally, the property is divided equally among the sons. However, there can be variations based on specific circumstances and the father's discretion.
3. **Rights of Daughters:** While traditionally sons are the primary heirs, daughters are given a share in the absence of male offspring. They also have the right to inherit their mother's jewellery and personal property.



NOTES

4. **Widow's Rights:** A widow is entitled to her husband's property if there are no male heirs. She can also inherit if the male heirs are minors or otherwise unable to manage the property.
5. **Inheritance by Relatives:** If a man dies without direct heirs, his property can be inherited by his nearest relatives, such as brothers, uncles, or cousins.
6. **Adoption:** Adopted sons are given the same rights as biological sons regarding inheritance. This ensures continuity of the family line and care for the family property.
7. **Exclusion of Unworthy Heirs:** Manu's laws also stipulate that individuals who are deemed unworthy or have committed serious offenses can be excluded from inheritance.

3.6 MANUSMRITI AND WOMEN

In every society, be it Indian, Western, Greek or any other, administrative and social rules change according to the needs of the period and their interpretation also becomes different. These changes have been visible in Indian society also. The system of the Vedic period, Ramayana and Mahabharata is not visible today.

3.6.1 Manu's Views Related to Women

During the Vedic and Manusmriti times, Indian women enjoyed considerable pride. In Manusmriti, differences are seen at many places in Manu's views on women. Nevertheless, it is clear from many verses of Manusmriti that during this period, there was provision of adequate respect and rights for women in the society. Women perform their various duties in the family as mother, sister, daughter, wife, etc. There are many verses in Manusmriti which discuss the place of women in society and family. Let us explain this in detail. Manu has quoted the verse-

यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवता,
यत्रैतास्तु न पूज्यन्ते सर्वास्तत्राफला क्रियाः। (मनुस्मृति 3.56)



This verse very well describes the condition of women in that period. This verse says that in a society where women are worshipped, gods reside there, on the contrary, where women are not respected, all the works of the person who disrespects become futile, no matter how good he is. If he does any work, he has to face only sorrows. Maharishi Manu wanted to see the woman in a happy state. If the woman of the house is happy, positive thoughts will flow in her mind, due to which positive energy will remain in the family. For this, in Chapter 3 Verse 55 of Manusmriti, the father, brother, husband or brother-in-law should always keep their daughter, sister, wife or sister-in-law happy with respect, food, clothes, jewellery, etc. as per their suitability and should not give them any kind of trouble or problem. Sadness should not be allowed to reach them. Maharishi Manu says about the downfall of the clan which causes sorrow to women that:

शोचन्ति जामयो यत्र विनश्यत्याशु तत्कुलम् ।
न शोचन्ति नु यत्रता वर्धते तद्धि सर्वदा ।। (मनुस्मृति 3.57)

जामयो यानि गेहानि शपन्त्यप्रतिपूजिताः ।
तानि कृत्याहतानीव विनश्यन्ति समन्ततः ।। (मनुस्मृति 3.58)

Where daughters-in-law and women of the clan remain sad because of their husband's wrong conduct, atrocities, adultery, etc., the clan soon gets destroyed. Where they remain happy, that clan is always prosperous and flourishing and keeps moving forward. Further in verse 58, he says that the houses where daughters-in-law, daughters and women of the family remain unhappy and curse due to disrespect, that is, the feelings of destruction of the family arise in their mind, those houses are destroyed by sudden actions (invisible powers).

Verse numbers 3.62, 1.16, 4.170, etc. also explain the importance of women in the society and family and say that the man who does not keep his wife happy, his entire family remains unhappy and sad. Women who bring good fortune to the family by giving birth to children are worthy of respect and bring light to the home. In that period, women were considered Mahabhaga, worshipable, Grihalakshmi and Grihashobha and the responsibility of raising children and imparting public behavior was discharged by women only. In Manusmriti, it is said that the mother should be given more respect than the father. Considering that man and woman are incomplete



NOTES

without each other, the rule of performing all types of religious rituals by both of them together has been described. Men and women have been given equal recognition. Manu says that a sensible person should not argue or quarrel with family members, especially mother, daughter and wife.

In Manusmriti, it is expected from women that along with serving the husband, the wife should play her role in household chores, which will develop a sense of responsibility in them. Manu also says that the husband should hand over all his earned money to the wife so that the money can be used properly for household work and proper arrangements can be made for the maintenance of the family. This was the time when there was division of household work and livelihood work between men and women and women only performed all the responsibilities of the house. But in the present times, women are engaged in various activities even outside the home. The role has been changed and in the present scenario, men and women are arranging their household work.

Rights related to marriage

काममामरणात् तिष्ठेद् गृहे कन्यातुमत्यपि ।

न चैवैनां प्रयच्छेत् तु गुणहीनाय कर्हि चित् ।। (मनुस्मृति 9.89)

ब्राह्मो दैवस्तथैवार्षः प्राजापत्यस्तथाऽऽसुरः ।

गान्धर्वो राक्षसश्चैव पैशाचश्चाष्टमोऽधमः ।। (मनुस्मृति 3.21)

Rules regarding marriage of women have also been mentioned in Manusmriti and adequate freedom has been provided to girls. Manu says in Manusmriti that even if a girl lives in her father's house without marriage for the rest of her life, she should never marry a sinful, unworthy, evil man. Manusmriti talks about eight types of marriages – Brahma, Daiva, Arsha, Prajapatya, Asura, Gandharva, Rakshasa and Pishach. In this, the first four types of marriages are considered good. In a Brahma marriage, a suitable groom is selected and the girl is dedicated to him by donating water. When the girl becomes marriageable, she is given the freedom to choose a husband similar to her. The practice of Swayamvara has been prevalent in India since ancient times.



Therefore, the belief that only parents should choose the groom does not match Manu's views. According to Maharishi Manu, parents should help the girl in choosing a suitable groom and not impose her decision.

Prohibition of dowry

स्त्रीधनानि तु यह मोहादुजीवन्ति बन्धनवाः ।

नारी यानानि वस्त्रं वा ते यान्त्यधो गतिम ॥ (मनुस्मृति 3.52)

In this way, Manusmriti completely prohibits any kind of transaction in marriage so that no one has the feeling of greed and no one dares to grab the woman's money. Even Manusmriti calls marriage including dowry as 'demon' or 'demon' marriage.

यासां नाददते शुल्कं ज्ञातयो न स विक्रयः ।

अर्हणम तत्कुमारीणां आनृशंस्यं न केवलम ॥ (मनुस्मृति 3/54)

Women Education

There is no discussion of any restriction on women's education in Manusmriti, hence they could receive any type of education. There is a provision in Manusmriti to receive education from a Guru before marriage.

वैवाहिको विधिः स्त्रीणां संस्कारो वैदिकः स्मृतः ।

पतिसेवा गुरौ वासो गृहार्थोऽग्निपरिक्रिया ॥ (मनुस्मृति 2.67)

It is said in Manusmriti that a woman should have complete autonomy in handling money and the responsibility for its expenditure, purification of house and household items, religious and spiritual rituals, etc. and all these tasks should be done under her guidance. He is placed at the forefront of rituals.

In Manusmriti verses 9.130, 9.131, 8.28 and 8.29, it has been said about the property rights of women that a girl child is equal to a son, how can anyone else take away her property rights in her presence? Only her daughter has the right on the mother's personal property, whereas both sons and daughters have equal rights on the father's property. Manu arranges this special right for the girl so that she does not



NOTES

remain at the mercy of anyone. He wants to make the woman a proprietress and not a beggar. Further ensuring the safety of women, Manu provides for harsh punishment for those who take possession of women's property.

According to him, if a woman, who has no children, no male member left in her family, is a widow, or whose husband lives abroad or is ill, the responsibility of the safety of such a woman come under the administration and if somebody tries to steal her property, severe punishment must be given to that person and help her getting her property back.

The matter of giving priority to women is also visible in Manusmriti. He says that female patients, burden bearers, senior students, grooms and kings should be given way first. Provision has been made to feed newlyweds, underage girls, patients and pregnant women even before the arrival of guests to their home.

A rule has been made to give death penalty to those who molest, rape or kidnap women and it has been said to give extremely harsh punishment to those who kill women, children and virtuous scholars.

Manusmriti contains many free proposals for women as per social laws, especially in the realm of family. Despite giving a wide variety of rights to women, Manusmriti has been criticized from time to time, the main reason for this is that in some places women have been limited to household work and duty to the family. Verse 5.151 of Manusmriti talks about women always being under the protection of men. It says that women should remain under the protection of father, husband and son at different stages of age. But to a large extent it is possible that this was done for their safety in the society at that time, and the social structure was such that the responsibility of earning a living was on men. Women are physically different from men, hence at every stage of their age, arrangements were made for their complete protection and responsible behavior by the men of the house.

Manu does not say anything regarding the education of women, but in verse 2.70 of Manusmriti, such a provision has been made for women that marriage itself has been considered as Upanayana Sanskar for women and husband's house has been considered as Gurukul. But still in the Vedic period we find descriptions of learned women like Lopamudra, Gargi, Aditi, etc. which do not match the rules of Manu.



Manusmriti: Relevance of the Study in the Present Context

Apart from this, many rules have been made in Manusmriti to explain the character of women in detail and to determine their social behavior and conduct.

Conclusion

Maharishi Manu propounded some rules for all sections of the society so that the society could function smoothly. Considering man and woman as complementary to each other, Manu has laid down social rules and conduct for both. At the same time, it is also clear that the condition of society is different in every country and period. Today, both the system and needs of modern society are different from ancient times. Even if we talk about contemporary circumstances, the structure and needs of Indian society are different from that of Saudi Arabia, America, Iran, Japan, Britain, etc. and the status of women is also different in every society. Many contradictions in what has been said about women in Manusmriti are clearly visible, one of the main reasons for this could be that in different periods of time, some changes were made in all our ancient texts, due to which the original texts were not fully known. Manusmriti has also been interpreted in different ways by different scholars, in which the personal thinking of the interpreter also has an impact. One specialty of the Sanskrit language is that the same word can have different meanings in different circumstances, so the meaning of a word can change the entire meaning of a verse depending on what meaning the interpreter is perceiving. The translation of Manusmriti by foreign scholars during the British period could also be the reason for these contradictions. Today, if you take copies of Manusmriti, the number of verses is different in different copies, which casts doubt on its authenticity.

In-Text Questions - 2

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. Manusmriti is also known as the _____ of Manu.
2. In the absence of _____, the political system degenerates.
3. Manusmriti's caste system was originally based on _____ and _____.
4. The Ashram system divides human life into four stages: _____, _____, _____, and _____.
5. Manu's penal system includes _____ and _____ evidence.

Self-Instructional
Material

81



NOTES

B. State True or False:

1. Manusmriti prescribes the same punishment for all castes.
2. According to Manu, the king is exempt from punishment.
3. Manusmriti supports the concept of a birth-based caste system.
4. The Ashram system requires a person to live as a householder until the age of 50.
5. Manu's views on women indicate that they should be respected and kept happy.

3.7 SUMMARY

- Indian texts like Vedas, Puranas, and Upanishads provide a framework for regulating social activities, with Smritis specifically addressing societal laws.
- Manu, considered the first human and a progenitor, laid down broad and adaptable rules and principles, influencing Indian political thought.
- Manusmriti, believed to be composed between 300 BC and 200 BC, has no original copy but was translated into English by Sir William Jones in 1794.
- Manusmriti consists of 12 chapters covering various aspects of society, including the duties of kings, social classes, and atonement.
- Manu's political thought includes the divine origin of the state, where the king, created from parts of eight gods, holds a position higher than the gods.
- The Saptanga theory describes the state as having seven parts: King (Swami), Minister (Amatya), Capital (Pur), Nation (Rashtra), Treasury (Kosha), Punishment (Danda), and Friend (Mitra).
- The state is responsible for maintaining law and order, justice, social duties, and economic stability.



Manusmriti: Relevance of the Study in the Present Context

- The Manusmriti outlines the king's executive, judicial, legislative, and administrative roles and emphasizes his accountability to religion and the welfare of the people.
- Despite the divine status of the king, Manu's concept does not support autocracy but mandates checks on royal power and a focus on public welfare.
- Manusmriti, also known as the Laws of Manu, is an authoritative text outlining social and civil rules.
- It addresses the social system, varnas (castes), and the responsibilities of the state and king.
- Manu's judicial system includes detailed descriptions of laws and punishments.
- Different punishments are prescribed for different crimes, with harsher penalties for higher castes.
- Judges must be impartial and well-qualified, using human and divine evidence to decide cases.
- The caste system is based on qualities and deeds, not birth, although it became birth-based over time.
- Manu's Ashram system divides life into four stages: Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha, and Sannyasa.
- Manusmriti assigns high importance to moral conduct and has strict rules for each varna, particularly Brahmins.
- Women are given respect and rights, with emphasis on their happiness for the overall well-being of society.

NOTES

3.8 GLOSSARY

- **Smritis:** Texts in Hinduism that are considered to be remembered and are less authoritative than Shruti.
- **Manusmriti:** An ancient legal text among the many Dharmaśāstras of Hinduism.

Self-Instructional
Material

83



NOTES

- **Saptanga:** A theory describing the state as composed of seven essential parts.
- **Shruti:** Hindu scriptures that are considered to be heard or revealed.
- **Dharma:** A key concept in Hinduism, referring to duty, righteousness, and the moral law.
- **Varnas:** The four social classes in Hindu society (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra).
- **Gurukul:** Traditional school in ancient India where students lived and learned under a guru.
- **Ashram:** A system dividing human life into four stages (Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha, Sannyasa).
- **Upanayana:** A rite of passage marking the acceptance of a student by a guru in Hinduism.

3.9 ANSWERS TO IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

In-Text Questions-1

- A.**
1. English
 2. adaptable
 3. Saptanga
 4. gods
 5. higher
- B.**
1. False
 2. True
 3. False
 4. False
 5. True



In-Text Questions-2

- A.** 1. Laws
2. Strength
3. Qualities, deeds
4. Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha, Sannyasa
5. Human, divine
- B.** 1. False
2. False
3. False
4. True
5. True

NOTES

3.10 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. What are the major types of texts mentioned that regulate Indian society?
2. When is the Manusmriti believed to have been composed?
3. Describe the caste system propounded by Manu.
4. What are Manu's political and social views?
5. Explain the Saptanga principle of state given by Manu.
6. How has the status of women been considered in Manusmriti?
7. What has Manu said about the duties of a king?
8. Mention Manu's ideas regarding the origin of the kingdom.
9. How does Manusmriti define punishment in the context of justice?
10. What are the four stages of life according to Manu's Ashram system?
11. What is the significance of women's happiness in Manusmriti?



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3.11 REFERENCES/SUGGESTED READINGS

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3. मनुस्मृति में स्त्री-विमर्श – डॉ. विश्वेश्वामीगमी
4. मनु और भारत की राज्यव्यवस्था – राकेश कुमार आर्य
5. भारतीय राजनीतिक विचार – प्रो. ज्योति प्रसाद सूद
6. मनुस्मृति का समीक्षात्मक अध्ययन – डॉ. मंजु नारंग
7. मनुस्मृति – प्रो. सुरेन्द्र कुमार

ऑनलाइन स्रोत—

<https://www.gdcbhojpur.com/assets/uploads/file-43.pdf>

मनु के राजनीतिक विचार & Kailash education

<https://www.mmcmadinagar.ac.in/econtent/political-science/%E0%A4%85%E0%A4%A7%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%AF%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%AF-%E0%A4%A6%E0%A5%8B-%E0%A4%AE%E0%A4%A8%E0%A5%81.pdf>

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UNIT III: BRIHASPATI – STATECRAFT, JUSTICE, AND INTER-STATE RELATIONS

LESSON 4 BRIHASPATI – STATECRAFT, JUSTICE, AND INTER-STATE RELATIONS



LESSON 4

BRIHASPATI – STATECRAFT, JUSTICE, AND INTER-STATE RELATIONS

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Structure

- 4.1 Learning Objectives
- 4.2 Introduction
- 4.3 Statecraft
- 4.4 Inter-state Relations
- 4.5 Summary
- 4.6 Glossary
- 4.7 Answers to In-text Questions
- 4.8 Self-Assessment Questions
- 4.9 References/Suggested Readings

4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, students should be able to:

- Discuss the Vedic mythology inscribed by Brihaspati who was considered as Deva Guru, the Master of Sacred Knowledge, charms, hymns, and ceremonies; he was the advisor of Indra in his conflicts with the Asuras.
- Know about the statecraft given by Brihaspati and about the inter-state relations prescribed by him.
- Explain Brihaspati's special concern that the Raja should take every precaution to triumph over the populace.
- Describe the seven *Prakriti* which have been the cornerstone of the writings of Brihaspati.



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4.2 INTRODUCTION

In Vedic mythology, Brihaspati (Sanskrit: Lord of Sacred Speech) is the preceptor of the gods, as Deva Guru the Master of Sacred Knowledge, charms, hymns, and ceremonies, as well as the wise advisor of Indra in his conflict with the *asuras*. Brihaspati is also considered to be the celestial embodiment of the *purohita*, or family priest, the embodiment of religiosity and piety, and the foremost offeror of prayers and sacrifices to the gods, with whom he intercedes on behalf of humanity. He is the teacher of the *Devas* (gods), while Shukracharya, the teacher of the *Danavas* (demons), is his adversary. He is also referred to as the god of wisdom and eloquence, Guru. The Mahabharata claims that the sage Brihaspati was Angiras' son. He is described as the son of the fire god Agni in several Puranas. He was referred to as the gods' instructor.

According to tradition and Vedic literature, there are two books in the name of Brihaspati. The Brihaspati Sutra is one, and the Brihaspati Smriti is another. According to many scholars, the second is thought to have its origins in a considerably older period, likely the second century BC, while the first dates to the eleventh or twelfth century. Unfortunately, there are significant differences between the two volumes. Brihaspati was undoubtedly a renowned instructor of politics because nearly all ancient writers on Indian polity, including Vyasa and Kautilya, referred to him as a great expert on statecraft.

Additionally, it is probable that the Brihaspati Sutra in its current form dates from considerably later and was created by someone who wrote under the pen name Brihaspati, which was widespread during the medieval era. However, when we consider the text's whole context, it becomes clear that Brihaspati's words came from a time of unrest and often violent power grabs. For instance, the earlier fear of anarchy is repeatedly expressed in his writings with great worry. He agrees that there was a golden age centered on fairness right in the beginning. There was no Raja, and everyone did what was right. Undoubtedly, there was a social structure with masters and slaves. But the entire system operated on its own. In a society where harmony and cooperation prevailed, everything was good. However, two factors contributed to its degeneration: human ego and cupidity; the old lie and its inverse. Knowledge, a moral compass, and



social collaboration vanished. They were abandoned in favour of the laws of the jungle, which ensured that the strong outlived the weak. He also reiterates the traditional idea of *Matsya Nyaya* or the law of fishes, according to which the bigger fish eat the smaller ones. Agriculture, commerce, and trade were non-existent at the time. There were Rajas in some situations, but they were powerless to uphold the law. The need for kingship became apparent at this time.

4.3 STATECRAFT

According to Brihaspati, there can be no order without respect for authority; in its absence, people fight and obliterate one another. The powerful prey upon and profit from the helpless. People start claiming ownership of everything. The world vanishes. No longer functional are the family relationships. The idea of rights and obligations is also lost. Anarchy and natural disasters result from this.

The structure of the states, as illustrated by Brihaspati, must be thoroughly grasped in order to appreciate the current economic scenario. Brihaspati emphasises the scientific approach and materialistic viewpoint when establishing the structure of the states. The causes of state formation were both pragmatic and ideal, and they were intended to achieve a great objective. As a result, Brihaspati's ideas about the state might be characterised as a great living system rather than a state of mind. For the origin and functioning of this system, the collective efforts of seven separate limbs or *Prakriti* are required. A Saptang theory like that of Manu and Kautilya can be found in the writings of Brihaspati.

Few of these seven *Prakritis* have been fully evaluated by Brihaspati. Here are some of them:

The Raja (Raja)

According to Brihaspati, people gather and choose a person who is already gifted with heavenly traits to escape from such situations of tyranny. It is important to note that the focus now moves from contract to divine ordination, presumably because he believed that no government can be powerful enough to stand alone on contract.



NOTES

Brihaspati thus shares the traditional belief that human greed and cupidity are what lead to the state and that the solution to this problem is to check human selfishness and ensure that right prevails in society. This is the purpose for which the state was established. All of this is a reiteration of the Mahabharata's axiom that the state is unified by the objectives it serves, with the main goal being to ensure that people carry out the obligations of their station.

Like earlier theorists, Brihaspati views the 'Raja' as the supreme authority to govern society and the impetus of all economic activity. He has given the 'Raja' the highest and most significant position. Kingship has been referred to as one of the two wheels of the state, according to Kritya-kalpataru Shlokas. In one of the Shlokas, Brihaspati expresses emphatically that the Raja holds the primary responsibility for maintaining the socio-economic fabric of the state.

However, Brihaspati differs from Vyasa in that he did not have a philosophy of political obligation, fully disregarded the contract component of the origin of the state and relied on divine intervention. Brihaspati claimed that God made the Raja in his likeness in order to establish order in society. In his plan, the Raja is given the authority to punish people who endanger societal harmony. The valid basis of obedience that prevents people from disobeying their obligations can be provided by fear alone. Brihaspati places a larger emphasis on the Raja's divine birth, which gives him significantly more power than in the *Shanti Parva*. Brihaspati does not subscribe to Vyasa's doctrines of disobedience and revolt. Any act of disobedience against the Raja could be an act against God, aside from subjecting man to punishment in this world, because the Raja merges in himself all the powers of the intra-cosmic gods, which assures him superhuman character. He naturally distinguishes between excellent and evil Rajas, but he does not follow this to his logical conclusion. When Rajas stray from the path of dharma, it is unclear what the people's rights or obligations are. In fact, Brihaspati places such a heavy stress on the requirement for force aversion that it is reasonable to assume that any act of disobedience causes man to suffer both in this life and the next.

Another issue is that the Raja is required to follow the mean ideology. The responsibilities of the Raja are covered in-depth in a chapter. A good Raja is guaranteed to go to heaven and a bad Raja to hell, according to established doctrine. The Raja is



required to serve the people in exchange for their payment of revenue. The Raja only thrives when he is working for the people.

According to Brihaspati, any Raja who disregards their welfare is acting against God's will. In fact, he continues by asserting that the Raja's activities, rather than himself, are what give him divinity. Especially those deeds that result in the righteous being punished and the virtuous being protected. A virtuous Raja must perform charitable deeds, safeguard the people's wealth, aid in the growth of their wealth, and establish a reign of justice, love, and charity.

Selection of Raja: The selection process, according to Brihaspati is significant. The idea of a public election is present in older works, but Brihaspati downplays its significance. The election is brought up during the period of the first anarchy when people are against each other, but who could think that these people would be able to discuss one another and choose a common superior. They paradoxically forfeit this right once they have the ability. Nothing more is said about it after that. In fact, it looks like the authorities are winning the argument outright. The hereditary descent theory is fully upheld. Brihaspati supported the monarchy and, refrained from posing the logical question that would have followed from his theories regarding the origin of the state, namely, whether it matters who governs if they can uphold law and order and whether they are democratic or radical if they are popular with the populace. Although the citizens are respected, they are not given a chance to voice their opinions.

The Raja is expected to have good officials, riches, and knowledge within this constrained framework. There are in-depth references to the prince's upbringing, his coronation, and the Raja's obligations. The Raja is supposed to be made the people's leader so that everyone performs the tasks associated with their status. Brihaspati also believed that the role of the Raja should be to serve the needs of the populace rather than to rule just using force. He argued that the Raja had three responsibilities: defense against external threats, defense against thieves and dacoits, and defense against the more powerful. The varna system must be maintained for everyone to perform the obligations of their position. The Raja is entitled to one-sixth of the crop for every reason. A good rule has support from Brihaspati as well. The Raja must promote increased trade, commerce, and agriculture. He ought to take part in neighborhood social activities and safeguard the educated.



NOTES

Mantriparishad

Since the Raja cannot handle everything himself, he needs capable *mantriparishad* and aides who will regard him as their mother and father and do everything in their power to carry out his directives. Brihaspati presents the concept of administering tests to choose the best *mantriparishad* and officials based on merit while considering their excellence and virtue. Because of how prominent their position is, along with that of the Raja himself, *mantriparishad* is seen as one of the key components of the state. Formally speaking, the *mantriparishad* carries out the Raja's duties. Since the state cannot be properly organised without them, this *mantriparishad* is supposed to take on a significant role with the Raja. It must be emphasised that, despite references to merit, the emphasis on merit does not imply equality of opportunity. The Sukraniti does not follow the traditional pattern of hereditary office-holding, neither in terms of employing the sons of the officials nor, most definitely, in terms of distributing the offices based on *varna*. In fact, in contrast to the Sukraniti, the political structure of the Brihaspati Sutra is one in which the *varna* is dominant, with Brahmaas holding the highest and most eminent standing. Most officers would be chosen based on their *varna*, and Brihaspati makes it very clear that people from the lowest *varnas* will not be appointed in the *mantriparishad*. The Raja is commanded to pay attention to the indications of status distinctions. There are undoubtedly references to merit, but only the highest *varnas*—not all *varnas*—are covered by the notion. However, in the upper *varnas*, talent is chosen based on the application of logical principles, and selection is based on merit. Politics that solely favour family members and close companions is something Brihaspati would detest. However, *varna* distinctions are significant and cannot be disregarded.

Rastra

Brihaspati considers *Rastra* to be the third constituent part of the state, with the Raja and *Mantriparishad* being the first and second. Kautilya adopted the term *Janapada* to describe this concept of *Rastra*, which explains Brihaspati's broad economic ideas. Brihaspati's thinking and perception of *Rastra* give a disguised vision of the economic system. *Rastra* is nothing more than an integrated economic system, since *Rastra* cannot be realised in the absence of a solid economic policy. Brihaspati believes in the



perfection of the state, and he emphasises the integrity of the land that makes up *Rashtra*. This is recognised as a key component by contemporary states with state power and sovereignty.

The welfare state ideology advocated by Brihaspati and Vyasa is identical. However, in the *Shanti Parva* there is a clear relationship between the causes of the state's creation and the notion of rebellion if the state deviates from its main objective; in Brihaspati's works the two stages run in opposition to one another. If the need for protection, which was previously lacking, is what led to the foundation of the state, then it seems too reasonable that the state should be constrained by the circumstances that gave rise to it. On the other hand, whether there is anarchy is unimportant if only the divine hand was involved in the establishment of the state. Brihaspati is unable to determine which is more crucial. He wants a good leader, but he does not want to support any dissension or uprising if that leader turns out to be bad. At this moment, there is yet another significant deviation. In the Mahabharata, the weak serve as the state's pivot, but in Brihaspati, they are conspicuously absent. This fact suggests that Indian society may have undergone modifications throughout that time.

Kosha or Treasury

The kosha or treasury is yet another crucial component of the statecraft. Nothing can exist as a kingdom without wealth. It aids in the kingdom's stabilisation, the construction of dams, the promotion of trade, and the formation of state loyalty. One of the principles of kingship, as in the Mahabharata, is to safeguard riches, increase them, and use them for proper purposes. Of course, a lot would depend on the personalities of those in charge of the treasury. The kingdom is overrun by foes if the money is not secured. Brihaspati provided thorough explanations of how the finance department is set up. To prevent income streams from drying up and to boost the state's wealth, he also proposed a system of graduated taxes.

Given that it oversees the entire economic system, Brihaspati placed the treasury at the top of the state's economic hierarchy. Therefore, it becomes sense to assume that Brihaspati's economic model merged the agricultural and financial divisions of the contemporary administrative structures. To keep track of the treasury and maintain the statement of accounts of income and expenditure, a representative named



NOTES

Dhanadhyaksha was hired. Like other thinkers, Brihaspati acknowledges that wealth is the origin of all activities. He asserts that it governs all practical acts; thus, he advises the people to put in a lot of effort and amass ever-increasing wealth. To strengthen the public treasury, Brihaspati underlines the importance of a proper framework for tax collection and wealth accumulation. A person's profits should be divided among his or her family and close friends, according to Brihaspati. It shows that he was in favour of distributing wealth more fairly within society so that each person could afford to buy the things they needed to survive.

Brihaspati asserts that the three elements—*Mantra-Guna*, *Artha-Guna*, and *Sahaya-Guna*—when taken together, are essential for the effective operation of the entire *Rastra* system. If a Raja exhibits these three characteristics, he should be regarded as complete and meritorious. Brihaspati is categorical in his assertion that the best leaders are those who have the respect of their people. Nobody should underestimate a Raja who is regarded as a man of character by his subjects. Brihaspati's ideas make it plainly clear that "*Artha-Guna*" had a big say in how the *Rastra* ran its finances. The state's budgetary policy's worthlessness cannot be addressed until a plan is made to carry it out. To enhance the financial status and welfare of the public, Brihaspati advocates for an administration that must function in accordance with state norms and rituals.

Varta

Anvikshiki, *Vedatrayee*, *Varta*, and *Danda-Niti* are the four unique schools of thought that Brihaspati supports. The Brihaspati Smriti has underlined the significance of researching a subject considering the right time and completing a critical analysis of the *Nakshatra*, day, and date. *Jyotisha*, *Ganita*, *Samudrika*, and *Nakshatra Vidya* have received much prominence in comparison to other forms of education. It is interesting to note that religious and economic sources both express clear disagreements on these concerns. However, economists only recognised the economic components of these subjects, which is why *Varta*, the theoretical aspect of economic activity, was given a position. Ancient religious academics appreciated the worth of all four subject matters.

The moral precepts strongly affected Brihaspati's economic decisions. He asserts that the Raja obstructed growth operations due to the imposition of severe taxes



to accumulate growing sums of riches, which finally culminated in his nation's demise. Brihaspati chooses to increase the riches of the empire even though dealing with crises like war and natural calamities, etc., requires additional resources. He learns that a Raja runs the risk of being humiliated by his enemies if he does not raise the state treasury. The importance of a fair tax system has increased. Brihaspati's views on the taxation system are successfully communicated through the budgetary strategy. Brihaspati opposes high taxes on the one hand, but he also seems to be in favour of the state's general economic growth, which can only be achieved by fair taxes that fill state coffers. Brihaspati took issue with the Raja's heirs participating in economic management and tax collection.

Justice and Judicial System

What makes Brihaspati's political beliefs noteworthy is how he articulates a complex judicial system. He claims that justice is so crucial that the Raja's future determines how it should be administered. He contends that justice must be carried out in accordance with the laws and scriptures, and no one who disobeys the law—even a brother or sister of the Raja himself—should not escape punishment. Justice seeks to foster an environment where the Raja can appease everyone. The rules for crime detection, evidence gathering, witness examination, etc. are all covered in great depth. Decisions should be made after carefully examining the arguments put out by each side and supporting them with facts. He offers a complex judicial system with a hierarchy, and he says decisions should be based on consensus-derived equity. The judges must be moral people. They must always belong to respectable families, but they can never be from lower varna. Additionally, they must get adequate emoluments. The administration of justice is decentralised, and the local and district legislatures are treated with sufficient deference.

The Raja's court serves as the system's pinnacle. Lower courts have the authority to hear fresh cases and revisit previous ones. The district and subordinate courts' rulings may be subject to review by the top court. Brihaspati considers the following aspects of the judicial system: the review of the evidence, the opportunity for questioning, the production of new evidence, the cross-examination of witnesses, and oaths. Additionally, it is mandated that the courts take regional traditions and customs into



NOTES

account. Justice seeks to find the truth, punish those who break the law, and remove factors that contribute to the suffering of those who stand up for the truth. Right (dharma), behavior, character, and kingly orders are the four main sources of law. Conventions, as well as social and familial practices, form the basis of character.

The Raja's order is the final source. Again, the shift is apparent here. While in the time of Vyasa, the Raja was only a recipient of laws made outside of the political sphere, in the time of Brihaspati, he became a significant source. This was indeed of utmost significance because once the Raja's authority to make laws was acknowledged, there was no turning back. The Raja could meddle in all facets of society, including how the Brahmins should read the scriptures, simply because he had a monopoly on coercive power.

Additionally, Brihaspati suggests a method of proportionate punishment. The concept is that people should not stray from the obligations set out by their varna status. The fact that no one is above the law, regardless of how strong they may be, is significant. But varna and rank determine how punishment is administered. Brahmins fare better than those from any other varna in this arrangement (he did say Sudras could not be penalised, but this could be because they did not possess any property). For instance, the death penalty cannot be imposed on a Brahmin. Cutting off one's hands and exile from the realm would be the worst punishment for him.

Brihaspati considers four different forms of retribution: warning, dishonor to remind individuals of their obligations, penalties, and the death penalty. The Raja's court had authority over the last two, while the other courts had jurisdiction over the first two. Remember that the fourth category included physical suffering and torture in addition to the death punishment. The lowest varnas would be especially affected by this. However, it must be noted that Brihaspati places equal emphasis on crime prevention and criminal reform, and he offers methods to that end. It was a step backward to suggest that the Brahmin shares the authority to punish the Raja. It amounted to blending the worlds of the Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Furthermore, it is unclear if Brahmins have the authority to influence temporal affairs. Although the Brahmin's authority theoretically included that of the Kshatriya, it is unlikely that the former could impose punishment on its own without the assistance of the state.



Hierarchy of courts

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Brihaspati Smriti maintains that there existed a hierarchy of courts in ancient India, with the family courts at the bottom and the Raja at the top. The family arbitrator was the least effective. The court of the judge was the next higher court, followed by the Chief Justice, also known as *Pradivivaka* or *adhyaksha*, and finally Raja's court. The severity of the problem determined which court had jurisdiction over it; the Raja had authority over the most significant conflicts, while the lowest court had control over minor ones.

Each higher court's judgement superseded that of the lower court. Each subsequent decision shall take precedence over the preceding one due to the higher level of study and expertise, and the binding force of the decisions of these tribunals, ending with that of the Raja, is in ascending order. It is interesting to note that the Indian judicial system currently consists of a hierarchy of courts arranged on a similar principle: the village court, the Munsif, the Civil Judge, the District Judge, the High Court, and lastly the Supreme Court, which replaces the Raja's Court. Without realising it, we are continuing a long-standing custom.

It is important to emphasise the institution of family judges. The joint family, which might include four generations, served as the basic social lesson. As a result, a joint family may have several members at any given moment, making it important to resolve their conflicts with tact, sympathy, and firmness. It was also ideal for a family member to serve as the initial arbiter in cases of conflict. The importance of the family courts lies in the fact that the judicial system's foundations are in the social system, which accounts for its success.

The sovereign served as the source of all justice. One of the main characteristics of sovereignty in Indian legal theory was the ability to administer justice and impose punishment. Being the source of justice, the Raja was initially expected to deliver justice in person while carefully adhering to the law and with the assistance of judges who were well-versed in the law. For the Raja, a highly rigorous code of judicial conduct was established. He had to make decisions during open hearings and in the courtroom, and he had to conduct himself in a way that did not intimidate the parties. He was required to take an impartial oath and rule on matters without prejudice or allegiance.



NOTES

The Raja should approach the courtroom modestly attired, take a seat facing east, and listen intently to his people's cases. He shall follow the advice of his Chief Justice (*Pradvivaka*), judges, the *mantriparishad*, and the Brahmin members of his council before taking any action. In accordance with the law, a Raja who administers justice in this way occupies heaven. These boundaries are important. In order to prevent the complainants from feeling frightened, the Raja was supposed to dress modestly (*vineeta-vesha*). The Raja was subject to an extremely severe code of behavior when serving as a judge, and he was expected to be devoid of any "attachment or prejudice. The seven virtues of a Raja come together in him like seven flames in a fire if he resolves legal disputes (*vyavaharan*) in line with the law and exhibits self-control (in court). Having taken the oath, the Raja performs the duty of dispensing justice and is therefore regarded as the son of Vivasvan when he remains in the judgement seat (*dharmasanam*), where he is required to be impartial towards every being. The *Vivasvan* oath is an oath of impartiality because *Yama*, the deity of death and son of *Vivasvan*, is unbiased towards all living things.

Integrity is a virtue of the judiciary

Integrity, which includes impartiality and a complete lack of bias or connection, is a judge's top responsibility. A very broad definition of integrity was given, and the judicial code of integrity was exceedingly stringent. According to Brihaspati, judges should make decisions without considering personal gain or any other form of bias, and they should follow the steps outlined in the texts. By carrying out his judicial duties in this way, a judge gains the same spiritual merit as someone who conducts a Yagya.

Retribution for corruption

Corruption was viewed as a serious crime, and all authorities agreed that a dishonest judge should receive the harshest punishment possible. According to Brihaspati, a judge who accepts bribes, commits injustice, and undermines the public's faith in him shall be exiled from the kingdom. Criminals of the same calibre include a dishonest judge, a fabrication of a witness, and a Brahmin killer. The entire estate of a dishonest judge should be seized by the government. Having confidential conversations with the



complainants while a trial was ongoing was judicial misconduct. A judge or chief justice (*Pradvivaka*) who privately speaks with a party before the matter has been determined should be penalised similarly to a corrupt judge, according to Brihaspati.

Brihaspati urged the court to refrain from simply enforcing the language of the law since doing so would lead to injustice (*dharmahani*) if the judgement was made without any consideration of any relevant factors. Brihaspati goes on to add that the court should rule in accordance with local conventions and usages even if they disagree with the wording of the law, and he provides several impressive examples that, incidentally, shed a great deal of light on current societal realities. These communities in their respective nations should not be subject to penance or legal punishment.

The deception was discouraged by the Courts' procedures and culture. Instead of a peon as is done today, the judge himself administered the oath. The judges were compelled to address the witness while administering the oath, praising truthfulness as a virtue and denouncing perjury as a terrible evil. According to Brihaspati, judges who are knowledgeable about the Dharmashastra should speak to the witness in a way that promotes the truth and drives deception (from his mind). Instead of using predetermined phrases, the judge's address to the witness was more of a moral admonition meant to instil a sense of dread in him.

4.4 INTER-STATE RELATIONS

Brihaspati made remarks about inter-state relations as a crucial aspect of politics. The king should employ direct, talented and diplomatic methods to divide the enemy's forces. The realm of even a mighty king can be troubled by an adversary who takes refuge in a fort, even if he is only armed with a single horse. This is because even a tiny spark can start a fire, and even a tiny poison can kill. He should not trust the enemy even after signing a treaty with him. The Dharma-Vijaya method ought to be used. A ruler only sets the stage for his own ultimate demise if he wins a battle by turning to Adharma. By making a commitment to the Dharma, noble individuals may assuredly defeat tyrants. Spies and diplomats are essential in international relations.



NOTES

Conclusion

One of the most significant thinkers, Brihaspati represented the latter stages of the growth of the Smriti literature. Instead of viewing the monarch as an autocrat, he perceived him as a Raja, or one who pleases. The thinker kept the priest and Raja apart, yet they were both supposed to confer with one another, with a slight difference in emphasis. He applauded those who criticised autocrats or anyone who exploited their position of authority. It is notable in this context that all their admiration for the Raja was not directed at the state's control of religion or education. The Raja was also warned not to meddle in the family's affairs. He was instructed to take extra care to prevent the exploitation of disputes between brothers, fathers, and sons, or husbands and wives. In fact, no Indian philosopher could have claimed that only the state is a whole and the family is simply a component, as Aristotle did, or that a good state relied on the destruction of the family, as Plato did. Both were regarded as wholes within the wholes. In contrast to early Western philosophy, family life, and varna duties still have a much higher value in Indian society. The two institutions of the family and the varna served as the foundation for the moral and legal systems.

The professionalisation of state agencies is another goal of Brihaspati's, along with the advancement of judicial processes. The formation of a mixed type of government in ancient India, where the principle of kingship was made dependent on the priest and the Brahmas on the one hand and the councillors and *mantriparishad* on the other, may be attributed to all of this. According to ancient customs, the weak and impoverished were regarded as crucial components of the polity that required the ruler's attention and never ascended to absolute authority.

It is obvious how they should be heard, but through spies, the *Mantriparishad* Council, and occasional uprisings, people appeared to have expressed their resentment against the tyranny. This partially explains Brihaspati's special concern that the Raja should take every precaution to triumph over the populace. A criticism that might be levelled at all ancient philosophers is that distinctions of this kind do not include any discussion of institutional restraints on the Raja's exercise of power. In the absence of such institutional safeguards, it was almost assumed that laws would be based on the standards of truth and popular will, but this was rarely the case.

Self-Instructional



In-Text Questions

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. According to Brihaspati, no order exists without respect for _____.
2. The state is considered a complex system requiring _____ efforts.
3. The Raja is selected based on _____ ordination.
4. The Mantriparishad is selected based on _____ and virtue.
5. The _____ represents the economic system of the state.
6. The treasury is crucial for the _____ of the state.
7. The judicial system is _____, with decisions from higher courts overriding those of lower ones.
8. Brihaspati emphasizes a _____ tax system.
9. The _____ should maintain integrity and avoid bias.
10. Treaties with enemies should be approached with _____.

B. State True or False:

1. Brihaspati believes anarchy results from a lack of respect for authority.
2. The Raja is chosen by a democratic process in Brihaspati's theory.
3. Mantriparishad are ministers chosen from all varnas without any consideration of status.
4. Rastra in Brihaspati's theory is unrelated to the economic system.
5. The treasury is considered secondary in the stability of the state.
6. Brihaspati supports high taxes as a means of economic growth.
7. The judicial system includes a hierarchy of courts.
8. Integrity is a key virtue for judges in Brihaspati's judicial system.
9. The Raja should always trust treaties signed with enemies.
10. Brihaspati believes in using Adharma for victory in battles.



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4.5 SUMMARY

- Brihaspati emphasizes that without respect for authority, chaos and anarchy ensue, resulting in natural disasters and the breakdown of societal order.
- The state is a complex system requiring the collective efforts of seven components or Prakritis, including the Raja, Mantriparishad, and others.
- The Raja is considered divinely ordained, with supreme authority to maintain order and socio-economic stability. Selection is often hereditary, and the Raja must serve the people's welfare.
- A council of ministers, selected based on merit and virtue, assists the Raja in governance. The council is integral to the administration but is influenced by varna distinctions.
- The treasury is vital for the state's stability and economic activities. It requires efficient tax collection and wealth management.
- Emphasizes economic activities and the theoretical aspects of the economy. Brihaspati supports a fair taxation system for the state's economic growth.
- Brihaspati proposes a detailed judicial system with a hierarchy of courts and stresses impartiality and integrity. Judges must be from higher varnas and ensure justice aligns with dharma and law.
- From family courts to the Raja's court, each higher court's decision supersedes the lower ones. The judicial system mirrors the current Indian judicial structure.
- Judges must avoid corruption and bias. A strict code of conduct and severe penalties for corruption are emphasized.

4.6 GLOSSARY

- **Statecraft:** The art and skill of governing a state effectively, encompassing political, economic, and judicial strategies.



- **Authority:** The legitimate power to make decisions and enforce obedience.
- **Prakriti:** In Brihaspati's context, refers to the essential components or limbs of the state necessary for its proper functioning.
- **Varna system:** A hierarchical social order based on occupation and birth, prevalent in ancient Indian society.
- **Mantriparishad:** Council of ministers or advisors who assist the king in governance.
- **Rastra:** Economic system or realm; the integrated economic structure of the state.
- **Kosha (Treasury):** Financial department responsible for managing state finances and wealth.
- **Brahmin:** The highest varna in the Hindu caste system, traditionally priests and scholars.
- **Judicial misconduct:** Improper behavior or actions by judges that undermine the integrity of the judicial process.

4.7 ANSWERS TO IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

- A. 1. authority
2. collective
3. divine
4. merit
5. Rastra
6. stability
7. hierarchical
8. fair
9. judiciary
10. caution



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- B.** 1. True
2. False
3. False
4. False
5. False
6. False
7. True
8. True
9. False
10. False

4.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Examine various dimensions of statecraft prescribed by Brihaspati.
2. Critically analyse the concept of kingship and statecraft given by Brihaspati.
3. According to Brihaspati, what happens in the absence of respect for authority?
4. How is the Raja selected in Brihaspati's theory?
5. What is the role of the Mantriparishad?
6. What does Rastra represent in Brihaspati's theory?
7. Why is the Kosha important in statecraft?
8. How does Brihaspati view the relationship between taxation and economic growth?
9. What is the structure of the judicial system as per Brihaspati?
10. How should a king approach treaties with enemies?



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UNIT IV: SHUKRA/USANA

LESSON 5 TALKING POINT: DEBATE ON THE AUTHENTICITY OF SHUKRA-NITI AND THE CONCEPT OF KINGSHIP AND STATECRAFT IN SHUKRA-NITI



LESSON 5

TALKING POINT: DEBATE ON THE AUTHENTICITY OF SHUKRA-NITI AND THE CONCEPT OF KINGSHIP AND STATECRAFT IN SHUKRA-NITI

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Structure

- 5.1 Learning Objectives
- 5.2 Introduction
- 5.3 Shukracharya: Life Sketch
- 5.4 Debate on the Authenticity of Shukra-niti
- 5.5 The Concept of Kingship and Statecraft in Shukra-niti
- 5.6 Critical Evaluation
- 5.7 Summary
- 5.8 Glossary
- 5.9 Answers to In-text Questions
- 5.10 Self-Assessment Questions
- 5.11 References/Suggested Readings

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, students should be able to:

- Know about Shukra the Acharya, who wrote the Shukra-Niti that provides in-depth explanations of several of the political, governmental, and social institutions; and practices that were common in ancient India.
- Learn about the conception of Kingship and statecraft in his treatise.
- Give an idea of the King's primary responsibility to protect his subjects and punish evil doers.



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5.2 INTRODUCTION

Sages have written works about their core principles of ethics and beliefs at various points in time. They are known as Niti. There are Niti, among which Vidur Niti, Chanakya Niti, and Shukra-Niti are the most well-known. Shukra's claim that one can do with grammar, logic and Vedanta but not without Niti demonstrates the pragmatic nature of the work. According to Shukra, the king's primary responsibility is to protect his subjects and punish evil, and this duty cannot be carried out without Niti's guidance. The King is respected if he upholds the Niti code, however, if he breaks it, his reputation suffers. Therefore, in this lesson, we will focus on the arguments revolving around the Shukra-Niti's authenticity and the Shukra-Niti concept of kingship and statecraft.

Like many historical writers in India, Shukracharya also regarded politics as a part of ethics. He termed it moral science or Niti Shastra, which he saw as the source of virtue, wealth, enjoyment and salvation. He believed that a ruler could only subdue an enemy and win a friend with the aid of this science. He continued by stating that Niti Shastra is incomparable to other sciences since it attempts to satisfy and realise every human want and interest, as well as happiness, which is their primary goal.

5.3 SHUKRACHARYA: LIFE SKETCH

He was the son of Rishi Brighu and Ushana. Shukra, a planet with a feminic nature, belongs to the Brahmins. He was born on Friday, *Sravana Shuddha Ashtami* in the year *Parthiva*, when *Swati Nakshatra* was rising. So, in Indian languages, particularly Sanskrit, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, and Kannada, Friday is known as *Shukravaar*. He continued to study the Vedas with the rishi Angiras, but he was perturbed by Angiras's preference for his son Brihaspati. Then he went to learn under the guidance of Gautama. He later got the Sanjeevani mantra (a song that can bring the dead back to life) after offering penance to Lord Shiva. Brihaspati took on the role of Guru (Preceptor) over the holy *Deva* people during this time. Shukracharya decides to take



on the role of the Asuras' Guru out of jealousy. He aids in their triumph over the *Devas* and employs magic to bring back the *Asuras* who have died or been injured.

An ancient Indian sage and philosopher, he is best known for the contributions he made to the study of astrology and his connections to the *Asuras* (demons) in Indian mythology. He is credited with being a master of many academic disciplines, including politics, astrology, medicine, and philosophy. Although many of these have been lost to time over the years, he is also thought to have produced a few texts on these topics.

The concept of "Shukra-Niti," which stands for the art of diplomacy and the science of moral conduct, was developed by Shukracharya and is considered one of his most significant contributions to Indian philosophy and astrology. He created a system of moral standards and regulations for individuals in positions of authority and power, such as monarchs and rulers, in his book on Shukra-Niti. These principles provide helpful guidance on issues like taxation, diplomacy, and war while emphasising the value of justice, fairness, and honesty in governance.

Thus, Shukracharya was a key figure in ancient Indian astrology and philosophy, and students are still learning from and valuing his contribution to these subjects today. His ethical guidance and good governance principles are still applicable today, and his connection to the *Asuras* has made him a fascinating subject in Hindu mythology.

5.4 DEBATE ON THE AUTHENTICITY OF SHUKRA-NITI

The ancient Indian scholar Shukracharya is the author of the treatise known as Shukra-Niti. The book, which is a treatise on the study of politics, government, and ethics, is sometimes contrasted with Kautilya's more well-known Arthashastra. The authenticity of the Shukra-Niti has been fiercely debated. While some academics contend that the manuscript was later fabricated, others assert that it is a genuine work by Shukracharya. The following are the justifications for this debate:



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First, except from the Matsya Purana, which is a somewhat modern source, the Shukra-Niti appears nowhere in any of the ancient Indian writings. This has prompted some academics to contend that the work was unknown in ancient India and may have been written later.

Second, the Shukra-Niti's language and writing style differ from those of other ancient Indian manuscripts, which raises the possibility that it was written later.

Third, some academics contend that the Shukra-Niti is a replica of the Arthashastra due to similarities in the content between the two texts.

There are, nevertheless, certain arguments in favour of the Shukra-Niti's veracity. For instance, some academics have noted that the writing bears references to historical persons and events from ancient India, indicating that it was written there. The text also contains concepts that are exclusive to the Shukra-Niti and do not appear in other classical Indian writings.

Arguments in favour of authenticity

- The Shukra-Niti provides in-depth explanations of a few of the political, governmental, and social institutions and practices that were common in ancient India. Since several of these descriptions are exclusive to the Shukra-Niti and are absent from other writings, it is possible that this work was created independently.
- The Upanishads, the Vedas and other ancient Indian writers are all mentioned in the text, along with other literary and philosophical works. These citations imply that the Shukra-Niti's author was knowledgeable about traditional Indian knowledge systems.
- The Shukra-Niti elaborates on subjects like taxation, diplomacy, war and ethics and offers a sophisticated and multifaceted picture of political and social issues. This shows that a competent and skilled author was behind its creation.

Arguments against authenticity

- The text makes references to some historical figures and events that are either out of date or challenging to contextualise. For instance, the Kuru dynasty is



mentioned as if it were still in power during the author's lifetime, which is historically improbable.

- The Shukra-Niti's language and writing style are different from those of other classical Indian works, such as the Arthashastra, which raises the possibility that it was written later.

It is crucial to note, though, that there are probably many levels of authenticity that the book could have and that the issue of the Shukra-Niti's veracity is not a straightforward binary one. For instance, it is likely that a scholar who lived in ancient India but was less well-known than other Indian scholars penned the Shukra-Niti. Alternatively, it is likely that a later author who was influenced by the concepts and knowledge structures of ancient India wrote the text.

Altogether, the validity of the Shukra-Niti is a complex and contentious issue. Even though both sides have their arguments, it is crucial to read the book critically, have an open mind, and concentrate more on the knowledge and insights it provides than on who wrote it.

In-Text Questions - 1

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. Shukracharya is the author of the treatise known as _____.
2. Shukracharya is often associated with the _____ in Indian mythology.
3. The _____ is the only ancient text that references Shukra-Niti.
4. Shukracharya gained the Sanjeevani mantra after offering penance to _____.
5. Shukra-Niti emphasizes the importance of _____, diplomacy, and statecraft.

B. State True or False:

1. Shukracharya was a disciple of rishi Angiras and later learned under Gautama.
2. Shukra-Niti is widely accepted without any debate regarding its authenticity.
3. Shukracharya's teachings suggest that a king's primary responsibility is to amass wealth.



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4. The Shukra-Niti contains references to historical figures and events that are well contextualized and accurate.
5. The principles of Shukra-Niti focus on justice, fairness, and honesty in governance.

5.5 THE CONCEPT OF KINGSHIP AND STATECRAFT IN SHUKRA-NITI

The Niti Shastra explains how to go about achieving the ultimate goal of happiness. In a phrase evocative of Plato, he said, “Great misery comes from dependence on others.” There is no satisfaction greater than that of self-rule. According to him, a king’s two main duties are to protect his subjects and punish the guilty, and neither of these duties can be properly carried out without the aid of Niti Shastra. When a monarch disobeys niti, according to Shukra, “evils prevail everywhere, the kingdom is weakened, the army is ineffective, the civil service is disorganised, and other elements of the state get topsy-turvy.”

Shukracharya embraced the idea of the kingdom as a traditional body with seven limbs, namely “the sovereign, the minister, the friend, the treasury, the state, the fort, and the army.” The treasury serves as the mouth, the army as the mid-region, the fort as the arm, and the state as the legs. The sovereign serves as the head. The connection between a ruler and his subjects cannot be broken. He considers the state to be a living thing. Without the right balance of interests among all the state’s organs, the state cannot operate effectively.

He said that “the prince who is virtuous is a part of God”, and that “every king is endowed with the power of God.” Anyone who is different is a member of the demons, an adversary of religion, and a subject oppressor. He asserted that there are three different categories of kings: *Satvika*, *Rajsika*, and *Tamsika*. The definition of a *satvika* monarch is “a king who is consistent in his duties, defends his subjects, makes all necessary sacrifices, vanquishes the enemy, and who is kind, patient, and brave,



and who has no attachments to things of pleasure and is dispassionate.” The king of *Tamsika* possesses the exact opposite traits, and according to Shukra, such a ruler will perish in hell. Shukra even claims that the blessings of God are bestowed upon the *Satvika* king, those of men are bestowed upon the *Rajsika*, and those of ordinary devils are bestowed upon the *Tamsika*.

Public opinion, the key component of contemporary democracy, is given significant weight for the first time in the annals of ancient literature. Shukracharya gives a lot of weight to the views of the subjects of the state. During that time, participatory government began to emerge. Through a network of spies, the king is mandated to learn about the needs of the populace. Shukra counsels the rulers to exercise patience and kindness. He said, “The king should rectify his own faults and should never punish the people for holding opinions supposed to his.”

The Shukra-Niti examines a few facets of ‘kingship and statecraft’ and offers advice and guidelines for monarchs to successfully run their kingdoms. In Shukra-Niti, the idea of monarchy and statecraft is centred on the following major concepts:

Qualities of a King

As stipulated by Shukra-Niti, a monarch must have certain traits in order to reign well. Wisdom, righteousness, bravery, knowledge, and a sense of righteousness are some examples of these traits. A king ought to be informed about a wide range of issues, including politics, military strategy, diplomacy, and economics. These characteristics are seen to be necessary to uphold the kingdom’s wealth and stability. Shukra-Niti emphasises the value of moral principles and ethical behaviour for a king. It urges leaders to set a good example by acting with integrity, honesty, and fairness. The scripture exhorts kings to put the wellbeing of the kingdom and their subjects ahead of their own selfish wants and avarice.

For a ruler, Shukra-Niti emphasises the value of adaptability and continuing education. It implies that a king needs to be open to fresh perspectives, eager to learn from past errors, and flexible in their approach. Literature advises kings to consult with knowledgeable advisers, academics, and specialists in various subjects to enlarge their knowledge and viewpoints.



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Responsibilities and Duties of a King

The text makes clear that a king has a responsibility to look after and protect his subjects. The well-being of the populace should be given top priority, and their security, happiness and safety should all be guaranteed. The king ought to be approachable to his people, attentive to their complaints, and fair in how he settles conflicts. The king's duties include upholding the law, carrying out justice and advancing the kingdom's general prosperity.

Diplomacy

The text acknowledges the value of diplomacy in keeping cordial ties with nearby kingdoms. It indicates that in order to advance peace and avert pointless conflicts, a king ought to participate in strategic alliances, accords, and talks. When engaging in diplomatic relations, Shukra-Niti advises leaders to exercise caution and discernment while being cognizant of possible risks and the goals of other leaders.

The following can be listed as an example among Shukra's suggestions for subduing the opponent by guile and diplomacy:

1. **Bhedaniti:** The practise of using bribery and other unethical tactics to promote discord among the rival's commanders, council members, allies, troops, and civilian population.
2. **Guerilla Strategy:** The skill of starting military operations suddenly, approaching the adversary like perpetrators from a distance, and then retreating as quickly as possible.
3. **Kutayuddha:** The immoral practice of conducting war by lies and deception. According to such a policy, "one should inspire confidence in the enemy by a sweet, smiling face, soft words, confession of guilt, service, gifts, humiliation, praise, good offices as well as oaths." His maxims in the Niti shastra are undoubtedly intended to serve as a guide for monarchs and statesmen, whose unique responsibilities to society put them beyond the rest. Like Machiavalli, Shukra "offers an extreme example of a double standard of morals, one for the ruler and another for private citizens. Since ruler is outside the group, or



at least in a very special relation to it, he is above morality to be enforced within a group.”

4. Cut down on supplies and commodities. Military and Warfare

Defence and military readiness are important, as acknowledged by Shukra-Niti. It implies that a king should keep a well-trained and powerful army to defend the realm from outside dangers. The book instructs kings to take strategic actions to protect the kingdom’s safety and security as well as to be wary of prospective enemies. It also emphasises how diplomatic channels must be exhausted before turning to violence because war should only be used as the last option. The king has been instructed to keep a strong army since, without it, “neither a kingdom, nor wealth, nor prowess” is possible. It is noteworthy to observe that Shukra encourages the use of weapons and the manipulation of battle arrays and encourages the recruitment of individuals of any caste as soldiers and commanders if they are young, committed to their duties, disciplined, and well versed in Niti Shastra. Three different methods—good pay, consistent exercise and penance and interaction with Shastra-educated individuals, must be used to preserve and improve the army’s strength and effectiveness.

As stated by Shukracharya, “two parties, who have inimical relations with each other, undertake by means of arms to satisfy their rival interests,” is what is meant by warfare. Before beginning the real operation, the king is required to study the art of war in conjunction with his counsellors and consider the time of year, the area, and the relative strengths of his and the enemy’s armies. According to the weaponry employed, wars have been categorised into three categories: *Daivika Yuddha*, which uses charms; *Asura Yuddha*, which uses mechanical devices; and human warfare, which uses shastras and hands.

Governance

Shukra-Niti provides advice on efficient leadership and management. It emphasises the value of selecting capable ministers and counsellors who are loyal, intelligent and honest. The text also emphasises the importance of having an effective administrative



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system that deals with issues pertaining to infrastructure, trade, defence, taxation, and social welfare. Shukra-Niti urges kings to have a balanced approach and advises them to confer with their ministers before making decisions. Shukra-Niti believed in governance through strategic planning. It implies that the king ought to have a long-term goal in mind for the realm and make strategies and programmes to get there. This includes establishing objectives for advancing the economy, society, and the military. The text exhorts rulers to foresee difficulties and modify their plans considering emerging situations.

The well-being of the populace is emphasised by Shukra-Niti as a key objective of governance. Its counsels' leaders should put the requirements of the common people first and endeavour to improve their lot. This includes offering fundamental services like infrastructure, healthcare, and education. According to the Quran, a king ought to have empathy for the plight and necessities of the less fortunate people in society.

Economic Management

The importance of effective economic management for a thriving kingdom is emphasised by Shukra-Niti. It urges leaders to support commerce, industry, and agriculture while ensuring fair taxation. According to the text, a king should support economic initiatives that benefit the entire kingdom and raise people's standards of living. Additionally, it cautions against overtaxing or overusing resources because these actions may cause unrest among the subjects.

Shukracharya asserts that the king has a duty to take care of the vulnerable and poor. He needs to show kindness to the underprivileged and refrain from oppressing them. In addition to taking actions to protect his wealth, the king should also do so by raising it. "Happiness of the subject is happiness of the ruler" is consistently highlighted in several Vedic texts and is often taken as an acronym in ancient Indian literature.

The happiness, labour, and welfare of people have always been essential considerations for rulers, and these considerations are reflected in our early legal systems. In truth, effort was revered in antiquity because it produced creative products. Economic, social, and personal security are necessities for all workers. Conflicts between the ruler and servant develop when these demands are not met. Shukracharya emphasised the psychological side of the conflict by stating that the servant should



leave a king who has a poor opinion of servants, is dissatisfied with the services he provides, and has a suspicious character.

Shukracharya asserts that the king must also see to it that wages are paid in accordance with the laws in effect at the time. In Shukra-Niti, the wage policy is covered in great detail. The payment of wages is not to be halted or delayed by the king. His belief that even moderate pay would cover the provision of necessary food and clothing with even a modest wage is a reflection of his care for the wellbeing of the general populace. He thinks that societal unrest and moral decay are caused by low salaries.

Self-Control and Self-Reflection

Shukra-Niti emphasises how crucial self-awareness and restraint are for a ruler. It counsels monarchs to pause and consider their choices to make sure they are in line with the values of justice and righteousness. The text warns against making decisions based on selfish motives, ego or haughtiness because doing so can harm a ruler's reputation and authority.

Culture and Education

The importance of education and cultural advancement in a kingdom is acknowledged by Shukra-Niti. It implies that a king ought to support academics, thinkers, and creatives in order to encourage learning and the upholding of cultural legacies. The passage stresses the value of an educated populace, as it adds to the kingdom's overall development and enlightenment. It also motivates leaders to assist religious, literary, and artistic institutions in order to promote a peaceful and culturally diverse society.

Virtuous Rule

Shukra-Niti places a strong emphasis on the notion of dharma, which stands for righteousness and moral obligation. It implies that a king ought to rule as per dharma, maintaining moral principles like justice and fairness. The passage exhorts kings to uphold moral law and serve as an example for their people by living morally. It emphasises that a king will win the respect and allegiance of the populace if they rule with honesty and commitment to dharma.



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5.6 CRITICAL EVALUATION

It is important to evaluate and place the ideas of Shukra-Niti within the larger context of current political ideologies and cultural norms. While literature provides insightful analysis into some facets of monarchy and statecraft, it is crucial to modify its lessons to meet the complexities and difficulties of the contemporary world.

The principles and norms of the time are reflected in Shukra-Niti, which has roots in ancient Indian culture. The social hierarchy and the notion of divine authority to rule both have an impact on the text's lessons. The concepts, according to detractors, might not be universally relevant in the complex and transforming world of today. Shukra-Niti gives a lot of importance to following established customs and traditions. It might not, however, sufficiently fulfil the requirement for adaptability and flexibility in governance. In a changing world, leaders must be flexible, responsive to new problems and ready to change policies as needed. The ruler's capacity to properly handle contemporary challenges may be constrained by Shukra-Niti's emphasis on tradition and stability.

The text largely concentrates on the viewpoint of a king who is in charge of a kingdom. It might not offer all-inclusive advice for governing in communities with various types of government or cultural diversity. It might be necessary to modify kingship and statecraft ideas to work with democratic systems, republics or other modern forms of government. Shukra-Niti pays little attention to the rights and involvement of the governed, instead focusing exclusively on the position and obligations of a king. The concepts of inclusion, participation, and citizen involvement are thought to be fundamental to modern governance. Because of the text's focus on top-down government, it may be easy to miss how crucial it is to involve and empower citizens in decision-making.

The patriarchal aspect of ancient societies, when male rulers predominated, is reflected in Shukra-Niti. The text does not fully discuss how women can play a leadership role or take gender equality into account. Fostering gender equality and integration in positions of leadership is now universally acknowledged as being essential to good governance. A philosophical treatise called Shukra-Niti offers advice based



on conventional knowledge and theoretical precepts. The effectiveness of its teachings, however, may not be supported by empirical data or contemporary empirical studies. The application of evidence-based strategies and the use of many viewpoints can improve our comprehension of governance and statecraft.

Conclusion

By considering numerous facets of governance, ethics, and leadership, Shukra-Niti offers an extensive approach to kingship and statecraft. To ensure the welfare of their subjects and the prosperity of their kingdoms, the king should work to build a prosperous, just and harmonious society by adhering to the values mentioned in the text. It highlights the significance of traits like wisdom, righteousness, accountability, and ethical behavior. The advancement of education and culture is emphasised, along with the welfare of the populace, economic management, defense and diplomacy.

A critical examination nevertheless exposes several restrictions. The text has roots in a particular cultural and historical setting, which may limit its application to all contexts. The requirement for adaptation, diversity and gender equality in modern governance might not be sufficiently addressed. The text's lessons might also be unsupported by empirical research and neglect to take into account various socioeconomic and governmental institutions.

Shukra-Niti's concepts must be critically examined and modified in order to be applied effectively. This requires bringing contemporary governing principles, empirical studies and societal values into the process. By doing this, leaders may glean insightful lessons from the book while applying cutting-edge strategies to promote inclusive, flexible, and efficient governance in today's vibrant and diverse society.

In-Text Questions - 2

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. Shukra-Niti teaches that a king must protect his subjects and _____ the guilty.
2. The seven limbs of a kingdom include the sovereign, the minister, the friend, the treasury, the state, the fort, and the _____.



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3. Shukra-Niti classifies kings into three categories: _____, Rajsika, and Tamsika.
4. Shukracharya suggests using _____ to subdue the opponent by promoting discord among their ranks.
5. Effective economic management in Shukra-Niti involves supporting commerce, industry, and _____.

B. State True or False:

1. Shukra-Niti suggests that a king should act based on his own selfish desires.
2. According to Shukra-Niti, a king should exhaust diplomatic channels before resorting to war.
3. Shukra-Niti disregards the importance of public opinion in governance.
4. Shukra-Niti emphasizes that kings should consult with knowledgeable advisers and specialists.
5. The concept of the kingdom as a body with seven limbs implies that each part operates independently.

5.7 SUMMARY

- Ancient Indian sages authored ethical and political treatises known as Niti, with Shukra-Niti, Chanakya Niti, and Vidur Niti being prominent examples.
- Shukracharya, a significant ancient Indian sage, emphasized the importance of Niti in governance, arguing that rulers must follow Niti to maintain respect and effectively govern.
- Shukracharya, son of Rishi Bhṛigu and Ushana, studied under rishis like Angiras and Gautama, gaining knowledge in various fields including politics, astrology, and medicine.
- Known for his connection with the Asuras (demons) and for his contributions to astrology and philosophy, Shukracharya is credited with creating the Shukra-Niti, focusing on ethical governance, diplomacy, and statecraft.



Talking Point: Debate on the Authenticity of Shukra-niti and the Concept ...

- The authenticity of Shukra-Niti is debated among scholars, with arguments for its genuineness based on its detailed descriptions of ancient practices and its references to traditional knowledge, while arguments against its authenticity highlight inconsistencies in historical context and writing style.
- The debate on Shukra-Niti's authenticity emphasizes the complexity of ancient texts, urging a focus on their content and insights rather than solely on their origins.
- Shukra-Niti teaches that a king's primary duties are to protect his subjects and punish the guilty, achievable only through Niti Shastra.
- The concept of kingship involves a kingdom as a body with seven limbs, emphasizing the balance and interdependence of its parts.
- Shukracharya classified kings into Satvika, Rajsika, and Tamsika based on their virtues and alignment with moral principles.
- Public opinion is crucial in governance, advocating participatory government and listening to subjects through a network of spies.
- The text provides guidance on the qualities and duties of a king, including wisdom, righteousness, bravery, and the protection of subjects.
- Diplomacy is emphasized for maintaining peaceful relations, with strategies like Bhedaniti (creating discord), Guerilla strategy, Kutayuddha (deception), and cutting supplies.
- Effective governance includes selecting capable ministers, maintaining a well-trained army, and strategic planning.
- Economic management involves supporting commerce and agriculture, ensuring fair taxation, and preventing unrest from economic exploitation.
- Shukra-Niti stresses the importance of self-control, cultural advancement, and ruling according to dharma (righteousness and moral obligation).
- The text's traditional focus may need adaptation to modern governance, emphasizing flexibility, inclusion, and empirical evidence over rigid adherence to ancient norms.

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5.8 GLOSSARY

- **Shukra-Niti:** A treatise attributed to Shukracharya, focusing on the principles of governance, diplomacy, and ethics.
- **Asuras:** Demons in Indian mythology, often contrasted with Devas (gods).
- **Angiras:** A rishi under whom Shukracharya initially studied the Vedas.
- **Sanjeevani mantra:** A mystical chant believed to have the power to bring the dead back to life.
- **Matsya Purana:** An ancient Indian text, the only known source that references Shukra-Niti.
- **Arthashastra:** An ancient Indian treatise on politics, economics, and military strategy, often compared to Shukra-Niti.
- **Kuru dynasty:** A historically significant ruling dynasty mentioned in the text, though its reference raises questions about the dating of Shukra-Niti.
- **Satvika:** A king characterized by virtues like duty, kindness, bravery, and detachment from pleasure.
- **Rajsika:** A king with mixed traits, less virtuous than Satvika but not as negative as Tamsika.
- **Tamsika:** A king with negative traits, considered a subject oppressor and aligned with demons.
- **Divine Authority:** The belief that a king's power is endowed by God, legitimizing his rule.

5.9 ANSWERS TO IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

In-Text Questions-1

A. 1. Shukra-Niti

2. Asuras



- 3. Matsya Purana
- 4. Lord Shiva
- 5. ethical governance

- B.** 1. True
- 2. False
 - 3. False
 - 4. False
 - 5. True

In-Text Questions-2

- A.** 1. punish
- 2. army
 - 3. Satvika
 - 4. Bhedaniti
 - 5. agriculture
- B.** 1. False
- 2. True
 - 3. False
 - 4. True
 - 5. False

NOTES

5.10 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- 1. Comment on the debate that revolves around the authenticity of Shukra-Niti.
- 2. Critically analyse the concept of kingship and statecraft in Shukra-Niti.



NOTES

3. Write short notes on:
 - a. Concept of Military and Warfare in Shukra-Niti.
 - b. Concept of Governance and Economic Management in Shukra-Niti.
4. What is the main argument in favor of the authenticity of Shukra-Niti?
5. How does Shukra-Niti classify kings, and what are the characteristics of each type?
6. Describe the concept of the kingdom as a body with seven limbs in Shukra-Niti.
7. What diplomatic strategies are mentioned in Shukra-Niti for subduing an enemy?
8. Why does Shukra-Niti emphasize the importance of public opinion in governance?

5.11 REFERENCES/SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT V: KAUTILYA: THEORY OF STATE

LESSON 6 KAUTILYA: THEORY OF STATE



LESSON 6

KAUTILYA: THEORY OF STATE

NOTES

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Structure

- 6.1 Learning Objectives
- 6.2 Introduction
- 6.3 Kautilya's Arthashastra
- 6.4 Origin of the State
- 6.5 Ends and Function of the State
- 6.6 *Saptanga* Theory (Seven Limbs of the State)
- 6.7 The Theory of 'Rajamandala' (Inter-state Relationship or Mandala Theory)
- 6.8 Espionage System
- 6.9 Taxation System
- 6.10 Kautilya and Welfare State
- 6.11 Kautilya and Machiavelli
- 6.12 Summary
- 6.13 Glossary
- 6.14 Answers to In-text Questions
- 6.15 Self-Assessment Questions
- 6.16 References/Suggested Readings

6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, students should be able to:

- Discuss about the ancient Indian philosopher Kautilya.
- Understand the characteristics of Kautilya's Arthashastra, his Rajamandala theory on inter-state relationships; and his Saptanga theory and Espionage system.
- Discuss differences and similarities between Kautilya and Machiavelli.

*Self-Instructional
Material*

131



NOTES

6.2 INTRODUCTION

Within Arthashastra Tradition, Kautilya's is the only complete work that is available to us. Kautilya in his Arthashastra salutes Shukra and Brihaspati as pioneers of Arthashastra tradition and also recognises his indebtedness to their teaching. After Kautilya, Kamandaka's Nitisara, Mitramisra's Rajanitiprakasha and Anantadeva's Rajadharmakustubha and the epic Mahabharata also reflect traits of Arthashastra tradition. For Kautilya 'Artha' meant subsistence. Arthashastra, therefore, would mean the mode of acquisition and preservation of land. More widely, it signified the science (or art) of government and statecraft. Generally, texts in this tradition contained detailed examination of rulers and principles of state administration. The authors seem to apply the methods of observation, analysis and deduction with respect to political life. Another important characteristic of writing in this tradition was the centrality given to *Dandaniti*. *Dandaniti* represented the science of politics and was primarily concerned with the application of coercive authority of rulers.

Characteristic Features of Kautilya's Arthashastra

1. Indicates a strong tendency towards a materialistic view of human ends.
2. Doctrine of seven constituents of state-organic theory of the state.
3. Authority and functions of the temporal ruler are discussed in detail.
4. Centrality of *danda* as means to protect people and save *dharma*. *Danda* is often seen as synonym for law.
5. Includes a complete theory of government with King, *amatyas* and administrative organisation as its integral parts with each being equally important.
6. Concerns about geopolitics were discussed for the first time. Glimpses of inter-state relationships are exhibited.
7. Concern about relative morality is central. The difference between *rajdharma* (during normal times) and *apadharma* (during emergencies) is very explicit.



8. Scientific analysis of power in relative terms and holistic view of state power (*bala*). Realist perception of international relations.
9. Politics developed as independent science, at least relative autonomous to the fields of morality, ethics and theology.

NOTES

6.3 KAUTILYA'S ARTHASHASTRA

Arthashastra deals primarily with two sciences- Varta or economics, and Dandaniti or science of government. Together they develop as Arthashastra, or the science of worldly prosperity and well-being. The Arthashastra, like the later Shukra-Nitisara, is essentially a handbook for the guidance of the governing group, manual for the practical politician. For the most part, Kautilya prescribes for specific needs and uses tested administrative procedures. Kautilya's Arthashastra's significance in the great tradition can be noted as follows:

1. Kautilya was truly a realist, and he dealt with all problems which were faced by the kings of his time and suggested pragmatic solutions in the field of statecraft.
2. Among all the great writers on politics, he is the only one who has written independently on the subject, i.e., on politics separated from religion, ethics, or morality.
3. He gave the country a strong and centralised administration, which had not been known to the Indians before.

There has been a controversy about the date of its composition. Winternitz, Dr. Jolly, and Keith hold the view that it was composed in the early centuries of the Christian era. Winternitz says that if this work is the creation of Kautilya, why is there no account of the Mauryan Empire and system of government as described by the Greek historians? According to Dr. Jolly, in respect of religion and laws there is great similarity between Kautilyan Arthashastra and Yajnavalkya Smriti; hence, the Arthashastra should have been composed in the 3rd century, which is the period of Yajnavalkya Smriti's composition. But like all ancient texts, there remains authentic controversy regarding the date and authorship of these texts. What we know, however, is that the manuscripts



NOTES

were first discovered in 1904, when some wandering monks brought some palm leaves to Mysore Oriental Library. R. Shamasastri, the librarian recognised it as Arthashastra and gradually translated it in English and published it in various European journals in 1908. It contained 15 books, 150 chapters and 180 topics. R. P. Kangle calls Arthashastra the 'science of politics', A. L. Basham calls it the 'Treatises on Polity'; and D. D. Kosambi considers it as the 'science of material gain'.

6.4 ORIGIN OF THE STATE

In the course of a dialogue, Kautilya says that the state originated when people got weary of the law of the fish (*Matasya Nyaya*), or widespread anarchy in society due to greed and selfishness, and selected Manu to be their first king. It was settled that the king would receive one-sixth of the grains, one-tenth of the merchandise and of the gold as his due share. This revenue enabled the king to ensure the security and well-being of the subjects.

6.5 ENDS AND FUNCTION OF THE STATE

The ends of the state, according to Kautilya, were not merely the maintenance of peace and order or protection of the people but to enable the individual to attain highest self-development with the help of the state. Functions of the state included: a) *Protection*, means guarding the country both against internal troubles as well as foreign aggression; b) *Maintaining Common Law*, the state was expected to maintain the common law as embodied in the ancient customs and usages of the land; c) *Upholding social order*: The third function of the state was the protection of dharma of the land, within the sphere of which both the state and the society moved. According to Kautilya, the duty of the king consisted of protecting his subjects with justice. A king upsetting the social order would prove the vanity of the royal scepter (*danda*); d) *Promotion of the people's welfare*: The king knew the ideal that in the happiness of his subjects



was hidden his happiness and in their welfare his welfare. Whatever pleased him was not considered as good, but whatever pleased his subjects was considered as good for him.

6.6 SAPTANGA THEORY (SEVEN LIMBS OF THE STATE)

Kautilya nowhere exactly defines the state or sovereignty, but he defines seven elements. Like the human body, the body-politics is supposed to possess various limbs (*angas*). Undoubtedly, Kautilya presented an organic theory of state, where each of these parts was given a specific duty and overall welfare and flourishing of the state depended on the performance of these parts. Every element is supposed to be at par in importance to others; but their importance depends upon the achievements they have obtained. Kautilya states these elements as, *swami* (king), *amatyas* (ministers), *janapada* (territory), *durg* (forts), *kosha* (treasury), *danda* (royal scepter), and *mitra* (allies).

Swami (King)

Even a glance at the Arthashastra will convince anyone that Kautilya was a strong advocate of monarchy. As a matter of fact, he keenly desired to establish the rule of a strong and powerful king over the country. But it was also expected to perform social welfarism to keep the people happy. In fact, Kautilya's entire classic has been written with the King at its centre.

Qualities of the King

The qualities of the king, according to him, are born of a high family, godly, possessed of valour, virtuous, truthful, not of a contradictory nature, grateful, having large aims, highly enthusiastic, not addicted to procrastination, powerful to control his neighboring kings, of resolute mind, having an assembly of ministers of no mean quality and possessing a taste for discipline. These are qualities of a high order and of an inviting nature. Further, Kautilya prescribes restraint of the organs of the sense. Success in



NOTES

study and discipline depends on the restraint of the organs of sense, which can be forced by abandoning lust, anger, greed, vanity (*mana*), haughtiness (*mada*), and overjoy (*harsha*).

Kautilya proposes a very strict and disciplined training program. He emphasised the importance of character-building for young Princes. He argues that vices could be related to pleasures as well as wrath. Among vices related to pleasures that should be controlled, he mentions hunting, gambling, sleeping by day, sensuousness, excess indulgence with women, drunkenness, excess love for dancing, singing, music, and useless travel. At the same time, the vices due to wrath that should be avoided included tale-bearing, violence, treachery, envy, slandering, unjust seizure of property, reviling and assault. Kautilya also advocated extreme care in personal safety of the King and for this the palace was to be guarded by series of circles of warriors. He was supposed to have multiple bedrooms and not even the closest associate should know which bedroom he was using on a particular night. The troubles of the king may be either internal or external. Internal troubles are more serious than external troubles, which are like the danger arising from a lurking snake. Troubles due to a minister are more serious than the other kinds of internal troubles. Hence, the king should keep under his own control the power of finance and the army. Kautilya, being a realist, suggested the King use spies even to test the loyalty of his ministers from time to time. Further, being a realist, he suggests that no threat, however trivial, should be overlooked.

Duties of the King

As already mentioned, the Kautilya King was central to all activities in the state. Therefore, the expectations were also very high, and he had to perform multiple functions.

- 1. Executive:** The foremost duty of the King was to protect and provide security to the people. *Lokaksema* or welfare of all was to be the principle on which the quality of his administration was to be judged. This included maintaining law and order and peace in society and acting against all forms of aggression, either internal or external. Other than these, he was also expected to help the people during natural calamities.



2. **Judicial:** King was the ex-officio head of the judiciary and the highest body for appeals. Kautilya suggests that the principles of dharma should always be followed while administering justice and King should be cautious that no one is punished without proper inquiry and evidence.
3. **Legislative:** Some legislative activity was added in the Kautilya state in the form of the legislative edict (*shasanadesh*). However, the King should always make laws keeping the principles of dharma in mind. All laws must be discussed with learned and experienced people for guidance and no law made should be arbitrary.
4. **Administrative:** These included the appointment of the minister and the control exercised over them by the king. Appointing the right person to the right post and assigning work to them according to their capacities is a significant administrative function.
5. **Religious:** He appointed the high priests. The domestic priest and the officiating priests appointed by the king performed his domestic rites and the sacrifices. Kautilya suggested that King should respect priests and give good amount of donations to the religious institutions as it created a sense of legitimacy for him in the hearts of masses who were mostly religious.
6. **Revenue:** It was his duty to see that the treasury was not depleted. He also looked into the accounts of receipts and expenditures. He appointed the Controller General, who was responsible for collecting the revenue. He was responsible for maintaining taxes and controlling inflation. Also, Kautilya suggests a rational system of taxation so that the poor do not feel oppressed.
7. **Military:** As supreme commander of the army, the king had the duty of inspecting the process of recruiting soldiers as well as seeing that they were well paid, and their families were taken care of. Further, he should also keep an eye on the condition of elephants, the horses, the chariots used by the army and the infantry. During wars and in peace time, he should keep his soldiers motivated and reward achievements graciously.



NOTES

8. Enlightened: Patronage of learned men, of those who were experts in different fields of knowledge was an added benefit to the king and he should ensure that these learned men are taken care of and are used for guidance.

Kautilya was firm believer in royal paternalism. Kautilya's king was to be a benevolent despot-responsible only to himself, accountable to none, like the father in the management of the children, guided only by his affections and the duties which affection implants in the paternal heart. Kautilya gives the welfare of the citizens the first place in all considerations of policy; the good of the people and their sustained happiness were the main ends for the service of which he chalked out an elaborate administrative system.

Amatya (Ministers)

The most important function of the mantri (ministers) was to render advice to the king. Kautilya insists that the king should appoint three to four counsellors. Probably the reason for not making too many ministers was to protect and maintain state secrecy. As regards the quality of the minister, who constitutes an important element of sovereignty, Kautilya says that he must be a native and born of high family, influential and well trained in all kind of arts. He must be wise, bold, eloquent, skilful and intelligent. He must be pure in character, loyal in devotion and endowed with excellent conduct. He must be enthusiastic and affectionate. But he must be free from procrastination and fickle mindedness. Their recruitment was to be based on principles of merit and King could employ certain parameters to judge the efficiency of these ministers. The King had to test the ministers from time to time for loyalty and based on that they were to be rewarded or punished. If any minister was found to be plotting against the King or failed the tests, they were not only to be removed but also killed as they share many secrets which they could split if left alive.

Janapada

Janapada includes the territory and the people. The king is asked to look personally into the affairs of the state. This makes one assume that the state has to be small if personal attention is to be given. There are indications that a janapada is to contain 800 grams with a *sthanika* at its centre. It should be fertile land with an abundance of



forest, rivers, mountains, and minerals. As for people Kautilya says that loyalty is the most essential characteristic expected. They should pay taxes on time, should be hardworking, religious, disciplined, and ready to even die for the country.

Durg (Fort)

The fourth element of sovereignty in the Arthashastra is the fort (*durg*). Kautilya says that the construction of defensive fortification on all quarters of the boundary is symbol of strength, provided they are situated in the strategically best suited regions, such as a water fortification on an island in the midst of a river, or a plain surrounded by low ground, a mountainous fortification such as rocky track or a cave, a desert fortification in areas of a wild tract devoid of water, and a forest fortification full of water. It would be used to garrison soldiers, store food grains for emergencies and also act as hideout for king when there is danger.

Kosha (Treasury)

The treasury is the fifth element of the state. According to Kautilya the treasury accumulated in a righteous and legitimate manner should be retained by the king. The king may inherit the treasury which must be filled with gold, silver, precious stones, jewels, and gems and it should be capable of withstanding the strain of expenditure during times of calamities of long duration. If needed, the king can increase it through increased taxation. Kautilya sets different kinds of taxes but maintains that they should never be oppressive. He also suggests that the treasury should be judiciously used and not wasted on personal aggrandisement and show-off.

Danda (Army)

Next important element in order of priority is army. Kautilya suggests the need for a standing army and non-dependence on mercenaries. The basic qualities of a good army according to Kautilya are that recruitment is fair and based on inheritance, they should be loyal, strong, full of vigor and energy. The army must be invincible and endowed with the power of endurance, trained in fighting various kinds of battles, skilful in handling various forms of weapons. The army should not bring in any state of instability in the kingdom, but it should be ready to share the sorrow of the king in time



NOTES

of calamities. He also mentions that the army men should be paid well, and families should be cared for so that the soldiers are not worried about their future while at war. Soldiers must be ready to die for the country, but the king also must ascertain that they are well equipped with right kind of weapons and are provided with whatever is required to keep them happy and loyal.

Mitra (Ally)

The last element is the friend of the king, who is always ready to help the king and is also capable of helping him in times of war and natural calamity. The King should continuously increase the number of friends and should send gifts and pleasantries as a mark of friendship. Allies are equally important for economic activities and trade relations.

Kautilya believes that when any one of the elements of state falls into trouble, it threatens the overall setup and should be considered a serious issue.

In-Text Questions - 1

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. Arthashastra combines _____ and _____.
2. The _____ should be fertile with abundant _____.
3. A _____ is preferred over _____ according to Kautilya.
4. _____ refers to _____ in Kautilya's theory.
5. The _____ treasury _____ should _____ be _____ accumulated _____ in a _____ and _____ manner.

B. State True or False:

1. Kautilya's Arthashastra was written in the 5th century BCE.
2. The state originated to counteract societal anarchy and ensure security and well-being according to Kautilya.
3. In the Saptanga Theory, "Kosha" refers to the army.
4. Kautilya suggests that the king should not rely on mercenaries for the army.
5. Ministers should be tested periodically for loyalty according to Kautilya.



6.7 THE THEORY OF 'RAJAMANDALA' (INTER-STATE RELATIONSHIP OR MANDALA THEORY)

Kautilya formulated a detailed theory of foreign policy and inter-state relations. For him, the constant expansion of territory was not only a strategic tactic but an important duty of King. He refers to the King as *vijigishu* (the one desirous of conquest). Inter-state relationship, according to Kautilya, was important because no state existed in isolation. In reality he assumes that every state is in constant search for power over other land. His theory of international relations is based on the maxim that a friend's friend is likely to be a friend and an enemy's friend is an enemy. This theory popularly known as Rajamandala or Mandala theory assumes a set of four concentric circles consisting of a set of twelve states with three in each circle. At the center of this political network was of the political system ruled by the *vijigishu*. The next set is represented by *ari* (the enemy state). The third set represented the *Madhyama* king who could turn out to be an ally or an enemy and intervene on the side of the victor by supporting him or decide to be neutral (*udasina*) or an enemy (*ari*). The fourth circle represented the *Udasina* states which were largely non-interfering and neutral considering their distance from the centre. The relationship between the *vijigishu* keeps varying as he progresses in his conquest.

Circle I: Comprising of *Vijigishu*, his friend and his friend's friend.

Circle II: Comprising *Ari* (enemy), his friend and his friend's friend.

Circle III: Comprising *Madhyama* King, his friend, his friend's friend.

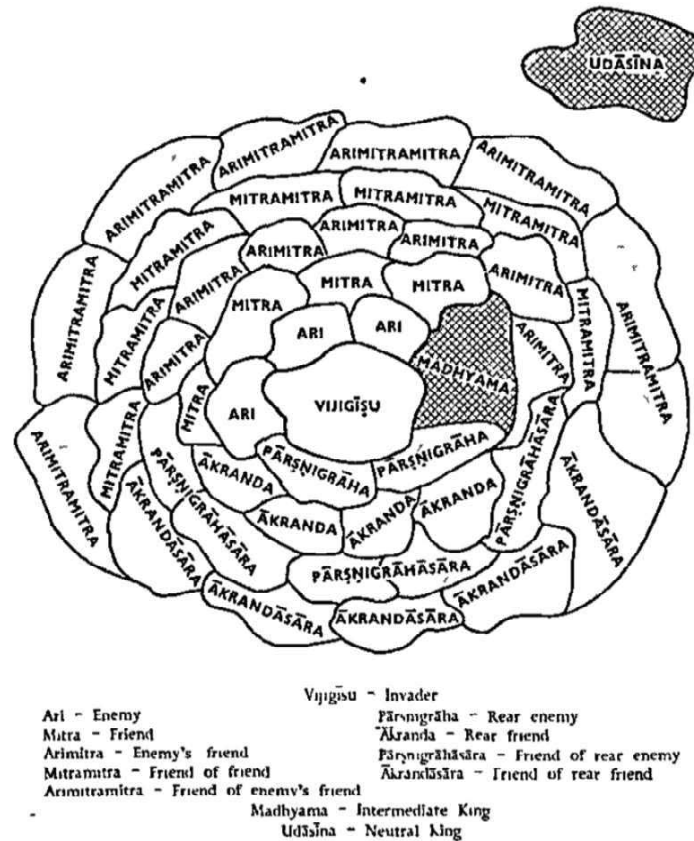
Circle IV: Consisting of *Udasina* King, his friend and his friend's friend.

Spatial location and distribution of state system are two important geopolitical aspects related to interstate relations. There are certain basic assumptions on which his theory is based:

- a) No state can exist in isolation.
- b) There are no permanent friends or foes.
- c) Bordering states can never be friends.
- d) States become friends or allies according to their geographical positions.



NOTES



A HYPOTHETICAL ILLUSTRATION OF THE MANDALA THEORY.

Fig. 6.1 A Hypothetical Illustration of the Mandala Theory

Source: *Political Theory of Ancient India: A Study of Kingship from the earliest times to circa A.D. 300* by John W. Spellman (Oxford University Press: London, 1964)

Based on the relative location, Kautilya claims that the conquering King can predict the nature of other states both in front and in the rear. The move in the mandala is like one in the game of chess where one presumes the next move of another and based on that plan one's own move. In front of the *vijigishu*, bordering its state is the *ari* (enemy), sharing the border with the enemy state would be conqueror's friend (*mitra*), next to him sharing its border would be *ari mitra* (friend of enemy). Next to *ari mitra* is *mitra mitra* (conqueror's friend's friend) and sharing its border is enemy's friend's friend (*arimitra mitra*). Similarly in the rear of the conqueror, there would be



an enemy of the rear who could attack from back (*Parshnigraha*). Sharing its border would be *vijigishu*'s friend of the rear (*Aakranda*). Next is the friend of the rearward enemy (*Parshnigrahasaara*), and next to it is the ally of the rearward friend (*Aakrandasaara*). These are the relations of state immediately in front or rear of the conquering king. Other than these, he conceives of the *Madhyama* king who is the intermediary king and therefore initially indifferent, but during process of conquest there is every possibility of him either joining the *vijigishu* or his enemy as an ally. Then there is the *Udasina* king who occupies territory far beyond the above states and is hence in a position to assert its neutrality.

Kautilya also talks about international policy during peace times. These include conciliation (*sama*); presents (*dana*); dissensions (*bheda*); and punishment (*danda*). He also discusses in great detail the six-fold policies or Shadgunas as war tactics:

- a) **Sandhi (Alliance):** That which is considered to be of mutual good faith and conducive to mutual interest is termed as sandhi. Kautilya seems to favour peace over war and asserts that whenever the output of peace and war are of equal value, king should favour peace over war because war is always costly and has that indeterminacy attached to it.
- b) **Vigraha (War):** War is inevitable if attempts for peace fail. It is an attempt to compel others to accept one's supremacy and sovereignty. Kautilya claims that when the king is convinced of success, he can go to war anytime. War becomes imminent in the policy of expansionism. War could be of different kinds: open battle; treacherous battle; and silent battle. When fought in daylight and in well-defined locality it is an open war. Threatening on one front but attacking from back, destroying enemy when he is in trouble or winning war by bribing opposite army forms part of treacherous war. Silent battles are fought with the help of secret agents without directly engaging in war.
- c) **Yaan (Military Expedition and March):** A king can march if it disturbs the plans of the enemies. Marching can also confuse the enemy and act as a natural deterrent. However, Kautilya suggests that marching should always look like one is prepared for war and should include allies because it might turn into real war anytime.



NOTES

- d) **Aasana (Halting):** Halting is also a very significant strategy. Kautilya suggests that king can halt at the borders to exhibit his preparedness for war but at the same time he should know when he can pause the war in case, he needs to buy time to bring in additional force or wait for an ally to join his side.
- e) **Samashray (Seeking Protection):** Seeking protection is yet another significant strategy for the king needs to survive to fight another day. So, if a king faces a sure shot defeat, he should seek protection from a powerful king. Obviously, the terms would not be as according to the king, but it is also a rational choice as the last resort.
- f) **Dvedibhaava (Duplicity):** Kautilya is not a moralist. He is a realist and suggests that for the larger interest of the kingdom, the king can use the strategy of duplicity. Duplicity can be initiated by using secret agents through bribing the ministers and army men of the enemy state or by not following the terms of sandhi when the need be.

The strategy of the victor is contingent on four factors.

- (a) Relative power equation among the victors,
- (b) Objectives or empirical deviations from the ideal policy prescribed,
- (c) Classification of the motivations of the actors involved, and
- (d) The unanticipated and unpredictable nature of the chance factors.

An important feature of the Arthashastra is that it presupposes wars of conquest to be a fit purpose for an ambitious king and devotes a great deal of space to advise on how to defeat all the other kings in the area. But the discussion of the Mandala theory and the idea of *dharmavijaya* show that the Mauryan pursuit of all Indian dominion was necessarily its background. The Arthashastra's model king does not annex defeated kingdoms, submerge their rulers, and absorb them into his own state apparatus. On the contrary, the ideal of conquest according to dharma (as opposed to *asuravijaya* and *lobhavijaya*) obliges him to deal leniently with his conquered foe, perhaps re-installing him or placing a relative on the throne. The throne does not disappear. Tributes will certainly be asked for, but the vassal kingdom so far as we can see keeps most of



its autonomy. However, all these are context-dependent and subject to the interests of the conquering King. Kautilya suggests that before any expedition, king should assess the power of the other kings and characterises them as *samrajya* (equal state); *heenarajya* (weaker king); and *balwaanrajya* (strong king). Relative strength however, is to be calculated based on an overall assessment of not only strength of army or physical strength (*utsaaha bal*) but also *mantra bal* (intellectual power) and *prabhu bal* (economic power).

6.8 ESPIONAGE SYSTEM

Espionage in the Arthashastra polity occupied a very important place in the function of the state (or the king). Spies disguised in several forms remained busy in conveying important news of the kingdom to the king. He believed that a strong and efficient espionage system was crucial for the king in both internal and external affairs. He classifies spies into two categories: *samstha* ('the establishment', where the agents are stationed in a single place, the headquarters); and *samcaras*, ('the rover', agents who move from place to place). These are further subdivided into categories.

Samsthas are stationed at the capital and help the king get all the information from within the capital. Equally, they are used to testing the *amatyas* and other administrative officers from time to time to check their loyalty towards the king. They are of five kinds specialising in different functions: *Kapatika* (sharp disciple with capacity to guess the minds of others); *Udasthita* (ascetic at centre of monks); *Grihapatika* (spy posing as farmer); *Vaidehaka* (merchant spy at centre of traders); *Tapasa* (bogus ascetic made a secret agent but poses as a seer). These spies are mainly responsible for ascertaining the purity or impurity of the king's servants.

Samcaras are special agents trained for both information gathering and assassinating. They are used against enemies and can also be stationed in other kingdoms (both of allies and enemies) to perform secret services. They are primarily categorised as: *Sattrin* (an orphan trained as agent by state); *Tiksna* (assassin who secretly liquidates



NOTES

all enemies of state); *Rasada* (a chemist and poison-giver); *Bhiksuki* (Brahmin nun who spies on families that trust them). They are expected to collect information and inflict punishments.

Other than this, he talks of Ubhayavetana spies who were engaged in foreign state. They play an important role in setting up propaganda and creating dissension in the other states when need be. Women also play a significant role as secret agents, disguising themselves as dancers and prostitutes in foreign states. They are given the task of luring the ministers and kings of foreign lands, befriending them and extracting secrets. When need be, they are also expected to secretly kill the enemy using poison or other substances.

6.9 TAXATION SYSTEM

Kautilya articulated a sophisticated taxation system in his treatise, the *Arthashastra*, highlighting its vital role in statecraft. Central to his Theory of State, the taxation system ensured a steady revenue stream essential for public welfare, infrastructure, and defense. Kautilya emphasised diverse revenue sources, including agriculture, trade, industry, and natural resources, with taxes proportional to income, typically one-sixth of agricultural produce. Efficient tax administration was crucial, advocating honest officials, meticulous record-keeping, and periodic assessment to reflect economic conditions. Kautilya's principles stressed equity, fairness, and flexibility, ensuring taxes did not overburden any group while offering reliefs during economic hardships. Revenue utilization focused on public welfare, military maintenance, and administrative costs, reflecting Kautilya's vision of a strong, stable, and prosperous state. By integrating equitable taxation into the broader governance framework, Kautilya's system aimed at economic prosperity, social justice, and administrative efficiency, ensuring that the state remained robust and harmonious. This taxation framework not only reinforced the state's economic foundation but also promoted social stability and good governance, underscoring Kautilya's profound understanding of economic and political dynamics.



6.10 KAUTILYA AND WELFARE STATE

One of the central themes in Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is the concept of a welfare state, an idea that he developed long before the term became commonplace in modern political discourse.

Kautilya envisioned a state where the ruler's primary responsibility was the well-being and prosperity of the citizens. He believed that the welfare of the people was intrinsically linked to the strength and stability of the state. The ruler, according to Kautilya, should act as a guardian and a caretaker, ensuring that all citizens have access to the basic necessities of life and that their economic and social welfare is protected.

Principles of a Welfare State in Kautilya's Vision

Given below are the principles of Kautilya's welfare state:

- 1. Provision of Basic Needs:** Kautilya emphasized the importance of ensuring that all citizens had access to food, clothing, shelter, and healthcare. He advocated for state intervention in times of famine, natural disasters, or economic distress to provide relief and support to the affected population.
- 2. Economic Prosperity:** Economic welfare was a crucial aspect of Kautilya's welfare state. He proposed a comprehensive economic policy that included agricultural development, trade regulation, industry promotion, and prudent fiscal management. Kautilya believed in the importance of a balanced and sustainable economy where the state played an active role in regulating and promoting economic activities to ensure prosperity for all.
- 3. Social Welfare:** Kautilya's welfare state also encompassed social policies aimed at improving the quality of life for citizens. He supported the establishment of educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and public infrastructure. He believed that a well-educated and healthy population was essential for the state's long-term stability and prosperity.



NOTES

4. Protection of Rights and Justice: Justice and the protection of citizens' rights were central to Kautilya's vision of a welfare state. He advocated for a robust legal system that ensured fairness and justice for all, regardless of social status. Kautilya's legal framework included provisions for the protection of property rights, fair treatment of labour, and measures to prevent exploitation and corruption.

5. Employment and Livelihood: Kautilya recognised the importance of employment for the welfare of the state. He proposed policies to promote job creation through the development of various sectors like agriculture, handicrafts, and trade. The state was to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to earn a livelihood and contribute to the economy.

Role of the Ruler in a Welfare State

In Kautilya's vision, the ruler played a pivotal role in the welfare state. The king was seen as the protector and provider, responsible for the overall well-being of his subjects. Kautilya emphasised that a ruler should be just, wise, and benevolent, prioritising the interests of the people over personal gains. The ruler was expected to be proactive in addressing the needs of the citizens and ensuring that the state's resources were utilised effectively for the public good.

Mechanisms for Ensuring Welfare

Kautilya's Arthashastra outlines several mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of welfare policies:

- 1. Efficient Administration:** Kautilya stressed the importance of a well-organised and efficient administrative system. He proposed a hierarchical structure with clear roles and responsibilities to ensure effective governance and implementation of welfare policies.
- 2. Revenue Management:** A well-planned taxation system was essential for funding welfare programs. Kautilya advocated for fair and equitable taxation, ensuring that the burden of taxes did not fall disproportionately on any one section of society. He also emphasised the prudent management of state resources to maximise public welfare.



- 3. Public Works and Infrastructure:** Investment in public works and infrastructure was seen as crucial for economic and social welfare. Kautilya proposed the construction of roads, irrigation systems, schools, hospitals, and other public facilities to improve the quality of life for all citizens.
- 4. Social Security Measures:** Kautilya proposed various social security measures to protect the vulnerable sections of society. These included provisions for the elderly, the disabled, and the poor, ensuring that they were not left destitute and had access to necessary support.

NOTES

6.11 KAUTILYA AND MACHIAVELLI

One of the most significant comparisons that is often forwarded by scholars is that between Kautilya and Machiavelli. Some scholars have gone so far as to call Kautilya as 'Indian Machiavelli' or 'Oriental Machiavelli'. Machiavelli, the political thinker and statesman of Italy during the Renaissance, is widely considered the first modern thinker. He was a realist thinker who was not a votary of the purity of means but rather focused on achievement of ends. He wrote in *The Prince* that the ruler, in order to succeed, must learn, how not to be good with the people whom he regarded as utterly selfish and wicked. This text by Machiavelli is often compared with Kautilya's Arthashastra. Both of them, though belonging to different times and environments, lived in an age of transition. Following the line it is asserted that 'like Machiavelli, Kautilya has also made a distinction between moralities of the ruler and the ruled and both of them have put the ruler above the ordinary canons of morality. There are also other striking similarities between Kautilya and Machiavelli.' Machiavelli and Kautilya avoided discriminating between good and evil and writing from the standpoint of the ruling elite they found their interest almost entirely in the affairs of state and man's political behavior. Both of them persuade almost the same goal, namely, how power can be maintained and enlarged. Their views on the nature of statecraft are also very similar. The focus in both the texts is on the King. He is pivotal and the entire strategy of statecraft depends on the efficiency of the king. Therefore, both of them advocated centralised monarchy as the best form of government. They focus extensively on the training and education



NOTES

of young princes and establish politics as an autonomous field separating it from ethics and morality. For example, both of them believe that if it is in the larger interest of his subjects, King can overlook the principles of morality. He should be ready to use unfair means, even treachery if it was aimed at larger good of his people, for he is to be judged solely based on how he improved the life of his people. In fact, both of them suggest different sets of moral principles for common masses and King, and within these principles they consciously make distinctions between King's duty during normal times and during emergencies. Both of them also asserted that King need not be religious in personal life, but he should be wise enough to use religion to create social bonds among people and should never insult religion in public. Even in the field of international relations, they reflect a similar attitude. They both support unification of smaller kingdoms and developing a larger and United Kingdom which is self-sufficient. At the same time, both favour expansionism as an important policy for the King. There are also similarities in the way they define the role of spies and propaganda for the king.

But Kautilya's comparison with Machiavelli in this respect cannot be pushed too far. It is said of Machiavelli that he was neither moral nor immoral but was unmoral. But even this cannot be said of Kautilya. Kautilya sought out to refabricate the craking (social) edifice, and his approach to politics, that is why, tends to be integral. He refers to the *trivarga-dharma*, *arthaa* (the material well-being) and *kama* (sensual pleasure) as the goal of life. However, equally significant is the fact that the whole conception of *danda* in Kautilya is structured in order to uphold *dharma* and it is this aspect that guides his assertion in Arthashastra. Further, the state envisaged in Kautilya's Arthashastra subordinates moral principle of the necessity of its own existence and welfare, and the same attitude is assumed towards religion. Also objectionable is the inherent eurocentrism in the claim of Kautilya as 'Oriental Machiavelli'. Kautilya produced his scholarship many centuries before Machiavelli and in a completely different place in history. Forced comparison often does not do justice to the unique characteristic of individual authors and their contribution in their fields. It also creates doubts about the authenticity and autonomy of these thinkers and is therefore avoidable.



Conclusion

Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is a seminal text that outlines the principles of statecraft, governance, and diplomacy with remarkable clarity. His Rajamandala theory presents a sophisticated understanding of inter-state relationships, emphasising the importance of alliances and enmities in maintaining a state's strategic position. Kautilya's Saptanga theory, which identifies seven key elements of a state, underscores his comprehensive approach to governance, while his espionage system highlights the critical role of intelligence in maintaining power and security. Comparing Kautilya to Machiavelli reveals both striking similarities and notable differences. Both philosophers emphasise the pragmatism required for effective governance and the importance of strategic manipulation in politics. Machiavelli's ideas in *The Prince* resonate with Kautilya's focus on realpolitik and the use of cunning to achieve and retain power. However, while Machiavelli's work is often seen as a reflection of Renaissance political realism, Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is deeply rooted in ancient Indian contexts, including religious and cultural considerations. His theories offer a more holistic approach, incorporating aspects of ethics and statecraft that Machiavelli's work typically sidelines. Kautilya's contributions to political philosophy provide a rich and nuanced perspective on governance and statecraft that continues to influence political theory today. His detailed analysis of state functions, diplomacy, and intelligence underscores the complexity and depth of his thought, while comparisons with Machiavelli highlight both the universality and distinctiveness of his ideas. Understanding Kautilya in the context of his time and in comparison to later political theorists offers valuable insights into the evolution of political philosophy and its practical applications.

NOTES

In-Text Questions - 2

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. Kautilya's Mandala theory emphasizes the constant expansion of _____.
2. The first circle in Mandala theory consists of Vijigishu, his friend, and his friend's _____.
3. According to Kautilya, there are no permanent friends or _____.
4. Kautilya's six-fold war tactics are known as _____.
5. Espionage is divided into stationary spies (Samstha) and _____ spies.

Self-Instructional
Material

151



NOTES

B. State True or False:

1. The Mandala theory is based on the idea that states can exist in isolation.
2. Kautilya favors war over peace whenever possible.
3. The role of spies in Kautilya's polity is crucial for both internal and external affairs.
4. Kautilya's views on statecraft and Machiavelli's are identical in all aspects.
5. Kautilya suggests that in times of sure defeat, a king should seek protection from a powerful ally.

6.12 SUMMARY

- Kautilya's Arthashastra focuses on two sciences: Varta (economics) and Dandaniti (science of government).
- Kautilya is noted for his pragmatic solutions and independent writing on politics, separate from religion or ethics.
- The Arthashastra was discovered in 1904 and later translated by R. Shamasastri.
- It contains 15 books, 150 chapters, and 180 topics.
- The state originated from a need to counteract societal anarchy (Matasya Nyaya), with people selecting Manu as their first king.
- Kautilya's ends of the state include peace, order, and individual self-development.
- Saptanga Theory outlines seven elements of the state: King (Swami), Ministers (Amatya), Territory (Janapada), Forts (Durg), Treasury (Kosha), Army (Danda), and Allies (Mitra).
- The king must possess specific qualities, such as being born of a high family, virtuous, and disciplined.
- Duties of the king include executive, judicial, legislative, administrative, religious, revenue, military, and enlightened functions.



- Ministers (Amatya) are to be wise, bold, loyal, and free from procrastination.
- The state (Janapada) should have a fertile territory and loyal people.
- Forts (Durg) should be strategically located and act as defensive structures.
- Treasury (Kosha) should be accumulated righteously and used judiciously.
- The army (Danda) should be loyal, well-equipped, and not reliant on mercenaries.
- Allies (Mitra) should support the king in times of war and calamity.
- Kautilya's Mandala theory focuses on foreign policy and inter-state relations, emphasizing territorial expansion.
- A state is part of a larger system and cannot exist in isolation.
- The Mandala consists of four concentric circles of states, each with different roles: Vijigishu (conqueror), Ari (enemy), Madhyama (neutral/intervening), and Udasina (neutral).
- Kautilya's strategies during peace include conciliation, presents, dissension, and punishment.
- The six-fold war tactics (Shadgunas) are Sandhi (alliance), Vighraha (war), Yaan (military march), Aasana (halting), Samashray (seeking protection), and Dvedibhaava (duplicity).
- Espionage is vital, with spies classified into stationary (Samstha) and roaming (Samcaras), each with specific roles.
- Comparisons between Kautilya and Machiavelli highlight similarities in their views on statecraft, morality, and the role of the ruler, though they lived in different times and contexts.

6.13 GLOSSARY

- **Arthashastra:** Ancient Indian treatise on statecraft, economic policy, and military strategy.
- **Varta:** Economics, one of the two main sciences in Arthashastra.



NOTES

- **Dandaniti:** Science of government, the second main science in Arthashastra.
- **Matasya Nyaya:** Law of the fish, symbolizing anarchy in society due to greed and selfishness.
- **Saptanga Theory:** The theory of the seven limbs of the state.
- **Vijigishu:** A term used by Kautilya to describe the king who is eager for conquest.
- **Madhyama:** The neutral or intermediary king in the Mandala system.
- **Dvedibhaava:** Strategy of duplicity or deceit. Kautilya advises using duplicity for the kingdom's benefit, such as using secret agents to bribe or manipulate enemy officials, or breaking alliances if it serves a greater strategic purpose.
- **Ubhayavetana:** Spies engaged in foreign states to spread propaganda and create internal discord.

6.14 ANSWERS TO IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

In-Text Questions-1

- A.**
1. Varta; Dandaniti
 2. Janapada; natural resources
 3. standing army; mercenaries
 4. Durg; forts
 5. righteous; legitimate
- B.**
1. False
 2. False
 3. True
 4. True
 5. True



In-Text Questions-2

NOTES

- A.** 1. Territory
2. Friend
3. Foes
4. Shadgunas
5. Roaming
- B.** 1. False
2. False
3. True
4. False
5. True

6.15 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. What is Saptanga Theory? Do you think the King has a pivotal role in Kautilya's theory of state? Explain.
2. Critically analyse Kautilya's theory of the origin and functions of the state.
3. Discuss Kautilya's understanding of international relations with reference to Rajamandala theory. Do you think it is relevant in contemporary times? Comment.
4. Explain Kautilya's views on the Espionage system and its importance for the state.
5. What are the two main sciences addressed in Kautilya's Arthashastra?
6. How does Kautilya's Arthashastra differentiate itself from other ancient political writings?
7. According to Kautilya, why did the state originate?



NOTES

8. List the seven elements of the state in the Saptanga Theory.
9. What qualities does Kautilya recommend for a good minister?
10. What is the main focus of Kautilya's Mandala theory?
11. How many concentric circles are there in the Mandala theory?
12. What are the four-fold strategies Kautilya suggests during peace times?
13. How does Kautilya classify spies in his espionage system?
14. What is the main difference between Kautilya and Machiavelli's views on statecraft?

6.16 REFERENCES/SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT VI: AGGAÑÑA SUTTA (DIGHA NIKAYA): THEORY OF KINGSHIP

LESSON 7 AGGAÑÑA SUTTA (DIGHA NIKAYA): THEORY OF KINGSHIP



LESSON 7

AGGAÑÑA SUTTA (DIGHA NIKAYA): THEORY OF KINGSHIP

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Structure

- 7.1 Learning Objectives
- 7.2 Introduction
- 7.3 The Issue of Political Authority and Obligation
- 7.4 Evolution of Kingship and the State in Buddhism
- 7.5 Concept of State in Aggañña Sutta
- 7.6 The Issues of Socio-political Equality from Buddhist Lens
- 7.7 Summary
- 7.8 Glossary
- 7.9 Answers to In-text Questions
- 7.10 Self-Assessment Questions
- 7.11 References/Suggested Readings

7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, students should be able to:

- Discuss about the issues of political authority and obligations in ancient India.
- Evaluate the evolution of Kingship and the state in Buddhism.
- Elaborate on the evolution of the concept of state in Aggañña Sutta.
- Discuss the issues of socio-political equality from Buddhist lens.



NOTES

7.2 INTRODUCTION

Literature from the Vedic era simply elaborates “the earliest expression of Indian social and political concepts, which served as the foundation for later development”¹. As these ideas were later developed and further enhanced through speckled channels such as “the literature of Brahminical laws (mentioned in *Smriti*’s), *Adikavayas*’, *Dharmashastra*, (above all) unorthodox canonical works of the Buddhists and Jains’, where the classical Sanskrit and Tamil literature and the literature of historical records of the later periods discovered it in most detailed manner”². Thus, there is no doubt to give the textual consent, hereafter, that early Buddhism was in part a product of the societal change in the Ancient India. It is also evident that it responded to the needs of the people during a period when the material culture was increasing rapidly.

While it appears that this was the case, our historical narrative indicates that dissenting perspectives to the effect that early Buddhism is incompatible with social, political, and legal notions are frequently found in the writings of earlier Buddhist thinkers. There are a variety of causes behind this. For the beginners, it has long been considered that “early Buddhism was almost totally concerned with individual ethics, which has proven to be incorrect. As a result, several academics have asserted that the primary goal of early Buddhism was the spiritual upliftment of the individual person”³. Meanwhile, for academicians, including some of the contemporary one’s, an attempt has been made to examine the teachings and preaching of the Buddha or early Buddhism in the context of the Vedic philosophy. For example, Radhakrishnan writes that “the Buddha did not perceive himself as announcing the establishment of an entirely new religion. He was raised as a Hindu and died as a Hindu. He was reiterating the ancient values of Indo-Aryan civilisation, but with a renewed emphasis on them”⁴.

This lesson attempts to extract the “political ideology of the Buddha from Theravada Buddhist texts to relate it to the idea of the non-self (*anatta*). Although the account from Buddhist texts does not clearly demonstrate that the Buddha, throughout his life, invented a political theory that is relevant to the modern political system in the modern era, his advice to rulers of state regarding righteous policy and strategy of state administration, as well as his advice to citizens regarding appropriate rights and



duties, are still relevant today”⁵. Therefore, to solve contemporary political difficulties and conflicts, the study of the political ideas of the Buddha would be a promising alternative path to take.

7.3 THE ISSUE OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY AND OBLIGATION

Early Buddhist ideas on the nature, grounds, and justification of political obligation and authority are examined in the *Pali* canon and in the non-canonical literature of early Buddhism to better understand these perspectives. Furthermore, “it will be concerned with the assumptions and acceptance of political obligation and authority by thinkers from the pre-Buddhistic era, notably those from the Vedic and later Vedic periods well as post-Vedic thinkers, to gain a better understanding of early Buddhist concepts”⁶. We will then look at sections in the Vedic and Buddhist texts where political obligation and power are explored about one. Since mankind has reached “a certain level of maturity in formulating a range of expressions of political obligation and authority, ideas of political obligation and authority can be classified in various ways and viewed from multiple perspectives”⁷. Concentrating on the Indian tradition, we can discover several notions about political obligation and power that were acknowledged as acceptable by Indian thinkers.

Before moving on to social contract debates, let us first analyse the theological doctrine of early Buddhism, which was primarily accepted by orthodox scholars. There are four different variants of this that we can differentiate. The monistic perspective of theology is the first form of theological theory to be developed. As a result of “the sacrifice of the cosmic person, it asserts that the ruler’s authority derives from the rejection of the cosmic person, and the subjects are required to obey the ruler because he works to bring about their salvation by the omnipotent cosmic or divine will of the cosmic person”⁸. More specifically, this point of view is implied by the divine construction of the social order, which is divided into four classes, each with a defined function. A second version of the “theological doctrine that of divine invention, also exists in numerous forms and facets, one of which is mentioned in the Mahabharata



NOTES

and is referred to as “divine creation” in the text. As the narration goes, everything was flawless in the natural world at the beginning of time, and men coexisted in peace and contentment, sharing whatever they had in common”⁹. According to the available historical evidence, passages like this, which can be found in several other courses, modify the idea of the ruler’s divine creation to provide him with religious traits, if not divinity itself. Following the logic, the ruler’s authority is primarily an emanation of, and a delegation by, divine authority. The monarch has no obligations to his subjects other than to coerce them into adhering to religious rules and regulations. The magico-religious view is the third variant of the theological theory. It has played a significant role “in the history of Hindu political views in one form or another. It is used to describe the belief that the authority and obligations of the sovereign are derived from the highest and that they are founded on a reciprocal link between spiritual authority and temporal power”¹⁰. The final version of the theological theory is “the concept of a mutually beneficial agreement between the king and his subjects, approved by the divine being. Even though the accounts of this agreement are recounted in various writings, their details fluctuate, and they can be taken as suggestive of conceptions of both divine selection and commercial agreement”¹¹.

Meanwhile, the opinions are not “the result of logical or empirical reasoning; instead, they have merely held ideas that have never been supported by rational arguments; furthermore, none of the four variants presents a meaningful notion of a social contract, even though some references are made to agreements between subjects and rulers on a sporadic basis”¹². According to early Buddhist scriptures, orthodox thinkers claimed authority in knowledge and divine power in ethical, social, and political life. This claim was inspired by Brahma, and it was supported by evidence in the early Buddhist literature. Any “statement claiming to be authoritative”¹³ should, according to the Buddha, only be accepted or rejected after one has personally verified its truth or untruth. Indeed, this is true even about comments made by the Buddha himself. With the “Vedic intellectuals’ naive theological and metaphysical notions being rejected and the authority of the dhamma being recognised, early Buddhism advanced a social contract theory as a possible explanation for the genesis of kingship. In those days and beyond, this belief had a significant impact on the country’s political life, possibly more so than any Vedic or post-Vedic doctrine about the origins of kingship”¹⁴. This is accomplished by presenting a quasi-historical account of the government’s birth,



Aggañña Sutta (Digha Nikaya): Theory of Kingship

chronicling man's evolution from his natural state to a fully formed civilisation. The people recognised the first king and were referred to as *Mahasammata*¹⁵ ("approved monarch" or "*Raja*").

The democratic and ethical characteristics of the *Ramayana*, for example, stand out as being distinctive of the early stages, as opposed to those of the *Mahabharata*, which stands out as being specific of post-Vedic epics. Ancient India's state expanded in size and complexity after the Buddha's time, partly owing to the rise of rulers such as the *Nanda* and *Maurya* dynasties. During this period, scholars developed a theory of reason for the state, which distinguished the realm of the state's morality from the individual's morality. Rhys Davids observes that "despite its good-natured irony and imaginative etymologies, the *Aggañña Sutta* reveals a sound and healthy perception and is considerably closer to the actual facts than the Brahmaa stories"¹⁶. V. P. Varma says that "while the narrative of *Mahasammata* is significant from a sociological standpoint, it did not serve as a springboard for a more significant amount of subsequent sociological and political study in the writings of later Buddhist scholars"¹⁷.

NOTES

7.4 EVOLUTION OF KINGSHIP AND THE STATE IN BUDDHISM

The state emerges as a punitive entity tasked with imposing law and order, without which human beings will not be able to thrive in a peaceful society. According to the contract between "the state and the subject, one command and the other must comply with the command. In the agreement, the institution of taxes represents payment for specific work, and taxation symbolises the contract"¹⁸. As a result, it is inescapable, and neither the subjects nor the state have any other option except to live with it"¹⁹.

The institution of kingship is the most important institution of a state, and it is ruled by or centred on a single man, the monarch. As a result, kingship differs from other social organisations characteristic of stateless civilisations, such as chiefdoms. Monarchies are symbolic of the centre of a culture that has been structured into a state. These individuals are regarded as intermediaries between the numerous elements and interests that combine to form society's social order and between the human and

Self-Instructional
Material

163



NOTES

extra-human worlds. Throughout “the *Diggah-Nikaya*, which is considered one of the most important Buddhist texts, the Brahmaa Vasetta inquires of the Buddha as to whether or not the Brahmaic claim to supremacy was justified. An extraordinary incident in history had supported Buddha’s point of view when he was asked whether he agreed or disagreed with the question. There was a time when individuals were faultless to the end of having no physical substance to be found in their bodies”²⁰. According to the *Diggah-Nikaya*, “the *Aggañña Sutta* traces the history of human civilisation. It provides a short explanation of the first difficulty, which is creating a monarchy or state. The changing nature of socio-political and economic phenomena is traced through history, from embryonic to a more complicated form”²¹.

According to the *Aggañña Sutta*, “the genesis of kingship evolved and passed through several stages of human society before reaching its current position. These signify that those ethereal creatures were in a state of peace, happiness, prosperity, and quiet for an extended period. Eventually, though, this absolute purity was no longer possible, and imperfection began to intrude into the picture”²². Differences in gender, race, religion, and other characteristics manifest, bringing life down from the ethereal to the corporeal plane. First and foremost, “they became involved in the food gathering process. Second, through increasing food production and cultivating agricultural lands, men began to organise themselves within their families in the third place. Fourth, they chose to split their rice plants or grain amongst themselves and set up boundaries to protect their property (*mariyadam thapemsu*)”²³. After reaching the final stage, a person, in addition to securing his own portion, also seized another’s that had not been assigned to him, and since then, theft, blaming, false speech, and the use of force have spread among the populace as a result. Following this crisis in society, “the beings (*satti*) assembled and debated possible solutions to the problem. They then agreed to choose a being (*satta*) to assist them in resolving this social issue. As recorded in the *Aggañña Sutta*, *Mahasammata* was not accorded the status of a monarch (*Raja*)”²⁴. He was only permitted to preserve peace and order by implementing the customary laws of the community or tribe, which he did at the will of the people. Gokhale asserts that, as the Suttanta pointed out, “the key intent of state is to ensure the rule of law against of every societal evil thought to provide the safeguard to the subject like property and family and to uphold the power of righteousness over the wrongdoings”²⁵. The



Aggañña Sutta (Digha Nikaya): Theory of Kingship

Mahasammata was declared to be the king to accomplish this. Then, he was referred to as *Khattiya*. He was “the Lord of the farmsteads, and Raja pleased and protected the people with his righteousness *Dhamma*, which was later changed to Raja. To put it another way, the state, according to this view, is founded on the widespread acceptance (*mahajanasammata*) of its objectives and functions”²⁶.

Through the practice of *Dhamma*, “it is supposed to defend and safeguard the rights of individuals while also creating conditions of happiness for those who are under its jurisdiction (*Dhammam pare ranjetti*)”²⁷. Finally, the state (is the antithesis of anarchy and the culmination of the *Dhamma*). In the *Aggañña Sutta* narrative, “*Dhamma* appears as deliverance from conflicts resulting from selfish wants, and it serves as the foundation for the establishment of order or state. The *Diggah-Nikaya*’s *Aggañña Sutta* contains a substantial spectrum of thoughts on creating the state and its concomitant, the social contract theory. It goes without saying that this story could not be believed to be true”²⁸. However, the Buddha made an attempt to describe the position of the king in the manner in which he believed it should be. Without question, he stated that the monarch had been chosen and that his most essential job was to maintain peace and order while also protecting the property of his subjects rather than levying taxes. When it comes to the *Mahasammata*, Jayatilake says that “the *Aggañña Sutta* makes no mention of his belonging to a particular caste when he was elected by his community to serve as their leader. In the sense of supreme legislative authority, Sovereignty is bestowed in the people, according to the Buddhist doctrine of the social contract”²⁹. There are a few things that are extremely important to the Buddhist notion of kingship. They are as follows: “Although the king in question was chosen by the entire population (*Mahajanasammata*), he is treated as a *prime inter pares* (a man who is “like unto himself and not unlike himself”) because of the equality of man after his election, even though he is a handsome and commanding figure in his own right”³⁰. According to the *Aggañña Sutta*, “the *Mahasammata* was not only a lawgiver, but he was also chosen by the people as their leader from amongst themselves, and he lived off rice that was provided by the people as well. When it comes to early Buddhist attitudes on kingship, the evidence provided by the *Pali* Canonical texts appears to be fairly equivocal”³¹.

NOTES



NOTES

Buddhists' attitude toward kingship is informed by "the *Aggañña Sutta*'s description of the origins of the institution of kingship, which in turn indicates what kind of kingship Buddhists may support; that is, a form of kingship that arose as the result of a social compact. Described in the *Aggañña Sutta*, the first monarch was chosen by the people as a means of ensuring justice and order amongst themselves"³². *Mahasammata* was the one who had been 'agreed upon' or "allowed" to reign. He was the one who had done so. Compared to Brahminical notions of kingship, in which the king played a "cosmic and divine function,"³³ as Heine-Geldern puts it, and "was regarded to be either an incarnation of a god or a descendant from a god or both,"³⁴ this is a significant departure from the Western concept of kingship. But according to the story of this *Sutta*, he was neither king nor legislator. Still, he served as the sort of executive who ensured that law and order were maintained throughout society. Moreover, because he was unbiased, he punished anyone who violated the customs and traditions of the group in question. In this way, "he could be seen as a law and justice authority of some sort."

Consequently, as the discourse demonstrates, a primitive social organisation among human beings also emerged in this manner. According to *Aggañña Sutta*, the state came into being during this period of kingship. Consequently, we can deduce that the *Khattiya* was not only the Lord of the Lands but also the King of State and the Supreme Ruler over his subjects"³⁵. The progression of the Raja's status demonstrates progress in the development of kingship over time. As a result, "economic growth alone will not be sufficient to eradicate theft from a society. On the other hand, there is no question that people steal due to destitution and unequal distribution of wealth in society. In these circumstances, there is no justification for punishing a person for theft who takes what is not provided simply for the sake of maintaining their own survival"³⁶. He steals for no other reason than the reality that he has nothing else with which to support himself and his family. The solution for him does not lie in punishment but rather in prudent financial management.



In-Text Questions - 1

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. The Pali canon contains teachings attributed to the _____.
2. In early Buddhist texts, the king is referred to as _____.
3. The Aggañña Sutta provides insights into the origin of the state and _____ theory.
4. Mahasammata was chosen by the people to ensure _____ and order.
5. The monistic perspective of theology asserts that the ruler's authority derives from the rejection of the _____ person.

B. State True or False:

1. The Pali canon is part of the Vedic literature.
2. Mahasammata was chosen to impose heavy taxes on the people.
3. The Aggañña Sutta traces the evolution of human society and the establishment of kingship.
4. In early Buddhism, Dhamma refers to the cosmic law and teachings of the Buddha.
5. According to early Buddhist texts, economic growth alone can eliminate societal issues like theft.

7.5 CONCEPT OF STATE IN AGGAÑÑA SUTTA

According to the *Aggañña Sutta* of *Digha Nikaya*, “the origin of the state in Buddhism is founded on the theory of cosmic evolution of nature. According to this discourse, the origin of the state can be explained utilising two evolutionary theories: the evolution of cosmology and the evolution of anthropology, both of which are significant”³⁷. Following the teachings of the *Aggañña Sutta*, “there came a time when the world contracted, sooner or later, after an interminably long period had passed, and the



NOTES

living beings reborn in the World of Radiance and made of mind and feeding on rapture, continued to exist for an interminably long period, traversing space and continuing to exist in glory”³⁸. The planet began to re-evolve at that point; there was only a single mass of water, obscurity, and darkness, and living beings were referred to as simply beings. Nevertheless, the globe continued to evolve, and as “the delicious Earth began to appear on the surface of the planet, the living species were drawn to it by their need for it. The sun, the moon, the stars, and constellations were visible to them during their period of reduced self-luminosity. As a result, they learned about the seasons, months, and years that followed”³⁹.

It is said that beings dwelt in “the world of brightness and were maintained by ecstasy, according to the *Aggañña Sutta*. When the world revolved, they flew across the skies and observed the savoury Earth that covered the planet’s surface. They then took possession of the ground and were stripped of their own brilliance. The colours of their skin have altered due to the effects of the medication they have taken. Some beings gained in attractiveness, while others lost their attractiveness”⁴⁰. The good-looking beings began to express their dissatisfaction with the bad-looking humans. There is ample evidence to suggest that even at the dawn of the world, “when there was no visible distinction based on birth, there was still societal bias based on the colour of one’s skin, and this was true regardless of the origin of one’s skin colour. When the living beings flew with self-luminous lights, the delicious soil appeared on the surface of the Earth. It served as sustenance for the earliest human beings to consume”. The tasty Earth was first tasted by living beings with their fingertips, and then “their physical appearance altered. Those who had a decent physical appearance began to criticise those who did not. The delicious Earth was no longer present on the surface of the planet and eventually vanished. When the tasty Earth was no longer present, fungi appeared before the living beings and provided food for them... After they were taken, there was a change in their bodies, and they subsequently censured each other for having a horrible physical look, and the fungi departed as a result of this”⁴¹. The creepers appeared on the surface of the Earth when the fungi vanished, and they became a source of sustenance for all living things. Creepers stayed as food for them for a short period before disappearing. Finally, rice appeared in primitive living creatures and has been their staple diet ever since that time.

Self-Instructional



Aggañña Sutta (Digha Nikaya): Theory of Kingship

NOTES

Although there were human beings on earth “during cosmological evolution, we discovered that their obvious gender as male or female did not appear until much later. After consuming rice as a diet for an extended period, the organs gradually became male and female, and they eventually engaged in sexual behavior. They constructed cottages in which they could reside separately to conceal their filthy activities”⁴². When they started having children, their offspring began to gravitate toward the group of people who shared their skin tone. They constructed the hut so that they could live separately and engage in sexual intercourse. During this period of evolution, “there was no compelling need for humans to remain as a group; they were perfectly content and confident in their ability to live alone by the fraternity to which they belonged, rarely requiring assistance from others. As a result, the birth of civilisation appears to be ambiguous; only sexual union cannot be used as a criterion of distinction in an absolute sense. Their unity grew gradually through time, from the tiny unit to the large unit, since they shared the same goals and followed the same procedures, which meant they had to work together to establish a social system, which took time to develop”⁴³. Later, those people came to appreciate the value of gathering and storing food grains for later use. To emphasise “the importance of the distribution of properties, it is important to mention that it marks the beginning of social relationships as well as the commencement of a social system. This realisation resulted in expressing oneself freely and having the willingness to share what one possesses with others. As a result, sacrifices on the part of the individual were required to further the interests of society. All of those who had common interests and possessions banded together to form a network of interconnections”⁴⁴. Buddhism pointed out that the primary reason for the disintegration of absolute society was the deterioration of moral ideals, which eventually led to “the degradation of morality itself. Malpractices committed in the name of morality brought the good and the cheerful to their knees. Because of this, the means of reaching happiness have been watered down in their current state. People’s selfishness was brought to light by their own self-centred egos”⁴⁵. According to the Buddha’s teachings in the *aggañña sutta*, this resulted in the greatest revolution in moral standards in the history of humanity⁴⁶.



NOTES

7.6 THE ISSUES OF SOCIO-POLITICAL EQUALITY FROM BUDDHIST LENS

It is widely acknowledged that “the Buddha’s teachings apply to all of humanity, regardless of race, caste, gender, skin color, wisdom or unwisdom, wealth or poverty, and that his teachings are universal. Buddha absolutely rejected the socio-political milieu that stood for right by birth, as established by one’s genetic makeup”⁴⁷. Instead, he devised his own philosophy, according to which all human beings have equal rights in all aspects of their lives. All Buddha’s teachings emphasise “the equality and equal rights of all human beings in society; however, he never forgets to stress their responsibilities as members of society. The Buddha specifically emphasised that all human beings are equal in society; nevertheless, because of ignorance on both the individual and social levels, as well as social dogma and human desire, we create disparities that threaten the very life of society”⁴⁸. In this section, we’ll go over the whole Buddhist perspective on equality from beginning to end. Many of the Buddha’s teachings advocated for the equality of all human beings, and this is one of them. To be more specific, “the three primary teachings of Buddhism are the principles, *Tilakkhana* (three common traits), *metta* (loving-kindness), and the law of *Kamma*. These are all considered to be Buddhist beliefs that symbolise the equality of all humans”⁴⁹.

The Buddha places a higher value on equality than other religions. Besides believing in inequality, he viewed all sentient beings on this planet as equal in terms of their rights and abilities. The Buddhist doctrine of social justice aims to promote equality among all people; “it is important to note that this is accomplished through the well-known principle of ‘*Tilakkhana*,’ which consists of three common characteristics, namely (i) *Aniccatâ*: impermanence, (ii) *Dukkhatâ*: state of suffering, and (iii) *Anattatâ*: non-self”⁵⁰. These three aspects of existence are also referred to as the ‘universal characteristics,’ or in other words, characteristics that are shared by all things and are therefore universally applicable. That which is recommended “in Buddha’s social philosophy for the growth of a sense of universal compassion or loving-kindness (*metta*), as well as the cultivation of creative altruism, is the most effective teaching for social integration and co-ordination. To understand *metta*, one must remember that the Buddha,

Self-Instructional

170 Material



Aggañña Sutta (Digha Nikaya): Theory of Kingship

NOTES

in proposing the deepening and ennoblement of character caused by metta, is not motivated by caste or social class considerations. To understand metta, one must understand metta and the Buddha”⁵¹. Finally, Buddhism emphasises the importance of the law of *Kamma* as a fundamental doctrine. Similarly, to the shadow that follows the person everywhere and at all times in this world as well as the next, as the Buddha declares: “Grain, property, money, all your cherished things, servants, employees and associates... none of these can you take with you; you must lay them all aside”⁵². However, whatever kamma you create, whether with your body, voice, or thought, is your actual property, and you must behave according to the Kamma you have made.

Caste was a primary factor in “the people’s social life during the time of the Buddha. A person who was born into a particular caste could not, under any circumstances, change their social standing during their lifetime. When it comes to this topic, the Buddha’s contribution is his acceptance of the notion that one’s caste can be changed. He put this philosophy into action by inviting people from all castes, both high and poor, into his community of monks, regardless of their social status”⁵³. The Buddha fostered brotherhood, practised love, sympathy, and compassion, and proclaimed the equality of all human beings, regardless of caste or gender, among all people. His order is made up of men and women and social professionals for the cause of peace. Throughout history, “his brotherly approach toward all beings, his concern for the well-being of all living beings, and his messages of compassion and a modest lifestyle have been effective in improving the relations between individual castes. His teachings are geared toward eliminating the distinction between a superior and an inferior, as well as between the rich and the destitute”⁵⁴.

In reality, societal bias is founded on popular views that are held by the majority of people. Human beings were introduced as the Son of God, for example. Buddhist doctrine, may “confidently assert that it has the least discriminatory views toward women, in contrast to such obstacles and bigoted religious beliefs. Without a doubt, the Buddha was the first religious leader to provide equal and unhindered chances for female spiritual development. We can confidently pronounce him to have done so”⁵⁵. The Buddha regularly attacked and questioned the antagonistic attitude toward women on religious and societal grounds throughout his lifetime. The Buddha, in the *Kosala-Samyutta*, refutes “the view that the birth of a daughter was not as much of a cause of

Self-Instructional
Material

171



NOTES

joy as the birth of a son, a belief to which the Brahmins had contributed through their practice of ritualism. Clearly, the Buddha saw that women had a dignified and vital role to play in society, and he defined that role with profound clarity, integrating her smoothly into the social fabric”⁵⁶. The Buddha made a concerted effort to bring about significant improvements in social views toward women. In the Buddhist tradition, women are not seen to be entirely under the control of men, as they are in Western culture. Buddhism liberated the woman from her condition as a chattel and gave her the ability to live an independent living on her own terms. As I. B. Horner put it, “With the expansion of Buddhism, women as spinsters (single, married, and widowed) and widows (with rights and duties that were not restricted to childbearing) became an integral part of society”⁵⁷. According to current trends, women are respected and honoured in a Buddhist society, and they enjoy equal standing with males in terms of respect and honour within their community. Women are also accorded “the same respect and recognition as men in their community”.

In the same way, widow women have the same rights and status as any other woman, including the freedom to marry if they so choose. According to reports, “widows in Buddhist countries have the same rights to remarry as males”⁵⁸. This is a development of Buddhism relevant to modern society since it is concerned with women’s equal rights and status.

Buddhism embraces everyone into its “fraternity without making any distinctions because everybody has an equal right to develop themselves. When it comes to defending the equality of all men, Buddhism does not dismiss or disregard the inequalities that exist between individuals due to other variables such as inheritance, environment, or past karmic influences”⁵⁹. Although human beings may differ in their interests and capacities “because of their diverse historical growth, their essential needs are fundamentally the same on all three levels: material, psychological, and spiritual. Aside from that, the Buddha felt that everyone had the right to seek salvation via meditation. Justiciability entailed the chance for a better life via the exercise of equal rights and liberties. The existence of a society that denies its members equality and justice would make it impossible for that society to function based on nonviolence”⁶⁰. Violence is the law of the jungle, and nonviolence is the law of the land, just as it is in the wilderness. According to the provisions of this legislation, the people’s material and spiritual goals



Aggañña Sutta (Digha Nikaya): Theory of Kingship

must be met with justice. Similar to this, “every adult member of the community has the freedom to choose their representatives for political or religious governing bodies when it comes to electing those representatives. It is an absence of justice when this option is denied to a person”⁶¹.

Conclusion

As a result, we have comprehensively explained the genesis of “the state, society, politics, property, and other aspects of human society that are critical to the governance of the human race. The gregarious nature of man is satisfied when he is joined with members of his own family and members of other families, preparing the path for social existence. Slowly but steadily, a man comes to understand himself and his fellow beings, which eventually leads to the establishment of a government by a person, ruler (king), or a collection of governors”⁶². As a result, the social norms, as well as the boundaries of the governmental administration, have been established. While maintaining objectivity, “the Buddha stressed the fragility of kingdoms and established the link between rulers and those they ruled. The fundamental teachings of the Buddha were impermanence, suffering, and the absence of a self, and these ideas were reflected throughout all of the master’s teachings and speeches. He pushed for the people’s freedom combined with a realisation for mankind to live in peace and perfection”⁶³. Crimes were discovered, and the perpetrators were brought to justice. Gender equality is maintained in an indiscriminatory manner. So, the Buddha’s political ideology serves as a paradigm for future political institutions and organisations and current political institutions and organisations.

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In-Text Questions - 2

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. According to the Aggañña Sutta, the origin of the state is founded on the theory of _____ evolution of nature.
2. The delicious Earth was first tasted by living beings with their _____.
3. The primary reason for the disintegration of absolute society, according to Buddhism, is the deterioration of _____ values.



NOTES

4. The Buddha's teachings emphasize the equality and equal rights of all human beings in _____.
5. The three universal characteristics in Buddhism are impermanence, _____, and non-self.

B. State True or False:

1. The Aggañña Sutta suggests that the origin of the state can be explained solely through the evolution of cosmology.
2. The beings initially existed in the World of Radiance, feeding on rapture.
3. The delicious Earth continued to exist indefinitely as the primary sustenance for living beings.
4. The Buddha's teachings promote inequality based on race, caste, and gender.
5. Women in Buddhist societies are given equal respect and recognition as men.

7.7 SUMMARY

- Early Buddhist views on political obligation and authority are explored in the Pali canon and non-canonical literature.
- Pre-Buddhist Vedic and post-Vedic concepts are compared to understand early Buddhist perspectives.
- Four theological doctrines related to political authority in early Buddhism are identified: monistic, divine invention, magico-religious, and a mutually beneficial agreement.
- The concept of kingship in early Buddhism evolves through the Aggañña Sutta, tracing from a natural state to the establishment of a social order.
- Kingship is seen as a social contract with the Mahasammata elected by the people to maintain peace and order.
- Buddhist texts suggest the state emerged to impose law and order, differentiating kingship from other social structures like chiefdoms.



Aggañña Sutta (Digha Nikaya): Theory of Kingship

NOTES

- Kingship evolved to maintain justice, indicating that economic growth alone cannot eliminate societal issues like theft.
- The Buddhist concept of kingship focuses on moral and ethical governance rather than divine or cosmic authority.
- The Aggañña Sutta of Digha Nikaya describes the origin of the state through cosmic and anthropological evolution.
- Initially, beings existed in the World of Radiance, feeding on rapture and traversing space.
- As the world evolved, beings were drawn to the delicious Earth, resulting in changes in their appearance and societal biases based on skin color.
- Primitive living beings consumed various natural substances like fungi, creepers, and rice as their primary sustenance.
- Gender differentiation and sexual behavior emerged over time, leading to the formation of social units and the development of civilization.
- The concept of societal cooperation and the distribution of properties marked the beginning of social relationships and systems.
- Buddhism attributes the disintegration of absolute society to the deterioration of moral values.
- The Buddha's teachings emphasize the equality of all humans regardless of race, caste, gender, or wealth.
- The principles of Tilakkhana (impermanence, suffering, non-self), metta (loving-kindness), and the law of Kamma are central to promoting equality.
- The Buddha challenged caste-based discrimination and advocated for the inclusion of all castes in his monastic community.
- Buddhist doctrine is less discriminatory towards women compared to other religions, providing equal spiritual development opportunities.
- Buddhism supports the equal rights and status of widows and encourages societal respect and recognition for women.



NOTES

- Everyone has the right to seek salvation and a better life through meditation, and the denial of equal rights undermines justice and nonviolence.

7.8 GLOSSARY

- **Pali Canon:** The collection of scriptures in the Theravada Buddhist tradition, containing teachings attributed to the Buddha.
- **Monistic Perspective:** A theological view where the ruler's authority stems from a cosmic person, implying a divinely constructed social order.
- **Divine Invention:** A concept suggesting the ruler's authority originates from divine creation, portraying the ruler with religious traits.
- **Aggañña Sutta:** A Buddhist text detailing the evolution of human society and kingship, providing insights into the origin of the state and social contract.
- **Khattiya:** A term for the king or ruler in early Buddhist texts, indicating the evolution of kingship from being a protector of laws to the Supreme Ruler.
- **Diggah-Nikaya:** A collection of long discourses in the Pali Canon, containing important Buddhist texts like the Aggañña Sutta.
- **Social Contract Theory:** A theory in political philosophy that views the legitimacy of authority or government as stemming from a contract or agreement among individuals.
- **Kamma (Karma) -** The law of moral causation, where actions have corresponding consequences.
- **World of Radiance -** A realm where beings exist in a luminous state, feeding on rapture.
- **Dukkhatā -** The state of suffering, one of the three universal characteristics in Buddhism.
- **Nonviolence -** A principle of peaceful coexistence and justice in society.



7.9 ANSWERS TO IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

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In-Text Questions - 1

- A.** 1. Buddha
2. Khattiya
3. social contract
4. peace
5. cosmic

- B.** 1. False
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. False

In-Text Questions - 2

- A.** 1. cosmic
2. fingertips
3. moral
4. society
5. suffering

- B.** 1. False
2. True
3. False
4. False
5. True



NOTES

7.10 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. What is mentioned about political thoughts, rights, and duties in ‘Aggañña Sutta’?
2. Explain the idea of kingship and statehood in Buddhism.
3. What does Buddhism say about socio-political equality?
4. What are the four variants of theological doctrine related to political authority in early Buddhism?
5. How does the Buddhist concept of kingship differ from Brahminical notions of kingship?
6. What is the role of the Mahasammata in early Buddhist political thought?
7. How does early Buddhism view the relationship between economic growth and societal issues like theft?
8. How did the beings initially exist according to the Aggañña Sutta?
9. What natural substances did the primitive living beings consume as their primary sustenance?
10. What societal biases emerged as beings’ appearances changed?

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Aggañña Sutta (Digha Nikaya): Theory of Kingship

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NOTES

Self-Instructional
Material

179



NOTES

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NOTES

**UNIT VII: THIRUVALLUVAR–ETHICAL LIFE
AND POLITICS**

**LESSON 8 THIRUVALLUVAR–ETHICAL LIFE AND
POLITICS**



LESSON 8

NOTES

THIRUVALLUVAR–ETHICAL LIFE AND POLITICS

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Structure

- 8.1 Learning Objectives
- 8.2 Introduction
- 8.3 Question on Time and Period of Writing
- 8.4 Importance of Thiruvalluvar and Thirukural
- 8.5 Translations of Thirukural
- 8.6 Personality of Thiruvalluvar
- 8.7 Essentials from the Teachings of Thiruvalluvar
- 8.8 Summary
- 8.9 Glossary
- 8.10 Answers to In-text Questions
- 8.11 Self-Assessment Questions
- 8.12 References/Suggested Readings

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, students should be able to:

- Understand the meaning of question on time and period of writing by Thiruvalluvar
- Discuss the meaning of importance of Thiruvalluvar and Thirukural
- Explain the meaning of translations of Thirukural



NOTES

8.2 INTRODUCTION

Western thought focused primarily on man and society and tended to disregard man's relationship with his maker; oriental thought reversed this trend and focused more on man's relationship to his maker than on man's relationship to man. Valluvar learned the most from both schools of thought and his greatest accomplishment was to combine the two for the first time in thought history.

Thirukkural is one of the world's oldest ethical works that has survived to the present day. It has been praised for centuries and is written in understandable Tamil in the form of couplets. It has been translated into several Indian and European languages. Due to its ethical precepts, the Tamil-speaking people venerate Thirukkural as the Tamil Veda (holy text). In comparison, the Sanskrit book Arthashastra by Kautilya is more well-known. For Indian thought, our studies have been constrained and limited to the Sanskrit literature as the only ancient work on politics and economics, we need to move beyond.

When it comes to the word 'Thirukkural,' 'Thiru' signifies 'holy,' and 'Kural' means 'anything short.' The first line of each Kural has four metric feet, and the second line has three. Kural Venba is the Tamil name for this style of couplet. Four lines make up the metrical composition known as Venba. It is generally acknowledged to be the most challenging form in which to write poetry. Even more, restrictions are placed on the practitioners of the Kural, a smaller Venba. Valluvar voluntarily gave into the tyranny of the uniquely developed Kural meter, and by mastering it, he was able to attain the greatest tension between matter and form. He also empowered words with meaning by engaging in a focused type of verbal exercise. Here, poetry had evolved into a dense work of art that was as meticulously carved as the images on the Mamallapuram rock temples, not a rhyming stream of joyous loquacity. The Kural's flow is very modest and dignified, glittering with audacious thought and vivacious style. The Kural is not an inorganic object that has been mechanically cut. It resembles an organism that has excellent coordination and has been active for 2000 years.

The couplets implicitly assume that all people in India have the same four life goals: *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksha*, which are represented in Tamil as *aram*,



porul, *inbam*, and *vedu*. These can be interpreted as sensuality, material prosperity, upright life, and freedom from the cycle of birth and death in English. However, Thirukkural only addresses the first three objectives. The fourth goal is assumed to be attained automatically if one lives in accordance with the ethical standards outlined in the book.

These couplets are typically credited to a single author who goes by the name Thiruvalluvar. The weaving caste is referred to as Valluvar (According to some interpretations, Valluvar is a subcaste of the Paraiyar people in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. They serve as the Pallars and Paraiyars of Tamil Nadu's hereditary priests. Basically, Valluvar denotes the caste). The Tamil honorific title Thiru is appended to this to obtain the author's name. The person's identity is unknown, even though he is the subject of various folklore. According to identical ideas found in texts from various times, multiple authors offer various dates for the work. It could be as old as the second century BC or as recent as the eighth century AD. Therefore, it is impossible to be positive about either the authorship or the date. Furthermore, we are unsure if there were more couplets than what has been passed down to us. Additionally, it is possible that certain couplets were added afterward. However, we treat it as a single-authored creation or work.

In both its earthly and cosmic surroundings, he considers the magnificent spectacle of the phenomenon of man and sees it in its whole in the open skies of unclouded faith. He pinpoints the sources of interpersonal discord and draws up a thorough code of conduct that would promote harmony both within and without the person. He focuses on the emotional ripple effects of human behavior in all human relationships, such as that between a son and his father, a husband and wife, a citizen and their government, and a soul and God.

In addition to his efforts to accept the human condition in all its complexity, he expresses his insightful insights via the flawless perfection of poetry. Sometimes through drama, sometimes through poetry, he arrives at the highest emotional outcomes. He is a sophisticated author who supercharges his words with meaning and achieves an extraordinary conciseness and an insurmountable density through self-control and aesthetic attention. Because of this, his commentators must extract every bit of meaning from each phrase. Each commentator's success has also been based on the knowledge



NOTES

he brought to bear on the original. The Thirukkural is made up of 1330 Kurals and 133 chapters. Within this, the porul (material things) and paal (division) among the three life goals encompass issues relating to politics, economics, and administration. All these subjects have been interconnected.

8.3 QUESTION ON TIME AND PERIOD OF WRITING

Thiruvalluvar is thought to have lived between the third and the first century B.C., according to evidence. The Chera, Chola, and Pandya dynasties, which ruled over various regions of Tamil Nadu during this time, maintained extensive diplomatic ties with a variety of nations, including Egypt, Greece, and Rome in the west, Burma, Malaysia, and China in the east, Ceylon in the south, and the Himalayan kingdoms in the north. The age of Valluvar is impossible to estimate with any degree of accuracy. The age of Thiruvalluvar has been the subject of drastically divergent theories in the world of Tamil studies. However, there is some literary and historical evidence that supports this claim, but it is merely indicative and not conclusive. The Manimekalai and the Silappathikaram are two well-known epics from the Sangam period. There is internal evidence in these two epics that proves Ilango Adigal, the author of Silappathikaram, and Sathanar, the author of Manimekalai, were contemporaries. Many Tamil scholars concur that the Manimekalai and Silappathikaram texts were composed in the second century A.D. and that the Gajabahu who was worshipped at the Kannagi temple was the Gajabahu of the second century A.D. The Thirukkural has been praised in Manimekalai, and the author is described as “Poyyil Pulavan,” or “the poet who is free from untruth.” Several Thirukkurals have been reverently quoted in Silappathikaram as well. Thiruvalluvar is referred to in several Sangam writings that are clearly from the second century A.D. as the “Divine Poet.” These facts indicate that Thiruvalluvar must have existed prior to the second century A.D.



8.4 IMPORTANCE OF THIRUVALLUVAR AND THIRUKURAL

Before Thiruvalluvar's Kural, there was a sizable body of Sangam poetry. There was Agattiyam, a grammar that had been compiled even earlier, and Tolkappiyam a well-known Tamil grammar, had been created in the second century B.C. These are the pathogens and antigens responsible for Thiruvalluvar's success in Tamil Nadu. After incorporating the best aspects of Buddhism, Jainism, and Vedic Brahmanism into the Tamil value system, Thiruvalluvar did three things: he preserved it, codified it, and expanded upon it. Valluvar, who lived in a time of dogmatic disputes, became an intellectually free man by looking above the petty arguments of his day to the universal truths that underlie and unite all religions. He possessed the insight and capacity to simultaneously comprehend the eternal out of the temporal, the entire out of the part, and the wisdom to see the part in the context of the complete. With a ferocity unmatched in poetry, he afflicted the most dominant traditions of the day. He declared with confidence:

By birth all men are equal;
it is by the differences in their action
that their worth is rendered unequal.

Valluvar's art is dominated by the idea that love is the pinnacle of human expression and that pursuing a life based on love is the highest humanly possible virtue. According to Valluvar, an act of love must be unprompted and unmotivated by the hope of receiving compensation in the afterlife. He believed that a loving gesture should be valued for the immediate satisfaction it brings. It has been discovered that Valluvar created a powerful synthesis of the best aspects of all major religions, choosing from each of those tenets that he felt were the most wholesome and incorporating them into the Tamilian way of thinking about spirituality and ethics. This synthesis has been accomplished with such precision that it does not appear to be at odds with the core of any religion. As a result, followers of various religions started to identify Thiruvalluvar as a follower of their own.



NOTES

8.5 TRANSLATIONS OF THIRUKURAL

The most translated, quoted, and citable piece of Tamil literature is Thirukkural, by Thiruvalluvar. Dr. Graul, a distinguished German scholar, read the poet's arrestingly astute couplet narrated in English. He was so enthralled with it that he learned Tamil so he could read the Kural in its original form before translating it into German in 1854 and Latin in 1856.

The eminent French scholar M. Ariel describes Thiruvalluvar's magnificent work as "*a masterpiece of Tamil literature, one of the highest and purest expressions of human thought*". He continues, "... *that which above all is wonderful in the Kural is the fact that its author addresses himself, without regard to castes, peoples or beliefs, to the whole community of mankind; the fact that he formulates sovereign morality and absolute reason; that he proclaims in their very essence, in their eternal abstractedness, virtue and truth; that he presents, as it were, in one group, the highest laws of domestic and social life; that he is equally perfect in thought, in language, and in poetry, in the austere metaphysical contemplation of the great mysteries of the Divine Nature as in the easy and graceful analysis of the tenderest emotions of the heart*".

Most of the Kurals were translated into Latin by the Italian Jesuit missionary Constantine Joseph Beschi (1680 – 1742), who contrasted Seneca's maxims with those of Thiruvalluvar in his commentary. The Kural was translated into English and published in 1886 by the renowned Englishman Dr. G. U. Pope. Dr. Pope used parallel sections from writers including Horace, Aeschylus, Dante, Shakespeare, Brownning, Wordsworth, Manu, Burgin, and Catullus in his commentary on the Kural.

The Kural's translation into European languages appears to have done a lot to allay European intellectuals' concerns about the nature and culture of the Indian people, especially those of European missionaries. The European Christian missionaries held the opinion that non-Christian cultures have not promoted the values of humility, kindness, and forgiving wrongs. In contrast to this, Dr. Pope, who performed the English translation of the Kural in 1886 highlighted that these emotions are well placed in the Indian



traditions and culture through the Kural. Therefore, it is not surprising that Thirukkural is the Tamil book that has been translated the most. In addition to Sanskrit, Urdu, Marathi, Bengali, Hindi, Telugu, and Malayalam, it has also been translated into Latin, German, French, Dutch, Finnish, Polish, Russian, Chinese, Fijian, Malay, and Burmese. In fact, the Thirukkural has been translated into 82 different languages.

For more than 2,000 years, Valluvar's ideas have dominated Tamil intellectual life. The Thirukkural is regarded as the Tamil Veda by the Tamil people. The Thiruvalluvar Malai, often known as "The Garland of Thiruvalluvar," is a collection of panegyrics performed by both Thiruvalluvar's contemporaries and those who came long after him.

8.6 PERSONALITY OF THIRUVALLUVAR

No contemporary documentation exists from which we could infer Thiruvalluvar's personality. However, there are a lot of stories that have been passed down about him through the generations, as well as some internal evidence in his works that may help one imagine Thiruvalluvar. Thiruvalluvar, according to tradition, was a weaver by trade. In some places, it also mentions that the term 'Valluvar' refers to a caste of men who were either priests or soothsayers and used to ride elephants to announce royal announcements. Valluvar's prefix, 'Thiru,' is a Tamil word that denotes something sacred. The words 'Holy Couplet' and 'Thiruvalluvar' refer to the same holy man who is a member of the Valluva community. He is praised as Deivappulavar; is also known by the names Nayanaar, Poyyirpulavar, and Perunavalalar. Thirukural is a collection of couplets that discuss morality, politics, and the economy. Thirukural has 133 Athikarams fewer than 1330 Kurals. Thirukkural is divided into three books: - Book 1: Aram or Dharma, Book 2: Porul or Artha, and Book 3: Inpam or Kama. In 57 chapters over the three books, Porutpal openly addresses the monarch and this state in Arasiyal and Angariyal. One of the classic Tamil writings, Thirukkural, focuses solely on the discussion of politics.



NOTES

In-Text Questions - 1

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. Thirukkural is revered as the _____ Veda.
2. Thiruvalluvar's couplets are written in the _____ Venba style.
3. The life goal of _____ is assumed to be attained automatically if one lives ethically according to Thirukkural.
4. Thirukkural has been translated into _____ different languages.
5. Thiruvalluvar synthesized elements of Buddhism, Jainism, and _____ Brahmanism.

B. State True or False:

1. Thirukkural addresses the life goal of moksha explicitly.
2. Thiruvalluvar is definitely known to have lived in the third century B.C.
3. Thirukkural is composed of 1330 couplets.
4. Thiruvalluvar's identity is precisely known and documented.
5. Thirukkural has only been translated into Indian languages.

8.7 ESSENTIALS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THIRUVALLUVAR

Valluvar was an existentialist because, like Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Jean-Paul Sartre, he believed that the only information that is worthwhile is that which directly affects the human experience. The sole goal of learning, in Valluvar's opinion, is to improve one's quality of life. He rejected any knowledge as useless that was unrelated to living and unrelated to learning.

The design and structure of the Kural, which has 133 chapters with 10 Kurals each, are intriguing to study. The 133 chapters themselves are divided into three primary categories. The first topic is *Arattu Pal*, which refers to the book on duty



Thiruvalluvar–Ethical Life and Politics

or Aram and has 380 Kurals. The second is a 700 Kural book called *Porut Pal*, meaning the book of wealth. The third and last book is *Kamathu Pal*, which has 250 Kurals and is about sexual affection. The Kural is generally criticised under the insulated presumption that it is based on the Sanskrit ideas of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Those who have been advocating this hypothesis have had difficulty providing explanations.

Those who have been advocating this idea have had a difficult time articulating why Thiruvalluvar neglected to address Moksha (Liberation), which is known in Tamil as Veedu. G.U. Pope questioned whether Thiruvalluvar's decision to simply consider the practical side of things prevented him from explaining Veedu or Moksha. Additionally, he reasoned that Valluvar might not have been content with the glimpses he had seen into the future of mankind and had been patiently waiting for the light. The most reasonable conclusion is that Thiruvalluvar's categorization was founded on entirely different ideas than those used in the Sanskritic classification. Thiruvalluvar's explanation of Aram differs significantly from the DharmaShastras' explanation of Dharma in terms of content.

Contrary to the Dharmashastras, Thiruvalluvar does not specify distinct Arams for different groups of people. His idea of Aram is one that everyone can relate to. As a person progresses through several stages of evolution, he assigns that person with different responsibilities. He outlines the obligations of a person in their roles as a family member towards their parents, spouse, and children; as a community member towards his or her favourable, adverse, or neutral neighbours; and as a state citizen towards the state's head of state. In each of these connections, he must show compassionate intent and practice moral behaviour.

The *Porut Pal*

Politics-related discussion of Artha is the focus of the second book. The king's moral outlook is thoroughly lauded. The six components of a kingdom are mentioned. It is expected of the king to be good, fair, and impartial. The three main vices of the monarchy are miserliness, vanity and sensuality. It is believed that *artha* and *dharma* are equivalent. Thiruvalluvar, which means discipline in Aram. Aram is the cornerstone of

NOTES



NOTES

human existence. Politics and society do not really differ all that much, and Aram connects them. Both Aram (Dharma) and Porul (Meaning) are emphasised in Thirukkural.

Neither the *artha* idea in Sanskrit nor the Porut Pal of Thiruvalluvar are comparable. Only a few chapters in Porut Pal discuss sovereignty and the art of government, in contrast to Arthashastra's extensive discussion of these topics. Additionally, whenever the term "King" is used in the Kural, it refers to a monarch without any divine authority who is expected to uphold virtue and abstain from vice. The ruler is portrayed as embodying the values and virtues of the populace. This part contains several chapters on the special virtues necessary for maintaining and enhancing interpersonal interactions in the social polity, as well as on the self-respect, truthfulness, good character, and honor of the citizen. Valluvar, after analysing the inner spiritual development of the individual in the first book, then moves on to analyse the public existence of such an individual, vis-à-vis Society, in the second book on Porul. Evidently, the idea behind Thiruvalluvar is that only a man who has proven his value as an individual by his moral, cultural and spiritual maturity is suitable for entering the larger world of public life and filling a useful role there.

The word Dharma can be readily translated to mean "*aram*" without retaining its religious sense. The better term is order. Thiruvalluvar tried to suggest that order is the cornerstone of human civilisation and that wherever order is reflected in human thought, speech, and action, there will inevitably be advancement and peace. Thirukkural provides the rules of order for both a man's internal and external behavior. But sadly, Thirukkural does not so 57 chapters examine polity from the ruler's point of view, whereas Arthashastra and Dharmashastra more often act as guides for the king. Advice is delivered to the king. The Thirukkural's last passages are addressed to the general public. According to several authors, the discussion of civic society is the focus of Thirukkural. Manu Dharma is not the same as Aram of Valluvar. Aram, according to Thiruvalluvar, has a socio-political rather than religious significance and finds expression in the home. It has no connection to Varna at all. Ashrawa, ceremonies, and sacrifices. In Valluvar's opinion, love is the driving force behind all good and productive things that happen in life. Valluvar views the family as the fundamental building block of society.



Polity and State

The political system (statecraft) of Thiruvalluvar is centered on royalty rather than democracy. So, the king must abide by the laws of justice. Without a hint of realpolitik or cynicism, Thiruvalluvar describes a state of perfection that will be ruled by a righteous king. Therefore, Thiruvalluvar's state is an example of applied ethics.

King is at the core of the state, Valluvar outlines. The fundamental idea of society is the family. His state is that the family has expanded, and the king's influence over his subjects is similar to that of a father. According to Valluvar, freedom is defined as behavior within the bounds of Aram and is guaranteed by performing one's moral obligations. Kural establishes that one must act in accordance with his knowledge and abilities, always aiming to treat people righteously. This could be characterised as self-imposed obligations being fulfilled voluntarily. The society of Thiruvalluvar is not divided into *Varnas*. *Ashramas* are not emphasised. It aimed to strengthen the foundational family unit. Kural laments a householder who seeks *sanyasa* and gives up the world. Kural evaluates all people based on their actions rather than their birth or fortune. It is radical thought in the context of India, and Kural's vision of the ideal polity focuses on an organic, self-supporting society.

Role of King, His Attributes, and Justice

Thiruvalluvar assumed an executive-style state led by a monarch in accordance with the prevalent form of governance of the period. The king has been entrusted with creating, obtaining, preserving, and distributing wealth. The king is expected to possess an army, subjects, food, ministers, allies, and forts in order to complete these tasks, which bears similarities to the Saptanga theory of Arthashastra.

Thiruvalluvar enumerates several favourable traits of the king. These include boldness, valor, grace, and virtue as well as courage, energy, liberality, wisdom, diligence, and learning. It is assumed that the king would be cordial and modest. Thiruvalluvar also enumerates characteristics that lower the king's qualities. Bias, mean or meagre, and suppressing attachments are a few of them. Thiruvalluvar portrays a picture of a nation characterised by law and order and fairness for all. He emphasises the need for a just government from the king. He exhorts the king to launch a thorough

NOTES



NOTES

investigation and to administer justice and punishment impartially. He points out that the scepter ultimately triumphs over the sword in battle. The death penalty for the wicked is not prohibited by Thiruvalluvar because meeting out punishment is a duty. Given that the overarching tone of his work is one of non-violence, it is odd that he would support the death penalty. He mentions a King who is powerless to uphold law and order, as:

“Wealth is worse far than poverty,
in a realm where the King renders no justice.” (Kural 558)

Tyranny, which Thiruvalluvar fiercely criticises for its damaging repercussions, is always a possibility in the executive type of governance that he depicts. He compares an evil and repressive monarch to a killer. He forecasts that the state’s wealth will be depleted as a result of the king’s brutality and the oppressed people’s grief. He asserts that a king who engages in violence will perish. He claims that the king’s unfairness even affects the natural world, ‘...causing the rain to stop and the cows to produce less milk’. Therefore, injustice will result in complications. Thiruvalluvar clearly asserts that the tyrant will ultimately lose everything. In a nutshell, Thiruvalluvar envisioned the king and the state as an organised structure regulated by just laws. He highlights justice as a fundamental tenet of government management. In a sense, the king is given the function of a social planner.

Valluvar forbids the King from collecting taxes from the populace by abusing state authority:

The King that goes a-begging
is like the dacoit, who, armed with a spear,
shouts, “Give”.

Thirukkural envisions an ideal monarchy. As per Thiruvalluvar “He is a lion among monarchs who owns these things army, people, wealth, counsel, friends, and forts.” King is expected to adhere to specific requirements as he oversees the nation’s administration. A King needs to be an intelligent man. King needs to read various scholarly books to get more educated. He ought to be wise, diligent, and honest, among other virtues. Apart from everything else, the monarch needs self-control. The monarch must understand how to expand the kingdom’s resources, strengthen the



treasury, protect his wealth, and make judicious use of it. The ruler must possess firmness but refrain from becoming harsh. He must act as a god and defend his subjects. The king ought to be familiar with the nation's resources and utilise all of them. The produced goods must be distributed fairly. The people must be freed from extreme hunger, incurable plagues, and terrible violence under the king's control.

He urges the State to balance justice with mercy rather than terrorise the populace. To the King, he says:

Raise the rod high
but let it fall gently upon the criminal,
Of what avail is a tune
if it isn't *en rapport* with the song?
of what avail is the eye
if it doesn't move to and fro with compassion. (Kural 562 & 573)

The monarch should be extremely knowledgeable since it is necessary for the king "to speak in the assembly without the fullness of knowledge, which is like playing chess without squares". He could experience both anxieties and not fear what ought to be feared. Kural emphasises the ruler's self-discipline. The golden rule is to always follow the monarch. If the king corrects his own error, the populace will do the same. The king should avoid acquaintance with evildoers and always seek out the company of the wise.

The king's responsibility to defend the nation's citizens is his or her most significant obligation. Realising promptly what always occurs is a king's primary responsibility. The king needs to build a strong espionage apparatus in order to learn about what is happening. The spies are tasked with keeping an eye out for suspicious activity and informing the king about it. The institution of spies holds a lot of significance for Thiruvalluvar. According to Valluvar, the king's two eyes should be the espionage service and reputable texts on diplomacy.

The king needs to pay attention to the people working there. The idea behind the fundamental principle of hiring the right person for the appropriate job: "...which the king does not regard all alike but regards each according to his merit, and many



NOTES

dwell happily on that account.” The king must refrain from disregarding his regular obligations. He should keep in mind the state’s objective and purpose. Kural counsels the king to set high standards for himself. The ruler must smile and go on even when faced with setbacks. Further, he advises using a simile to provide an appropriate solution for both the monarch and the citizen, saying:

The flower of the floating plant
is as high as the level of the water;
a man’s greatness is as high
as the level of his mind (Kural 595)

People are one of the key components of the state. The people retain full power in monarchies as well. The king ought to consistently follow the wishes of the populace. The king ought to always be very amiable towards the populace. Valluvar understood that the power of the state’s sovereign served as the sanction for every virtue and morality. He states in Kural No. 543:

That which furnishes basic support
to virtue and to scripture
is the sceptre of the king

Administrators of the Kingdom and their Attributes

To efficiently manage the state, the monarch needs advisors, soldiers, and other authorities. Thiruvalluvar has a lot to say about the responsibilities and characteristics of these functionaries. He explains how to choose them and take care of them. Thiruvalluvar advises caution when choosing ministers, describing them as the king’s eyes. He suggests hiring well-known individuals and giving them a test run. The king should then delegate jobs without mistrust after that. He is implying that once the king has faith in an appointee, the king should stop watching him/her closely. He is adamant that they should not only be “yes men,” but also incisive critics who are not scared to voice their opinions. He anticipates that the ministers will be knowledgeable, focused, able to offer timely counsel, pragmatic in their approach, and not places of concealment for betrayal.



The administration maintains a staff of envoys and diplomatic missions. Thiruvalluvar recommends that the monarch look for an ambassador who possesses the following traits: friendliness, breeding, loyalty, intelligence, sociability, bravery, persuasive scholarship and sagacity. He anticipates the ambassador will speak in a cordial and offensive-free manner. Even if his life is in danger, the ambassador should insist that his king is righteous.

The state also needs to have espionage capabilities in addition to diplomats. No spies, no success, is how Thiruvalluvar defines its purpose. Spies serve as the king's eyes and are essential for gathering information. Their duty is to keep an eye on the king's servants, relatives, and adversaries. As a result, Thiruvalluvar anticipates the use of spies in both local and international operations. Spies should be beyond question, bold, trustworthy, and close. They should travel everywhere, even dressed as holy men, whose capacity to acquire access is superior to that of commoners. Thiruvalluvar proposes seeking a second source's confirmation of the spy's claims in order to ensure their veracity. It is crucial that spies be strangers to one another for this to function. Thiruvalluvar instructs the king to never publicly honour a spy in order to protect their identity.

There cannot be a king without his courtiers. Thiruvalluvar gives some wise words of advice for the courtiers on how to act. They are not supposed to be too near or too far from the king. He forbids them from pursuing the king's secrets or exchanging knowing glances in front of him. They should have the ability to read the court's energy well and offer insightful commentary. They must, of course, treat the monarch magnificently.

Thiruvalluvar goes into exhaustive detail on the ministry. Valluvar declares, "*A minister is one who is wise in the choice of means and reason and skilled in the execution of rare enterprises.*" The ministry is a crucial component of the state. The advice provided by ministers to the king as he performs his duties is crucial. The ministry assists the king based on resource availability and scenario analysis. The ministers must take care of every other aspect, including the techniques employed to carry out the king's policies. Ministers assist the king in overcoming challenges when he meets them. The king makes judgements with the counsel of his ministers, who also assist in swiftly putting those decisions into action. The king's tasks should not be abandoned



NOTES

or unattended; otherwise, stress may build among the populace, which could result in unrest. In order to carry out their duties in a morally upright and honest manner, ministers need to possess a good understanding of the law. Valluvar asserts: “Far better are seventy crores of enemies for a king than a minister at his side who intends his ruin.”

A minister must possess competence in order to contribute to the success of that state. Ministers must be able to persuade the monarch in a persuasive way and speak with eloquence in order to successfully carry out their tasks. Ministers must also provide data in a systematic, logical, and meaningful way. Valluvar places a strong emphasis on ends and means. According to Kural, the use of pure means is crucial in both favourable and unfavourable circumstances. A solid purpose is necessary. Only the ministers can demonstrate these.

War, Strategy, and Diplomacy

The king needs to be both good on offense and defense in order to wage war. A fort was the most effective type of defense at the time. According to Thiruvalluvar, a good fort will include clear streams, wide-open spaces, hills, and dense woods. Walls that are tall, thick, and impenetrable must be used to build the fort. In the event of a siege, it should be challenging to seize and well-supplied with food. It should have a garrison of strong, combative men. A successful army will outwit its adversaries’ strategies and advance. Desertion, disaffection, and niggardliness have no place in such a successful force. Despite the military organisation’s hierarchical structure, Thiruvalluvar asserts that without strong leadership, the army will disintegrate.

If the king’s army is made up of brave and polite warriors, that is believed to be the measure of his wealth. Thiruvalluvar lists several qualities that warriors should have. They must be immune to corruption. They ought not to be bargained away by anyone. They should unite and overcome death itself. They ought to be courageous, honorable, and unwavering. Thiruvalluvar praises a soldier’s main virtue, which is bravery. He says that showing courage under adversity is a sign of manliness. It is stated that a brave soldier would be willing to forfeit his life for immortality.

Many remarks about military tactics are made by Thiruvalluvar. As the first step in defeating a foe, he advises picking the appropriate location for combat. However, he



Thiruvalluvar–Ethical Life and Politics

takes care to highlight that men fighting in their native territory are tough to beat. Following the selection of the proper location, the choice of timing is crucial for success. He instructs the king to grasp the opportunity to launch an attack when the opportunity to do so is mature. Thiruvalluvar is aware that zeal cannot replace knowledge. He advises that before taking any action, one should carefully consider the strength of their own forces, the intended deed, and the locations of allies and opponents. He suggests avoiding battles with powerful adversaries and siding with the underdogs instead. Thiruvalluvar gives a comprehensive list of flaws to look for in other monarchs. It is claimed that kings who are cowardly, naive and unfriendly are readily captured. Individuals that act in a mistaken, neglectful and shameless manner. It is also believed that kings who possess blind rage and excessive passion are readily defeated.

Picking and choosing enemies requires strategy. Thiruvalluvar encourages careful preparation, strengthening, defending one's own positions and decisive action when waging battle. He issues a warning that enemies who are hated but unconquered will strike and overthrow the king. The danger of fighting alone in a hostile environment must also be avoided. Thiruvalluvar specifically advises turning one of two foes into a friend if possible. He wisely recommends that people facing difficulty keep all their choices open.

Contrary to what has been observed, Thiruvalluvar is not a combatant. He is extremely against taking that stance. He says in a poetic way that war is such anathema that it ought not to be yearned for. When Thiruvalluvar writes that the world is safe under a ruler who can turn enemies into allies, one can tell that his heart is truly in favour of peace. In light of this philosophy, Thiruvalluvar adopts a pragmatic stance devoid of any pessimism.

For diplomacy, Ambassadors, in Valluvar's view, are essential. Kural outlines the requirements for becoming an ambassador. "A loving native, high birth, and manners that captivate princes," are listed as prerequisites for an ambassador. An in-depth knowledge of politics is crucial for the ambassador. He needs to communicate effectively. Valluvar claims that he is the ambassador who bravely seeks the welfare of his sovereign, even if it requires sacrificing his life.

NOTES



NOTES

Forts & Fortification

The Thirukkural contains a separate chapter on forts. Strong, impregnable forts with high height and thickness are required. The fort is home to all weapons and equipment required for battle. It goes without saying that this stronghold is crucial for defense as well as for those who assault it. A fortress needs to have a fort of waters, a clearing, a hill, and a neighboring forest. It cannot be conveniently kept because of the way it is constructed. Within the fort is everything that would be required for survival in an emergency. The army, its bravery, and its defense of the fortress are all very important. It should be impossible to corrupt the army. They must always resist together. The army should be able to repel the enemy's advance.

Allies

When analysing the value of allies in the international arena, Kural believes that friendship is the hardest one to win because, in Valluvar's opinion, it is the best weapon against one's enemies. According to Thirukkural, friendship is what keeps things from going wrong, encourages people to choose the correct path, and shares in suffering during difficult times. The king must know who his enemies are, both inside and outside the state. There is no benefit to the king in maintaining good ties with his subjects on their own; he must do so. Kural defines the welfare state and the king as the welfare king, who, through his compassion and good judgement, vanquishes evil and upholds peace and advancement.

Philosophers like Valluvar are known for their positive interactions with all living things. They have the capacity to both receive and provide devotion. Friendship forces new viewpoints and breaks down the rigidities of isolated pride. On the other hand, individuals who have alienated themselves are unable to re-enter the sources of their own being for nourishment since they have lost the ability to do so. Therefore, Valluvar is justified in asking:

Is there anything more difficult to achieve
than friendship?

Is there anything as protective against foes
as friendship? (Kural 781)



According to Thiruvalluvar, friendship is tested most effectively in times of difficulty because most friends like to gather around you when times are good and forsake you when times are tough. Thiruvalluvar offers the following pearl of knowledge:

There is some good even about adversity,
for it gives you a measuring rod
with which
you may unstintingly measure your real friends.
Friends,
who are descended out of the true stock of love,
cease not to love
even those who have betrayed them.
Solitude is better
than the company of those
who, like the unbroken colt,
throw the rider down to the ground
in the midst of the battle-field. (Kurals 796, 807 & 814)

The friendship of those who would adore you in secret but despise you in public is severely discouraged by Valluvar. In fact, the Kural contains five chapters in which Valluvar delves deeply into the psychology of friendship and exposes the superficiality of life to reveal its gruesome reality.

Economy

A full treatise on economics is not in Thiruvalluvar's commentary on the economy. The crucial issues of poverty and prosperity are instead the focus; he criticises poverty and considers how to advance prosperity. He expresses a vision of collaborative work done for society's overall good. Although Thiruvalluvar does not address the causes of poverty, he strongly condemns it. He claims that being poor is not fun. It does not offer a way to be saved. Being poor is a miserable state. The words of a poor man are



NOTES

meaningless. Even a mother would frown at a poor person, Thiruvalluvar writes in a poignant couplet.

Thiruvalluvar places agriculture at the center of all activities. He exalts the farmer as the provider of the world's food. He calls farming the ideal profession. He claims that ploughmen never turn away beggars. He counsels farmers to weed and protect the crop more than to irrigate it, and to apply manure instead of plowing. The works of the physiocrats of a later era seem to support Thiruvalluvar's belief that agriculture was the most significant economic activity.

Several interpersonal skills were highlighted as resources for fostering economic prosperity among the elements that influence it. His production function acknowledges the value of human abilities as production components in contemporary parlance. The capacity to learn and gain knowledge is one such ability. Lifelong learning is encouraged by Thiruvalluvar. The building up of human capital is what we refer to as nowadays. Insanity is condemned by him. The uninformed, according to him, are like salty soil: there but completely useless. He compares the taught to people who only have two wounds on their faces, using a gruesome metaphor, while the unlearned have two eyes. He describes knowledge as a form of riches and says it never diminishes. Thiruvalluvar calls the sense of hearing "the wealth of signs of wealth" since it is one method of learning. Men are fed through the ear, he says, therefore they should keep their senses open to emerging knowledge. The attainment of wisdom, which Thiruvalluvar refers to as an inner fortress, is the aim of study. The wise are also visionary. They basically have everything. According to Thiruvalluvar, excellent company strengthens a sound mind.

A productive economy also requires human labour. Thiruvalluvar provides suggestions for attracting and keeping staff. In a move that echoes a later generation's idea of marginal productivity, he calls on companies to hire people who will increase income. He advises hiring managers to look for staff that are knowledgeable, wise, and obedient. The employee begs the employer not to mistrust him once it is established that he is conscientious. As we already observed, the advice offered to monarchs is also beneficial to normal people. In addition to effort and knowledge, Thiruvalluvar



Thiruvalluvar–Ethical Life and Politics

emphasises the need of energy in the pursuit of prosperity. He asserts that if a person is vigorous, prosperity will find its way to them. A strong mind is another asset since people with strong wills are not deterred by failure. He exhorts one to set lofty goals in every situation. He also recommends conducting thorough cost-benefit analyses before beginning any project. Thiruvalluvar emphasises his point by drawing a comparison between the effects of vigor and those of sloth. He claims that sloth will eliminate virtue, increase immorality, and demolish one's home. Sloth, forgetfulness, and procrastination are some of the harmful factors.

Thiruvalluvar appears to be aware that sound health has a role in economic activities. He offers sound, common-sense guidance on maintaining good health. He recommends eating in moderation and only after a previous meal has been completely digested. He advises physicians to consider the patient, the condition, and the passage of time. This would be referred to as holistic care in modern parlance. Thiruvalluvar advises against drinking wine. Additionally, he opposes gambling. He points out that gambling causes a person to lose reputation, sorrow, and family possessions. There will be difficult times in life. To maintain a balanced viewpoint, Thiruvalluvar counsels. He warns against becoming excessively overjoyed or overly depressed in times of sadness. This instruction is reminiscent of Buddhism's 'middle way'. He suggests making light of misfortune when it occurs. Nothing else has a better chance of defeating it.

He understands the value of having a social conscience. Without excellent men, society will collapse, he claims. The pursuit of community advancement is regarded as magnificent. People from all around the world will swarm to those who are engaged in social work. He presents an idealised view of the economy as a result. At the center are farmers. People who are awake and in moderation are skilled at interacting with others. They labor diligently and with vigor. Not only is wealth spent, but it is also distributed. People have private interests, yet they also care about society and are charitable. Large cities play no role in his economy. Almost nothing is discussed regarding the state's role in the economy. Thiruvalluvar hence advocates for minimal to no government involvement in economic matters. He tends to favour collaboration over competition while pursuing economic goals. Therefore, it is appropriate to refer to his economy as a cooperative semi-socialist commonwealth.

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Conclusion

Its capital was probably restricted to the southern region of the subcontinent because it was written in Tamil. It does, in fact, contain influences from the Arthashastra, which academics point out had a considerably wider audience because it was written in Sanskrit. However, Thiruvalluvar differs from Kautilya in a number of significant ways. Here, we list a handful of them. On power, Kautilya went into detail. Justice was emphasised by Thiruvalluvar. Additionally, Thiruvalluvar appears to grant the state a relatively minor role in the economy. On the other hand, the condition of Kautilya had a substantial effect on the economy. The Artha Shastra was written with a sense of reality and worldliness. Contrarily, Thirukkural endures throughout a treatise on moral behaviour. As a result, its impact is best observed in how frequently common people adhere to its principles. Thiruvalluvar's political and economic theories have several noteworthy characteristics. Thirukkural is not a sophisticated work on statecraft, in contrast to Kautilya's Artha Shastra. The general ethical precepts that underpin the work are the source of the behavior it promotes. Thiruvalluvar did not seek to assist any one ruler in gaining control, as Kautilya is thought to have sought to do. His articles are intended to serve as general advice for anyone in charge of the state. He does not go into detail or particulars. He uses terse language to make his points because his language and form are so brief.

The government, monarchy, and community are expertly explained by Valluvar. Sociological ethics are covered in the Kural. It establishes standards and promotes social harmony, brotherhood, and accommodation. Among the members of the society, it aimed to promote amity, peace, and kindness. In the form of morals and messages, the illustrious and cherished author Valluvar has instilled moral and social teaching to uphold peace, brotherhood, and justice. In Tamil ethical literature, Thirukkural holds a prominent position. Although it is not a book on political theory in the strictly defined sense, it does contain social, moral, and political directives. The aura of dogmatism is completely absent. When issuing political injunctions, Kural uses a moderate tone. Its instructions are clear and simple to comprehend.



In-Text Questions - 2

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. Thiruvalluvar believed that the only worthwhile information is that which directly affects the _____.
2. The three sections of Thirukkural are Arattu Pal, Porut Pal, and _____.
3. Thiruvalluvar's concept of Aram is applicable to everyone and focuses on _____ behavior.
4. According to Thiruvalluvar, the king should possess attributes like boldness, valor, and _____.
5. Thiruvalluvar places _____ at the center of economic activities.

B. State True or False:

1. Thiruvalluvar's classification includes the concept of Moksha.
2. Thirukkural suggests that the king should have divine authority.
3. Thiruvalluvar considers poverty a significant social issue.
4. The concept of Aram in Thirukkural is more socio-political than religious.
5. Thiruvalluvar recommends having ministers who are "yes men."

8.8 SUMMARY

- Western thought focused on man and society, oriental thought on man's relationship with his maker; Valluvar combined both.
- Thirukkural is an ancient ethical text in Tamil, translated into many languages, revered as the Tamil Veda.
- Thirukkural's style uses short, dense couplets with a unique meter, balancing form and meaning.
- The text addresses the life goals of dharma, artha, and kama, assuming moksha is attained through ethical living.



NOTES

- Thiruvalluvar's identity and the exact period of the Thirukkural's composition are uncertain.
- The text covers human relationships, politics, economics, and personal conduct, promoting harmony and love.
- Valluvar synthesized elements of Buddhism, Jainism, and Vedic Brahmanism into Tamil ethics.
- Thirukkural has been widely translated and praised for its universal ethical precepts.
- Thiruvalluvar's personality and exact life details are unknown, but he is traditionally considered a weaver and a revered holy figure.
- Thiruvalluvar valued knowledge that directly impacts human life and rejected unrelated learning.
- His work, Thirukkural, comprises 133 chapters divided into three sections: Arattu Pal (duty, 380 verses), Porut Pal (wealth, 700 verses), and Kamathu Pal (sexual affection, 250 verses).
- Thirukkural's classification differs from the Sanskrit Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha, excluding Moksha (liberation).
- Thiruvalluvar's concept of Aram is universally applicable, focusing on moral responsibilities in various human roles without discriminating among different groups.
- The book emphasizes virtues in governance, portraying the king as a non-divine leader expected to uphold justice and virtue.
- Thiruvalluvar's notion of Aram (duty) is socio-political rather than religious, distinct from Manu Dharma.
- His political views centered on monarchy, advocating a just and ethical ruler akin to a social planner.
- The role of the king includes safeguarding wealth, maintaining law and order, and upholding justice, which involves fair punishment.



Thiruvalluvar–Ethical Life and Politics

- The king must be wise, diligent, and self-disciplined, supported by ministers chosen for their abilities and integrity.
- Military strength is essential, with strategic warfare and a well-fortified state being crucial elements.
- Thiruvalluvar emphasizes the value of allies and friendships, advocating for alliances and peace.
- He provides practical advice on managing ministers, diplomats, and spies for effective governance.
- Thirukkural advocates for economic prosperity, placing agriculture at the center of economic activities and condemning poverty.

NOTES

8.9 GLOSSARY

- **Thirukkural:** An ancient Tamil text consisting of ethical couplets.
- **Moksha (Veddu):** It refers to liberation from the cycle of birth and death.
- **Kural Venba:** The metrical style of Thirukkural couplets.
- **Tamil Veda:** A term used to describe Thirukkural, indicating its reverence in Tamil culture.
- **Porut Pal:** Wealth or material prosperity, the second section of Thirukkural.
- **Kamathu Pal:** Sexual affection or desire, the third section of Thirukkural.
- **Moksha:** Liberation or release from the cycle of rebirth; not addressed in Thirukkural.
- **Realpolitik:** Politics based on practical and material factors rather than moral or ideological considerations.
- **Espionage:** It refers to spying or gathering intelligence.
- **Physiocrats:** It refers to 18th-century economists who emphasized agriculture as the source of wealth.



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8.10 ANSWERS TO IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

In-Text Questions - 1

- A.** 1. Tamil
2. Kural
3. Moksha
4. 82
5. Vedic

- B.** 1. False
2. False
3. True
4. False
5. False

In-Text Questions - 2

- A.** 1. human experience
2. Kamathu Pal
3. moral
4. virtue
5. agriculture

- B.** 1. False
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. False



8.11 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Describe Thiruvalluvar's perspectives on the State.
2. Highlight Thiruvalluvar's opinions on kingship and justice.
3. Evaluate the Thirukkural notion of politics critically.
4. What are the four life goals assumed in Thirukkural?
5. How is Thiruvalluvar traditionally described in terms of occupation and caste?
6. What is unique about the Thirukkural's poetic structure?
7. Which three life goals does Thirukkural address?
8. What has been the global impact of Thirukkural in terms of translation?
9. What are the three main sections of Thirukkural and how many verses do they contain?
10. How does Thiruvalluvar's concept of Aram differ from the DharmaShastras?
11. What is the primary role of the king according to Thiruvalluvar?
12. Describe the importance of friendship in Thiruvalluvar's philosophy.
13. What does Thiruvalluvar consider the ideal profession, and why?

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UNIT VIII: BASAVANNA

LESSON 9 BASAVANNA



LESSON 9

BASAVANNA

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Structure

- 9.1 Learning Objectives
- 9.2 Introduction
- 9.3 Life and Development
- 9.4 Philosophy through Poetry and Vachanas
- 9.5 Democracy
- 9.6 Duties
- 9.7 Religion and Secularism
- 9.8 Kayaka
- 9.9 Summary
- 9.10 Glossary
- 9.11 Answers to In-text Questions
- 9.12 Self-Assessment Questions
- 9.13 References/Suggested Readings

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, students should be able to:

- Give a brief description of the ancient philosopher Basavanna's philosophy through poetry and Vachanas (writings in the Kannada literature).
- Evaluate Basavanna's idea against social injustices existing at that time.
- Discuss ideas of democracy, duties assigned to men; idea of religious duties and secularism.



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9.2 INTRODUCTION

Today's problems with humanity are more complex than ever before. Man possesses unparalleled strength and wisdom, without a doubt, yet these accomplishments have also sparked unmatched change, which has made life even more perplexing. The world around us is constantly evolving. More than at any other time in our history, we are in dire need of spiritual outreach currently. We can learn from the great poets and saints of the world how to develop the spiritual resilience required to escape the rut of mundane daily life. One of India's greatest spiritual teachers, Basaveshwara or Basavanna, was a saint, poet, and impassioned social reformer from the state of Karnataka.

Basavanna's political ideas are complex and cannot be traced in one segment, for that one needs to critically analyse various of his 'vachanas' (writings in the Kannada literature) in-depth, and through this one can see his diverse vision of social, political, cultural, and so on the ideology of the great Indian philosopher. The peculiarity of his vachanas is that they cannot be restricted to a single theory or ideology but each of the vachana provides varied meanings in relation to the time and space of concern. Furthermore, they need to be interpreted properly to obtain the correct meaning.

Basavanna was a philosopher, statesman, poet in the Kannada language, and social reformer born during the rule of the Kalachuri-dynasty under Bijjala I in Karnataka, India. He majorly contributed to the 12th-century socio-economic-religious-political revolution through his poetry, known as Vachanas, and raised social awareness. He disregarded superstitions, rituals, and discrimination based on socioeconomic class and gender. He created new institutions for the public, such as the Anubhava Mantapa (also known as the "hall of spiritual experience"), which invited people from all socioeconomic classes to openly debate both mundane and spiritual issues. Veerashaivas, or ardent, heroic worshippers of Shiva, is the name of the new spiritual movement he founded and inspired. The Shaiva Nayanars traditions of the 7th to 11th centuries were the mainstays of the Tamil Bhakti movement, which continues today. Basava promoted devotional worship that rejected temple worship and Brahmin-led procedures and favoured individualised direct worship of Shiva using techniques like wearing icons/symbols that are unique to oneself like a small linga.



“Basavanna is the Indian independent thinker. He fought against the social injustices. He tried to abolish the caste system through freedom of speech and reason. He advocated that by birth everyone is equal, women are equally competent with men, those who wear ‘Linga’ are equals, they can eat together and marriage among them is valid,” quotes Arthur Miles in his book *The Land of Lingam*.

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9.3 LIFE AND DEVELOPMENT

Around A.D. 1131, Basavanna was born into a prominent Brahmin family in Ingaleswara-Bagevadi (now in the Bijapur District of Karnataka). His father, Gramanimani, served as the Agrahara’s leader at Bagevadi. His wife Madalambe, devoted much of her time to Nandiswara, the main deity of Bagevadi. He had an older sister named Nagamma and an older brother named Devaraja, who were significant participants in Basavanna’s later religious and social activities. He was blessed with a symbolic Linga and initiated into the new path by an acclaimed Shaiva saint named Jatavedamuni, also known as Ishanya Guru, who arrived from Kudala Sangama as soon as he was born.

Basava showed glimpses of greatness and uniqueness even as a young person. He was a bright, independent child who was inquisitive. He was raised in a traditional Brahmin family and had opportunities to consider the strict customs and rituals that the orthodox adhered to with great rigor. He discovered that superstitions and dogmas held men and their minds in a strong grip under the pretext of religion. Even the temples had evolved into exploitative hubs. Basava noticed these things. He had to deal with his first crisis when he was eight years old. He vehemently objected to his parents’ preparations for his Upanayana, which is an initiation or thread ceremony. He asserted that at the time of his birth, he had already received Linga’s initiation. He left his parents’ home and headed for Kudala Sangama as his father insisted, he take part in the event. Some scholars claim differently, that when the rite was completed, Basava left his house for Kudala Sangama at the age of sixteen and threw away the sacred thread. Few others believe that no ceremony was held at all. But one thing is for certain—his Upanayana and the following observance associated with it could not be



NOTES

compromised, as they had only come to represent caste dominance. He further stated that the Linga was worn solely for religious purposes and not as a caste symbol. Anyone could wear it, regardless of caste, creed, or sexual orientation.

Thus, even at a young age, he recognised the potential of the significant symbol of Shiva to help advance social and religious equality. As a result, he was drawn to Veerasaivism, which saw Lingadharana, or the wearing of a Linga on the body, as initiation, or Deeksha. His time at Sangama provided him with a fresh perspective and new life for his thoughts. Sangama was the perfect location for Basavanna to complete his education and accomplish his long-held goal. Ishanya Guru was a famous scholar of spiritual ideas who favoured Lingadharana (wearing the Linga on the body) over Vedic sacrifices and ceremonies. He was likely of the Kalamukha School of the Saiva faith. He discovered Basava to hold the promise of a remarkable career. Basavanna undertook years of intense study and spiritual reflection under his enlightened direction. This time in his life was crucial because it was during this time that his future goals and paths were formed.

He researched in-depth expositions of numerous religious beliefs and ideologies, as well as the Vedas, Upanishads, Agamas, Puranas, and Kavyas. His revolutionary intellect critically examined them and worked to put the concepts and goals that appealed to him into action. Being a renowned Bhakta himself, he studied the Saiva saints' devotional hymns with great zeal. As he strove to convey his ardent adoration through Vachanas, the poet in him began to emerge.

The state of politics in Karnataka was changing at that time. When Tailapa III was crowned emperor, the Chalukyas of Kalyana (now known as Basava Kalyana in the Bidar District of Karnataka) were in more dire straits than before. Tailapa III urged Basavanna to accompany him to Kalyana and accept the position of empire minister, but it was refused as he had no desire to gain power or take part in the uprising that followed. He headed deeper into social and religious pursuits. He worked extensively to bring forth the vision he had at Kudala Sangama. Without regard to caste, creed, or sexual orientation, the entrances of the Dharma were opened to all. Anubhava-Mantapa, the socio-religious academy he founded, attracted hundreds of saints and seekers of the spiritual from across the nation.

In the essential cause of universal enlightenment, dharma evolved into a living force. Dharma had never possessed such brilliance and such miraculous force in the



history of religion. The greatest miracle that Basaveshwara is credited with is elevating the average man and the outcast to the celestial heights of spiritual realization. The referred to Varnas were no longer of concern to Basavanna. To end this Varna divide was his constant effort. For instance, the system of marriage, in his opinion, was perfectly legitimate. He claimed that once Madhuvarasa joined the Sarana community, neither he nor Haralayya fit the definition of a Brahmin or an untouchable. They overcame Varnas when they converted into Bhaktas and began wearing lingas.

As a forerunner and an enigmatic mystic, in addition to being a social reformer, Basaveshwara was able to see how these events were part of the divine plan. Basavanna gained the respect of King Bijjala of Kalyana by being the most effective Bhandari—the chancellor of the State Exchequer. However, he was Bhakti-Bhandari in the field of spirituality, the keeper of the priceless relic of devotion. Contemporary epigraphs, religious writings like the Puranas by Veerasaiva authors, as well as Basavanna's own words and those of his contemporaries like Siddarama, Channabasavanna, Akkamahadevi, Allama Prabhu, and others of the Anubhava Mantapa are important sources for restoring his life story.

The teachings of Basaveshwara take on a unique significance in the backdrop of the social transformation and religious awakening in contemporary India. Indian society is currently undergoing change attributable to its emphasis on the expansion of education and a scientific attitude, as well as its democratic and nationalist ideologies. It is affected by the dominant global current of thought. Some of our outdated beliefs, institutions, and practices, such as castes, creeds, and rituals, as well as our old values and institutions are changing our thought patterns so drastically that it seems impossible for them to continue. Although Basavanna lived eight hundred years ago, his teachings are still relevant today because he comes across as entirely modern and pragmatic. If only that teaching had been adhered to, we would have a very different picture of Indian society today. Basavanna foresaw several modern prophets, including Swami Dayananda, Swami Vivekananda, and Gandhiji, in the essence of what he believed. He could legitimately be said to be the forerunner of a New Era in India and Karnataka. The best way to understand his ideas about the socio-economic-cultural situations of society is to interpret his vachanas. It is important to note two things here: (1) that these are not exclusively political views of Basavanna, and (2) the way we interpret his vachanas, accordingly will determine the meaning.



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9.4 PHILOSOPHY THROUGH POETRY AND VACHANAS

The rarest occurrence of a great man and a great poet is Basaveshwara. He was a magnificent man who combined the qualities of a mystic, social reformer, free thinker, and prophet of a new age in one person. His primary focus was not the creation of literary works, but rather the achievement of the ultimate life aims and laying the foundation for the highest good of the average person. His enormous undertaking was to spread timeless principles and values among people and to deliver the divine message to every heart and home. Every emotion or idea that sparked his intellect, inspired his intellect, or bloomed in his heart was thus given expression in the straightforward yet potent Vachana form.

Prose is what Vachana can be defined as, but in this context, it takes on a new meaning as a form of expression and creates a new genre that is exclusive to Kannada literature. Although Sharanas' Vachanas are written in prose, they have a poetic voice. They could be described as succinct prose-lyrics since they combine prose's rhythmic articulation with poetry's lyrical charm. Although vachanas do not follow any set guidelines for metre or rhythm, they do have a unique rhythm that is linear, occasionally non-metrical, and intense depending on the thought content and emotional fervor of the individual vachana.

The Vachanas, which Basaveshwara stated while pursuing spirituality, serve as a living record of intuitive insight and a guide to behavior that will help one achieve the highest level of spiritual realisation. His Bhakti strikes a balance between *nivrtti*, the withdrawal from all activity, and *pravrtti*, the engagement in worldly activities. The inner and exterior lives of a man are perfectly in harmony. It is a rare instance of the three facets of human personality—thought, feeling, and action—coming together in a joyful synthesis. The highest euphoric experience that a spiritual aspirant can achieve was obtained by Basaveshwara. He was not able to achieve it by giving up the outside world or by taking the ascetic route. He respected the world, which he accepted. The everyday pursuits of life had never denied him.



9.5 DEMOCRACY

Basavanna, the pioneering thinker, is credited with establishing the democratic process. He is a legitimate Democrat in that respect, as his contribution, i.e., ‘Anubhava Mandapa’ in Kalyan, is the ideal illustration of a legislative body. Its members came from every sphere of life. As “Sharanas,” who are sincere and legitimate citizens, he addressed them, the Anubhava Mandapa’s talks and deliberations allowed Sharanas to freely express their opinions. They all used to actively engage in its proceedings and the team was led by Basavanna. Further, we could find out that before deciding, he listened to everyone. That demonstrates a democratic leader’s actual character. Basavanna performed in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the Anubhava Mandapa. It was a representative, constitutional body. Its regulations apply to all its members. The majority rule applied to the decisions made in this body. The minority, however, was never persecuted. In a certain sense, the Anubhava Mandapa had a legal system. Although the other Anubhava Mandapa members cooperated with Basavanna, according to Ranganath Divakar, “.... he (Basava) was the real leader, the chief, a driving force and the central figure for all the discussions.” This assertion demonstrates how much he resembled the group’s democratic leader. However, it should be noted that he never forced his opinions on anyone. However, it should be noted that he never forced his opinions on anyone. All member’s opinions were taken into consideration before a decision was made on any matter. The fact that he was “.... the one who wishes the betterment of every living creature” demonstrates how he was genuinely concerned for everyone’s welfare. He created the idea of a welfare state around the beginning of the 12th century. He envisioned the creation of a new political society in which every person would be valued regardless of caste, faith, race, or sex.

Basavanna firmly believes that a state’s most valuable resource is its ability to attract and retain good citizens. The state’s happiness is a function of its citizens’ happiness. According to Basavanna, a state’s greatest valuable resource is its ability to attract and retain good citizens. The state’s well-being is an extension of its citizens’ well-being. State authority was derived from popular power. According to Harihara, Basavanna defends the idea of social welfare in his *Basavaraj Devar Ragale*, which endeavors to convey the narrative that Sharanas and the noble people have equal



NOTES

rights and authority over the King. The King is in no way superior to the common person. Everyone has an entitlement to the state's property, not just the King.

In-Text Questions - 1

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. Basavanna founded the _____ to promote open discussions on spiritual and mundane matters.
2. The _____ of Basavanna combine prose and poetry, reflecting his spiritual insights.
3. Basavanna's teachings emphasized equality, opposing _____.
4. The practice of wearing a _____ is known as Lingadharana.
5. Basavanna envisioned a _____ valuing citizens equally regardless of caste, creed, or gender.

B. State True or False:

1. Basavanna believed that only Brahmins could wear the Linga.
2. Anubhava Mantapa was a socio-religious academy that excluded lower castes.
3. Basavanna's vachanas require careful interpretation to understand their diverse meanings.
4. Basavanna's philosophy solely focused on spiritual enlightenment.
5. Basavanna's teachings are considered relevant even in contemporary Indian society.

9.6 DUTIES

Most political thinkers agree that freedom and duty are contemporary notions. However, Basavanna discusses the responsibilities of each person. He assigns his citizens seven obligations, or Sapta Sutras. He intended to convey through this passage that it is forbidden to steal, kill, lie, be angry, insult others, exalt oneself, and criticise others. It results in the soul's purification. We can create a powerful and stable nation if we treat Kudal Sangama Deva as the nation and uphold these obligations.



Vachana: Kalabeda Kolabeda Husiya Nudiyalu Beda Muniya Beda Annyarige Asahya Padabeda, Tanna Bannisabeda, Idiru Haliyalu Beda Ide Antaranga Shudhhi, Ide Bahiranga Shudhhi, and Ide Kudal Sangama Devanolisuva Pari.

Meaning: Don't steal, don't kill, don't tell lies, don't get angry, don't insult others, don't praise yourself, and don't condemn others. This is inner purity, this is outer purity, and this is the path to please our Lord Koodala Sangamadeva.

Freedom

He believes that anarchy is established by terror. The Sharanas must have all forms of freedom if the anarchy is to be ended and the rule of law established. He is a fervent advocate for individual freedom. He claims that everyone is free to express their opinions. In the Anubhava Mandapa, freedom of speech and expression was a widespread practice. Members of the Anubhava Mandapa used to actively participate in the proceedings, regardless of caste or gender. Before drawing a conclusion, all opinions were considered. Even female members, such as Aydakki Lakkamma, used to offer advice and critique their husbands' opinions. For instance, the call made by Lakkamma to his husband Aydakki Marayya in one of the vachanas to not gather more rice than necessary is quite clear; further, she commands him to give back to society the additional rice he has already gathered.

Equality

The idea of equality in Basavanna is highly distinct and specific. No one is superior to the Shivabhakt, and no one is inferior, as demonstrated through the vachana: *Enaginth kiriyarilla Shivabhaktarigintha hiriyaarilla*; meaning no one is superior to me, and no one is superior to the disciple of God; depicts his passion for equality. His primary goal in creating his vachanas was to create an egalitarian society. He encountered numerous obstacles and resistance from the priestly elite because of this. Another vachana: *Evanarava Evanarava Ennadirayya, Eva Nammava Nammava Ennirayya*; meaning: Never inquire about him; simply state that he is our man; depicts his intention and care for the creation of an equitable society. He refers to all the Sharanas as *Aiyya/Akka/Avve* which is the utmost respect accorded to a person in Indian society.



NOTES

He was the first intellectual to place equal value on women. Women had to stay within the four walls of the house throughout their lives. He nevertheless compels them to attend and take part in the Anubhava Mandapa's activities. The Anubhava Mandapa contained more than 35 female members, including Akkamahadevi, Sule Sankavve, Nilambike, Gangambike, Kadire Remmevve, Muktayakka, and Kottanad Somavva, to name a few. In his opinion, the source of purity/supremacy is not caste but character.

Emancipation of Women

The emancipation of women was a significant accomplishment. The Vedas and other religious texts were forbidden to women and Sudras. Within such circumstances, Basava adamantly asserted that there was no difference in religion between men and women. For anyone, male or female, who would come with a pure heart and sincere intent, he threw wide the doors of spiritual pursuit. Because of this, we encounter several female saints, like Akkamahadevi, Akkanagamma, Neelambike, Gangambike, Lakkamma, Lingamma, and Mahadevamma, whose names are already connected to high spiritual achievements.

9.7 RELIGION AND SECULARISM

In addition to proclaiming that everyone had equal access to religion, Basaveshwara had to strive to free it from the control of scriptural and sacerdotal authorities. What if you read the Vedas and listened to the Shastras? He asks, what if you recite your beads or perform your penance. He fervently objected to the Vedic ceremonies, yet he embraced the Upanishads' revelation of the truth. Basava questioned, "What kind of religion can it be without compassion? If it failed to accept any form of accommodation regarding the ritualistic animal sacrifice included in sacrifices. He protested the priestcraft that was behind sacrifices, other rites, and rituals that further promoted unwavering love and directed devotion to a single supreme divinity. He opposed polytheism and the worship of several deities. He adhered to rigorous monotheism, which was reflected in various vachanas. God is only one, though he goes by many names, and a devoted woman only knows one Lord, he says.



He condemns the worship of several gods and goddesses, such as Mari and Masani, for frivolous purposes. Here, Basavanna makes a clear distinction between the religion of love and selfless devotion and the religion of fear and superstition. He promoted the Veerashaiva religion's doctrine that there is only one God, who takes the form of Ishtalinga. Accordingly, his view of God is so high and persuasive that it once attracted even the most cynical individuals. He transcends the Brahma, Vishnu, and Rudra trinity. By the grace of the Guru, the absolute Almighty—who has taken on the shape of Ishtalinga—has grown to be worshipped. It is a belief in an impersonal God. The Guru creates an image of Sunya, or perfection, and presents it to the seeker as Ishtalinga while inhaling Shadakshari, a six-letter mantra, into his ears.

As we saw in the progression of the Bhakti of Basaveshwara, this Ishtalinga, which is regularly worshipped on the palm, captures the seeker's complete spirit and aids in his further evolution into Pranalinga and Bhavalinga. Basavanna emphasised the importance of the seeker focusing all of his devotional efforts on the Ishtalinga with single-minded trust. As a result, Basava was able to eliminate priestly craft and temple worship, which had evolved into the sources and vehicles of exploitation. Worship is a close relationship between the devotee and the deity. In Ishtalinga, this is accomplished immediately since there is no intermediary between the Linga and the Bhakta.

Being a rationalist, Basava only supported religions that aided spiritual endeavors and rejected irrational beliefs and superstitious practices. Many false beliefs about astrology, lucky or unlucky omens, and the power of days, weeks, or stars were deeply ingrained in the brains of the vast majority. As a result, he revolted against anything that defied logic and worked to alter the mental confusion and physical exhaustion that were the norm at the time. He was unable to treat the Dharmashastras—or any other book, for that matter—as a sacred text that demanded unquestioning submission. He could not stand the vices of the favoured classes and made a strong protest of all caste and class divisions, which in the context of his day seemed to be a very revolutionary act.

The Anubhava Mandapa was a secular organisation where all castes and communities of Sharanas used to congregate. For instance, Madhuvarasa belonged to the Brahmin community; Kakkayya and Channayya were untouchables; prominent women members like Akkamahadevi, Nilambike, and Muktayakka were also members of the Mandapa and its discussions and deliberations. Therefore, it was the ideal



NOTES

secular body. Without a doubt, we must state that Basava founded a secular organisation during the 12th century. Allama Prabhu, a member of the Natawara caste, served as its leader and moderator for the entire session. Purity of mind and purity of behavior were of the utmost importance to him. He valued the method just as much as the goal. He gave the spiritual practice known as “Kayaka,” which took on a special significance considering the accomplishments of the Sharanas of his day. It was endowed with purity of mind and conduct.

9.8 KAYAKA

‘Kayaka’ is a phrase for honest manual labor, although it refers to much more than only work done to support oneself. One could argue that Basavanna’s concept of “Kayaka” was a significant addition to practical philosophy. Due to Basavanna and other Sharanas’ preaching and practice of it, it took on a new dimension. It was given flawless coordination of mind and deed by Basavanna. And he himself was both a thinker and a doer. The idea is so all-encompassing that it may be used anywhere.

First and foremost, it is a profession or a job for survival. It is what Gandhiji refers to as “bread labour.” “Nature has intended for us to earn our bread by the sweat of our brow,” asserts Gandhiji. Everyone, whether wealthy or poor, must perform physical or manual labour in some kind. So why shouldn’t it manifest itself as fruitful work? In the same spirit, Basaveshwara states that everyone should do some job to meet the requirements of society. No one has the right to live a parasitic existence, whether they are a Bhakta, a Guru, or a Jangama, taking advantage of the labour of others. Its fundamental tenet is that each man should strive for both material and spiritual advancement. Its fundamental tenet is that every man should use his “Kayaka” to achieve his material and spiritual advancement and that sloth and beggarliness have no place in society.

The democratic ideal of freedom of occupation was another significant feature of Kayaka that Basava promoted. He rebelled against the Karma doctrine, which held that a man’s profession was predestined by his birth; Basavanna opposed any discrimination based on a person’s sex, gender, or line of work. The people’s minds



NOTES

had a spiritual and social awakening because of this significant social revolution. Kayaka altered the custom of valuing men according to their occupations. No profession was higher or inferior to another, according to Basaveshwara, and the value of a means of subsistence was determined by honesty and sincerity. This is Kayaka's guiding principle. The third crucial element of equality is that it has been announced that all professions are equal.

By uprooting the traditional Varna or caste hierarchy, Kayaka embodies the values of equality for all men, human dignity, and the dignity of employment. It is consistent with democratic values. Equitable wealth and work distribution are its main objectives. Basavanna's ideal society is free from beggarliness and idleness. This could be referred to as the Kayaka social structure. Everyone works here to fulfil their physical, mental, and emotional demands, which results in a full growth of a person's inner capacities. No type of exploitation—economic, social, or religious—is accepted. Each person works to the best of his or her ability and contributes the earnings from their career to society.

There is no greed, which means that there is no artificial scarcity, social injustice, or social tyranny. All people, including untouchables, have equal access to opportunities in all spheres of life. There are no blind beliefs or rituals centred on the temple and priestcraft because everyone seeks redemption through a spiritual pursuit of individual efforts without any middleman. The triple Dasoha, or dedication to the Guru, the Linga, and the Jangama, combines work and worship inseparably, transmuting the mercenary drive into the spiritual motive.

With the help of Kayaka's message, people were liberated from long-standing societal and religious superstitions and were once again able to think for themselves and act independently. It can provide new insight and open the door to finding solutions to the issues facing our scientific age if it is viewed from the right angle. By uprooting the traditional Varna or caste hierarchy, Kayaka embodies the values of equality for all men, human dignity, and the dignity of employment. It is consistent with democratic values. Equitable wealth and work distribution are its main objectives. Basavanna's ideal society is free from beggarliness and idleness. This could be referred to as the Kayaka social structure.



NOTES

Communism

His version of communism, which he calls Kayaka, is centered on labor. Physical labor is what he performs at work. Except for those who work, no one has a right to food. It is not necessary for someone who is working to perform Gurudarshan or Ling Pooja. Any religious activity cannot benefit from money earned without labor. He believed that one should simply collect the property for his daily necessities. He opposed gathering up assets for tomorrow. If he makes more money, it should be used for social advancement since it belongs to society. He holds the view that wealth should be wisely split and distributed among the people in society. Service to others is, in his opinion, service to God.

Non-Alignment

India's foreign policy is based on non-alignment and the roots can be traced back to Basavanna's non-alignment principle which he gave to humanity.

Vachana: Lokada Donkava Niveke Tidduviri, Nimma Nimma Tanava Santaishikolli, Nimma Nimma Manava Santaishikolli, Nere Maneya Dukhakke Aluvavara Mechha Kudal Sangama Deva.

Meaning: Why should you try to mend? The failings of the world? Assuage your bodies first, each one of you! Assuage your minds, each one! Lord Kudala Sangama Does not approve, those who bemoan, the neighbor's grief.

It is secure for a country to conduct commerce if we apply this vachana to foreign policy. It exhorts the nations to refrain from meddling in the internal affairs of other nations and to stop worrying about their rise or collapse. For any state to succeed, it must prioritise its own business. Politicians and political parties fall under the same category.

Slavery

Slavery is a practice that is as old as humanity itself. Even in Western political philosophy Aristotle has supported slavery for personal reasons. Never were slaves accorded human rights. They were viewed as the masters' property. It went against the fundamental tenets of the Basavanna. He asserts that all Kudal Sangama followers and devotees



are on an equal footing. Basavanna argues that this institution is inhumane. His vachana shows how slaves were treated in his time:

Vachana: Nadevarayya Vadeyaru Tanu- Mana-Dhanad mele, Nudivarayya Vandu Nimisha Baradidde, Jarivarayya Vadeyaru Mana banda Pariyali, Shiva Shiva Anivarayya Mandeyannuri Pranad Vadeyarayya Kudal Sangama Deva Nimma Sharanaru

Meaning: There was no freedom for slaves. They simply must carry out their masters' instructions. Without their masters' instruction, direction, and command, they are powerless.

Corruption

In the 12th century, corruption was a severe problem, which Basaveshwara was aware of. He cautions people about the negative impacts of corruption. He makes it abundantly apparent in his words that accumulating wealth without cause or justification is sinful and bad for society.

Vachana: Papiya Dhana Prayaschitakallade Satpatrakke Salladayya, Naya halu nayagallade, Panchamrutakke Salladayya, Namma Kudal Sangana Sharaniragallade Maduv Artha Vyarthakanayya.

Meaning: The sinner's wealth serves no worthy cause. Only to expiate his sins! A dog's milk serves only a dog, not for a five-fold both. Mark, Sir! The wealth you render anyone, but our Kioala Sanga's Sharana's is given in vain.

Defection

Anti-defection legislation is a 20th-century construct. However, Basavanna already illustrates the fickle nature of human nature in the 12th century. He claims that when a person discovers someone who appeals to him, he speaks like him. This is very similar to how current politicians switch parties like chameleons for various personal reasons.

Conclusion

The value of Basavanna's contribution to Indian political thinking is obvious when considering all these factors. He gave liberalism, egalitarianism, communism, and secularism new meanings. The world will benefit much from his notion of love and care

NOTES



NOTES

for the Sharanas (citizens) if the current politicians adopt it. His idea of using public funds for general welfare will surely result in the establishment of the state's true welfare. Without a doubt, Basavanna is one of the world's finest humanists.

(Note: All Vachanas and meanings are for referral purposes only. The meaning may defer with the context and time of consideration.)

In-Text Questions - 2

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. Basavanna's Sapta Sutras prohibit stealing, killing, lying, anger, insulting, self-exaltation, and _____.
2. Anubhava Mandapa promoted freedom of _____ and _____.
3. The principle of _____ refers to honest manual labor for self-reliance.
4. Basavanna's version of _____ centered on labor and equitable distribution.
5. In his vachanas, Basavanna condemned the accumulation of _____ without cause or justification.

B. State True or False:

1. Basavanna believed that character, not caste, was the source of purity.
2. Anubhava Mandapa excluded women from participating in discussions.
3. Basavanna's concept of Kayaka emphasized the importance of parasitic existence.
4. Basavanna supported the practice of slavery as part of his teachings.
5. Basavanna advocated for a single deity worship and criticized polytheism.

9.9 SUMMARY

- Contemporary humanity faces complex problems, despite remarkable achievements.
- Basaveshwara (Basavanna), an Indian spiritual teacher and social reformer, from Karnataka, offers valuable lessons in spiritual resilience.



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- His vachanas (writings) reflect diverse political, social, and cultural ideologies and require careful interpretation.
- Born around 1131 in a Brahmin family, Basavanna was initiated into Lingadharana (wearing the Linga) early and opposed traditional caste-based rituals.
- He founded the Anubhava Mantapa, promoting open discussion and individual worship of Shiva.
- Basavanna emphasized equality, opposing caste and gender discrimination, and advocated that all wearing the Linga are equal.
- His philosophy aimed to integrate spiritual enlightenment and social reform.
- Basavanna's vachanas combine prose and poetry, capturing his spiritual insights and advocating balanced engagement with the world.
- Anubhava Mantapa, created by Basavanna, is considered a precursor to democratic legislative assemblies.
- Basavanna envisioned a welfare state valuing citizens equally, regardless of caste, creed, or gender, advocating for the well-being of all.
- Basavanna outlined seven duties (Sapta Sutras) for his citizens, prohibiting stealing, killing, lying, anger, insulting, self-exaltation, and criticism of others.
- Freedom of speech and expression was a fundamental principle in Anubhava Mandapa, including participation by women.
- Basavanna promoted equality, stating no one is superior or inferior based on caste, emphasizing character over caste.
- He supported the emancipation of women, giving them equal access to spiritual pursuits and religious activities.
- Basavanna advocated for a single deity worship and criticized ritualistic practices, promoting rationality over superstition.
- Anubhava Mandapa was a secular organization with diverse membership, emphasizing purity of mind and behavior.
- Kayaka (honest manual labor) was essential for self-reliance and societal contribution, rejecting parasitic existence and promoting equality in professions.
- Basavanna's idea of communism centered on labor, opposing accumulation of wealth and advocating for equitable distribution.



NOTES

- He supported non-alignment in foreign policy, emphasizing self-priority and non-interference in others' affairs.
- Basavanna condemned slavery, treating all followers equally.
- He warned against corruption, stating it was sinful and harmful to society.
- Basavanna acknowledged human fickleness, similar to modern-day political defections.

9.10 GLOSSARY

- **Vachanas:** Writings by Basavanna in Kannada literature, encompassing varied social, political, and spiritual themes.
- **Anubhava Mantapa:** A socio-religious academy founded by Basavanna for open discussions on spiritual and mundane matters.
- **Veerashaivas:** Followers of the spiritual movement founded by Basavanna, emphasizing direct worship of Shiva.
- **Lingadharana:** The practice of wearing a Linga as a symbol of spiritual initiation.
- **Upanayana:** A traditional thread ceremony in Hindu culture, symbolizing initiation.
- **Kudala Sangama:** A place in Karnataka where Basavanna completed his education.
- **Democratic Process:** A system where decisions are made through participation and majority rule.
- **Welfare State:** A government that prioritizes the well-being and equal treatment of its citizens.
- **Kayaka:** The principle of honest manual labor for self-reliance and societal contribution.
- **Ishtalinga:** A personal deity form worshipped in Veerashaiva tradition.



- **Communism (Basavanna's):** A concept centered on labor and equitable distribution of wealth.
- **Non-Alignment:** A principle of foreign policy emphasizing non-interference in other nations' affairs.

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9.11 ANSWERS TO IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

In-Text Questions - 1

- A.** 1. Anubhava Mantapa
2. vachanas
3. caste and gender discrimination
4. Linga
5. welfare state
- B.** 1. False
2. False
3. True
4. False
5. True

In-Text Questions - 2

- A.** 1. criticism of others
2. speech, expression
3. Kayaka
4. communism
5. wealth



NOTES

- B.** 1. True
2. False
3. False
4. False
5. True

9.12 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Critically evaluate various ideas of Basavanna in the context of democracy and state administration.
2. Examine the values and norms of egalitarian society created by Basavanna in ancient India.
3. What is the significance of Basavanna's vachanas?
4. How did Basavanna view traditional caste-based rituals?
5. What was the primary focus of Basavanna's philosophy and teachings?
6. Describe the role of Anubhava Mantapa in Basavanna's vision.
7. What are the seven obligations, or Sapta Sutras, outlined by Basavanna?
8. How did Basavanna's concept of Kayaka contribute to society?
9. What was the significance of Anubhava Mandapa in Basavanna's philosophy?
10. How did Basavanna promote equality in his teachings?
11. What was Basavanna's stance on religious rituals and superstitions?

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UNIT IX: ADI SHANKARACHARYA: ADVAITA

LESSON 10 ADI SHANKARACHARYA: ADVAITA



LESSON 10

ADI SHANKARACHARYA: ADVAITA

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Structure

- 10.1 Learning Objectives
- 10.2 Introduction
- 10.3 Epistemology of Advaita Vedanta
 - 10.3.1 Perception or *Pratyaksa*
 - 10.3.2 Inference or *Anumâna*
 - 10.3.3 Testimony or *Sabda*
 - 10.3.4 Comparison or *Upamâna*
 - 10.3.5 Postulation or *Arthâpatti*
 - 10.3.6 Non-Cognition or *Anupalabdhi*
 - 10.3.7 Advaita Theory of Error
- 10.4 Sankara's Adhyâsabhâsya
- 10.5 Refutation of the Different Theories of Error
- 10.6 Summary
- 10.7 Glossary
- 10.8 Answers to In-text Questions
- 10.9 Self-Assessment Questions
- 10.10 References/Suggested Readings



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10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, students should be able to:

- Examine the epistemology in the philosophy of Advaita
- Analyze the importance of Sankara's Adhyâsa bhasya
- Discuss about the refutation of different theories of error by Advaitins

10.2 INTRODUCTION

In the history of Indian Philosophy, the place of Sankaracharya is both permanent and high. He was gifted with extra-ordinary intelligence, a deeply penetrating mind, critical insight, logical reasoning, philosophical analysis, religious purity, sublimity of renunciation, and profound spirituality. His contribution to Indian philosophy and to Vedic religion and culture is unparalleled. The credit of establishing Advaita Vedânta as a sound philosophical system goes to Sankaracharya. He was a champion for knowledge and dedicated his life to selfless service (nishkâma karma) and devotion to God (bhakti). Hence, his life can be considered as ample proof that selfless service and devotion may go well with spiritual enlightenment (jñâna). Although he disclaimed originality, he brought about a revolution in the minds of men, the salutary effects of which can be felt even today. This was made clear by Dr S. Radhakrishnan when he stated, "His philosophy stands forth complete, needing neither a before nor an after whether we agree or disagree or differ, the penetrating light of his mind never leaves as wherever we were." (Indian philosophy, Vol. II, p.446) He emphasized the monistic tendency of Upanishads and developed it into a systematic philosophy of Advaita. Sankara appeared on the firmament of Indian thought at a time when the country was caught in a churning process-politically, socially, and culturally. It was in such a chaotic atmosphere that Sankara put forth his life-giving philosophy of the Non-dual Brahman of the Upanishads. His writings show great intellectual power, logical precision, and emotional profundity. According to Swami Prabhavananda, "by means of his remarkable clearness, his supreme wisdom and his profound spirituality he has so stamped himself upon Vedânta that it has remained the paragon of Indian philosophy, and has given solace to the



sorrowful heart of a large segment of mankind.”(The Spiritual Heritage of India, p.279) He thus set a model in thinking and exposition which subsequent philosophers in India have striven to follow.

Here in this unit, we will deal with epistemology of Advaita along with Sankara’s Adhyâsa bhâsya and his refutation of different theories of error.

10.3 EPISTEMOLOGY OF ADVAITA VEDANTA

The main feature of Advaita Vedânta is to understand Brahman, the Supreme Reality. To understand or realize Brahman, one has to overcome ignorance by attaining knowledge, be liberated, and be in a vigilant state at the conscious level. Sankara repeatedly asserted that the Absolute can be realized only through knowledge and knowledge alone while action and devotion are subsidiary.

According to Sankara, knowledge is the disappearance of the ignorance. While it is always existent, the ignorance keeps it covered and unnoticed. Though Advaitins regards all means of knowledge and all knowledge acquired through them as unreal from the transcendental standpoint, they do not deny their importance in the practical world before one gets the transcendental knowledge. Thus, Advaita recognizes knowledge only in the empirical level. It believes in the self-validity of knowledge.

The mechanism of knowing involves a knower or *pramata*, means of knowledge or *pramana*, and object of knowledge or *prameya* which give rise to valid knowledge or *prama*. In Vedanta, ‘*prama*’ means the knowledge which is un-contradicted. Advaita Vedânta recognizes the six *pramânâs* or sources and criteria of valid knowledge. They are as follows: Perception or *pratyaksa*, inference or *anumâna*, testimony or *śabda*, comparison or *upamâna*, postulation or *arthâpatti*, non-cognition or *anupalabdhî*. Let us have a look into these *pramânâs* separately.

10.3.1 Perception or *Pratyaksa*

It is knowledge gained by the senses. According to Advaita, in the perception of an external object, the mind goes out through the sense organ. For example, when the sense organ ‘eyes’ reaches the place of the object, for example a flower, it assumes



NOTES

the shape of the flower which modifies into the thought 'flower.' This modification is known as *vr̥tti*. The capacity of mind to illumine an object is because of the reflection of the consciousness (Brahman) in the mind. But the knowledge of self or Brahman cannot be gained by perceptual cognition because Brahman cannot be objectified. Brahman is self-evident luminous being and its knowledge is gained through *sv̥rupajñana* or knowledge of the nature of self. On the other hand, knowledge of other objects is gained through *vr̥tti jñana* or empirical knowledge.

10.3.2 Inference or *Anumāna*

Inference is the means of inferential knowledge. Knowledge derived through *anumāna* is not direct, since it makes use of previous knowledge obtained from other sources of knowledge like perception, testimony etc, and enables one to explore further knowledge. Inferential knowledge is produced by the knowledge of invariable concomitance or *vyapti*. The latent impression of the invariable concomitance is the intermediate operation or *vyapara*. The inferential knowledge that 'the hill has fire' arises when one sees the smoke (*hetu*) in a hill (*paksha*), which arouses the latent impression of the invariable concomitance 'when there is smoke, there is fire'. By this application, one gains the inferential knowledge that the hill has fire (*sādhya*). Though the Advaita philosophy recognizes this *pramāna*, it holds that Brahman cannot be known through inference because of the absence of *hetu* to determine Brahman.

10.3.3 Testimony or *Sabda*

In Advaita, Veda has been admitted as an independent *pramāna*. Vedas are impersonal and eternal. Vedas begin with the beginning of the creation and disappear with its disappearance. God begins the creation along with the Vedas. After destruction or *pralaya*, they remain in the mind of God. Advaita recognizes God as the author of Veda in a special sense. It is not his work in the literal sense. Like everything else, Vedas also disappear at the end of cycle and God repeats it at the beginning of the next cycle. As far as its content is concerned, it is independent of God i.e. *apauruṣaya*. According to Nyaya, God is the sole author of Veda while Vedas are self-existent as per Mimamsa. In Advaita, we find a midway position between Nyaya and Mimamsa. According to it, the purpose of the scriptures is attribute less Brahman or *Nirguna*



Brahman which is known by scrutinizing the intention of scriptures based on six indicating marks. They are introduction-conclusion, repetition, uniqueness, result, eulogy, and logical presentation. The *mahāvākyās* reveal the identity meaning by the application of exclusive-inclusive implication.

10.3.4 Comparison or *Upamāna*

This is the knowledge gained by analogy. It is an independent source of valid knowledge. The example is as follows: ‘A man does not know what a *gavaya* is. He learns from a friend that *gavaya* is an animal similar to the cow. Subsequently, he goes to the forest and sees an animal which is like a cow. He remembers the information he received regarding this animal. Now he knows that this is the animal called ‘*gavaya*.’ A connection between a name and the thing it signifies is established. It arises through the previous knowledge of the resemblance between the two things. It is non-perceptual source in the sense that it is not reducible to perception because of the two objects involved in the judgment only one is now being perceived. Similarity cannot be said to be the object of memory alone. It is not knowledge by inference either because inference always requires a universal premise stating invariable relation between two terms no such premise is employed here. Hence, Advaitins regard *upamāna* or comparison as an independent source of knowledge. But they held that Brahman cannot be known through comparison since there does not exist a similar second thing like Brahman.

10.3.5 Postulation or *Arthāpatti*

This is the knowledge gained by superimposing the known knowledge on an appearing knowledge that does not occur with the known knowledge. Through this *pramana*, we discover a fact as a result of a contradiction between two facts already known to be well established. One employs postulation in order to account for an observed fact which cannot be otherwise explained. This is explained by the well-known example of Devadatta. Devadatta does not eat during the daytime but he is fat – these are known facts. So, we postulate that he eats during the night. It is to be noted that postulation is neither perception nor inference. It is not perception because we have not perceived him eating in the night. It is not inference also because there is no invariable connection between growing fat and eating at night. Hence, Advaitin regards *arthapatti* as an



NOTES

independent source of valid knowledge and make use of it to prove the falsity of the world. The scriptural statement 'the knower of self transcends sorrow' reveals falsity of world by application of postulation.

10.3.6 Non-Cognition or *Anupalabdhi*

It is knowledge gained by negation. It is our immediate cognition of the non-existence of an object. For instance, an umbrella which is expected to be in a particular corner of a room is not seen there. We know about the non-existence of umbrella through this separate *pramana* of *anupalabdhi*. According to Advaita Vedānta, non-cognition cannot be reduced to any of the other five *pramanas* i.e., perception, comparison, inference, testimony, or postulation. Hence the Advaitin regards non-cognition as an independent source of valid knowledge.

10.3.7 Advaita Theory of Error

Advaitin accepts an objective factor in all knowledge. The object is objectively given even in illusory knowledge. Only its status is different from the objective content of valid knowledge. When a person mistakes a rope for a snake, he does have some knowledge - the knowledge of the illusory snake. An illusory object is described as a 'private object' whereas a real object is content of public knowledge. While the rope is perceived by all who may look at it, the snake is perceived only by the man who has the illusion. Secondly, an illusory object endures only so long as the perception of it endures. It comes into being along with its knowledge and disappears along with it. But the real objects exist prior to their being known and continue to be the same afterwards.

The illusory object is not completely unreal for the totality non-existent or unreal entity cannot make itself known, i.e., the illusory object cannot be expressed either as *sat* or as *asat*. It is *anirvacaniya* or inexpressible. Hence the advaita theory of error is described as *anirvacaniyakhyati* (perception of *sat asat vilakshana*).

Three orders of reality are recognized by Advaita - (1) *Pratibhâshika* or illusory level, (2) *Vyavahârîka* or empirical level, and (3) *Paramârthika* or absolute level. The lowest level is the illusory level where we recognize the false snake. The illusory knowledge gives place to the empirically valid knowledge, i.e., it is not a snake, but a



rope. It is the level of *vyvahârika* or empirical existence. But ultimately, it is an appearance of Brahman. For Advaitin, Brahman is the highest or ultimate level of reality.

In the same manner, the Advaita philosophy states that the world of plurality is superimposed on non-dual Brahman due to ignorance. Plurality is the cause of sorrow and on wake of Brahman-knowledge in the *paramarthika* or absolute level; plurality vanishes just as the snake vanished and one realizes the non-dual nature of the self and attains liberation. Many charges are levelled against Sankara, the great philosopher, but when we go deep into his thoughts, it reveals the fact that they are all baseless. This was clearly pointed out by Dr S. Radhakrishnan when he stated that, “It is impossible to read Sankara’s writings, packed as they are with serious and subtle thinking, without being conscious that one is in contact with a mind of a very fine penetration and profound spirituality.... His philosophy stands forth complete, needing neither a before nor an after.... whether we agree or differ, the penetrating light of his mind never leaves us where we were.”

In-Text Questions - 1

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. The credit of establishing _____ as a sound philosophical system goes to Sankaracharya.
2. Sankaracharya believed that the Absolute can be realized only through _____ and knowledge alone.
3. According to Advaita Vedânta, the six *pramânâs* or sources and criteria of valid knowledge are perception, inference, testimony, comparison, _____, and non-cognition.
4. _____ is knowledge gained by analogy and is considered an independent source of valid knowledge in Advaita.
5. The Advaita theory of error is described as _____, which is the perception of sat and asat vilakshana.

B. State True or False:

1. Sankaracharya dedicated his life to selfless service and devotion to God.
2. Sankaracharya’s writings are only significant for their emotional profundity, lacking intellectual power and logical precision.



NOTES

3. In Advaita Vedânta, pratyaksa or perception is considered the only source of valid knowledge.
4. The Vedas, according to Advaita, are eternal and impersonal, and are considered an independent pramana.
5. The illusory object in Advaita, such as the snake in the rope-snake example, can be described as sat (existent) or asat (non-existent).

10.4 SANKARA'S *ADHYÂSABHÂSYA*

Adhyasabhasya is the prologue to Sankara's commentary on Vedântasutras. More than a commentary, it is an independent piece of work which is very important in many ways. It is a short work with less than fifty lines and is divided into five sections. Sankara presents his views without citing any traditional text or authority to support it. Sankara is neither propagating a new school of thought nor is he attacking any school of thought. The concept of superimposition or Adhyâsa was already presented in the Advaita system and its literature prior to Sankara's rendering of it. Through this prologue, he only wanted to restore the true interpretation of the Vedânta tradition as it is contained. Sankara tried to synthesize and co-ordinate the different views in Vedas and Upanishads and tried to remove the vagueness in it. So, he begins his commentary on Brahmasutra with an analysis of superimposition or Adhyâsa. Hence, he held that the main purpose of the Upanishads is to provide the knowledge or vidya which will eliminate darkness, avidyâ, or ignorance which is in the nature of 'reality transfer' or Adhyâsa. After that, he explains the concept of Adhyâsa and now we will look into it.

Sankara has distinguished between the self and the not-self and has warned against confusing the two to be the same. In the field of 'I' and 'thou', subject and object are opposed to each other in nature like light and darkness. When it is proved that they cannot exist inter-dependently, it appears to be still more illogical that their characteristics can be imposed on one another. Thus, neither the self nor its characteristics can be imposed upon one another. This false imposition is known as Adhyâsa. In the words of Sankara, 'the imposition of something in the form of memory that has been seen earlier or somewhere else is Adhyâsa. Thus, Adhyâsa is an illusive



perception but an important concept in Advaita Vedânta. The cause of the illusion is the confusion of the imposed with that on which it is imposed. The present object cannot be imposed; hence the imposition is of some object seen earlier. The object of imposition is somewhere else and that is why imposition is illusion. Thus, Adhyâsa is the result of the mixture of truth and untruth. Besides the definition of adhyâsa already given, Sankara gives yet another definition of adhyâsa saying that, 'the appearance of something in something other than it is known as adhyâsa. When one sees rope as snake and the silver as nacre, it is adhyâsa. Something has been perceived as something else.

Similarly, when a man sees the self in the not-self, i.e., body, intellect, etc. which are entirely different in their nature from the former, it is said to be adhyâsa. According to Dr S. Radhakrishnan, "To attribute to the real what is different from it is what Sankara calls adhyâsa, or attributing to one thing what is different from it. Adhyâsa is defined as the appearance of a thing where it is not. When the light appears double, or when the rope appears as a snake, we have adhyâsa. All knowledge of finite things is in sense the negation of pure being since objects are imposed (adhyasta) on the eternal consciousness. The most striking instance of this adhyâsa is the confusion of subject with object where we attribute to the Âtman activity, agency and enjoyment." (Indian Philosophy, Vol. II, p471) "Sankara gives three definition of adhyâsa or superimposition, which are essentially the same. The first definition is: adhyâsa is the appearance of something previously observed which is now revived like a memory image, in something else given now. The definition demands that there must be three things in error (i) something given now is the ground, present before us and real, on which some other thing is super-imposed; (ii) something previously observed which in itself may or may not be real, but now is not before us and is therefore unreal in the sense of not-given, is the object superimposed due to its impression being unconsciously revived like a memory-image; and (iii) the fact of appearance itself which is terminated by subsequent right cognition of the ground. The second definition is: adhyâsa is the appearance of the attributes of something in something else. It means that error is an illegitimate transference of the 'what' of something to the 'that' of something else. The third definition is: adhyâsa is the (apparent) cognition of a thing in something else where in fact it does not exist. This shows that error is wrong cognition or misapprehension due to super-imposition of something on something else. These three definitions are different ways

NOTES



NOTES

of expressing the same thing and all imply the three factors mentioned above. Error is essentially the super-imposition of the unreal (not given) on the real (given).” (The Advaita Tradition in Indian Philosophy, pp, 169-70). The self is not a known object, because it is the object of the concept of ‘I’. In the concept of ‘I’, the self is seen as the doer and the enjoyer. The self is the object of immediate experience because by its disappearance, the whole universe will be in dark.

Ultimately, Sankara maintains that the self is the object of immediate experience. *Saririka* or embodied self is the self in the *vyavaharika* context but the self in reality or *asaririka* is absolute and infinite. When we perceive the infinite self as the limited self or *jīva*, it is *Adhyāsa*. Sankara holds that the relation between mind and self also involves *adhyāsa* because this relation is false as there cannot be any relation between the self and the non-self. In spite of the self being the only reality, the not-self can be imposed upon it. This *adhyāsa* is the basis of the workings of *Māyā*. In brief, the *adhyāsa* is of the nature of ignorance. Its work is to create the sense of doer and enjoyer in the self. Its proof is the common experience of everyone. According to Sankara, the scholars have called the above behavior as ignorance, while the understanding of the real essence of things after knowledge is said to be *Vidyā*. Ignorance or *Avidyā* is neither existent nor non-existent. It is indescribable. All the objects of the empirical world are due to *Avidyā*. *Avidyā* is false knowledge. It is the cause of the power of *Māyā*. It overshadows the self and the Brahman. It remains in the *Jīvas* in the form of *karmas*. It is due to *Avidyā* that the *jīva* does not know his real form. *Avidyā* is eternal and natural, but it can be destroyed through knowledge. It is the worldly behavior. *Adhyāsa* is not *avidyā*, but consequence. Both *Avidyā* and *Jīva* are eternal. Liberation from *Avidyā* is necessary for the destruction of *Adhyāsa*. This liberation from *Avidyā* is precisely the aim sought by the study of the Vedānta scriptures.

10.5 REFUTATION OF THE DIFFERENT THEORIES OF ERROR

The theory of error is called *Khyāti vada*. It stands for invalid or erroneous knowledge. Error is the reverse of valid knowledge. In the case of valid knowledge, the presumption of object is found in terms of what it really is, but in case of error, it is found in inverse



mode. In case of error, we become aware of the object as what it is not. In error, an object is cognized as having certain characteristics that really fall outside of its being, thus, it is wrong apprehension in which the object is taken for what it is not. For example, we mistake a snake to be a rope. This happens because the characteristics of a snake are found in the rope. Similarly, we mistake a shell erroneously as silver. As different philosophers gave different explanations to the problem of error, we have different theories of error. Some of them are Âtmakhyati vâda, Asatkhyati vâda, Akhyati vâda, Anyatha khyativâda, Anirvacaniya khyati vâda etc. Anirvacaniya khyati (perception of sat *asat vilakshana*) is the theory of error advocated by Advaita Vedânta. We have explained it when we dealt with Advaita epistemology. The other theories are refuted in Sankara's Adhyâsa bhâsya. Let us have a brief look into it.

Âtmakhyati vâda (Self Apprehension)

This is the theory of error advocated by Yogâcâra school of Buddhism. Âtmakhyati means that the error is the superimposition of the form of cognition on the so-called external object, which is unreal, for the real is only the momentary cognition. According to Sankara, as the external world is an object of experience through the senses, it cannot be considered as altogether non-existent. He held that the philosophers of Vijñâna vâda were not able to establish their position conclusively. They were committing blunders while trying to establish their position of the internality of ideas. Advaitavadins were of opinion that there cannot be any ideas without its external existence. When the Vijñânavadins tried to prove the internality of ideas stating that 'what is internal appears as external', they were actually proving its externality. So, the Advaitins were of opinion that in order to distinguish between valid and erroneous as perception, we need both inner consciousness and external objects. Otherwise, we will not be able to distinguish between them and so, the valid perception and erroneous perception will be the same. Sankara and his followers thus rejected Âtmakhyati vâda of Vijñâna vâda.

Asatkhyati vâda (Apprehension of non-existence)

Asatkhyati vâda is the theory or error advocated by Mâdhyamikâ Buddhism. It is also called Sûnyakhyati as it is upheld by Sûnya vâda of Buddhism. According to this theory, a non-existent thing (e.g. silver) is apprehended as existent in an illusion. An illusion apprehends a non-existent object or *asat*. So, this theory is called Asatkhyati.



NOTES

Error is due to the mistake of conceiving the non-existent for the existent. But this view is rejected by the philosophers of Advaita. They hold that there cannot be any cognition of what does not exist. For e.g.: the horn of a rabbit cannot be seen either in reality or in illusion because it is absolute non-existence which can never be apprehended as existent and cannot produce knowledge. To solve this, the Mādhyamikâ Buddhists hold that it is very essence of cognition to manifest the unreal. But if the very essence of cognition is real, its manifestation can never be unreal and they are put into trouble. Hence, the Advaitavadins reject the theory of error as well.

Akhyati vâda (Non-apprehension)

Prabhakara's theory of error is akhyati vada and this is similar to the Samkhya theory of error which is called viveka khyati. According to Akhyati vada, there is no invalid cognition. Error is only partial truth or imperfect knowledge. Error is one of omission only and of commission. It is due to non-discrimination between two cognitions and their separate objects. Prabhakara holds that when we mistake an acre for a silver coin, we have two cognitions – the perception of nacre and the memory of cognition of silver. Neither of these are untrue. The element of error lies in the fact that we fail to notice that there are two jñânas here, that is of perception and memory. Sankara in his Adhyâsa bhâsya criticizes this view of Prabhakara and says that Prabhakara fails to make the distinction between the cognition of nacre and the memory of silver. Actually, they cannot be turned into a positive experience here and now. Prabhakara's view of 'non-apprehension of the difference between those very two is self-contradictory. Where there is non-apprehension of difference, it cannot be of the form 'between the two'. There it is held that the arguments of Akhyativadins are not proper and so it is rejected.

Anyatakhyati or Viparitakhyati (Misapprehension)

Kumarila Bhatta's view of error is known as Viparita khyati, which is in essence the same as Anyatâkhyati of Nyaya Vaisesika. Here, we are dealing it together. In Nyaya, error is the comprehension of a thing as other than what it is. For example, when a person mistakes a rope for a snake, the idea of the snake perceived in the past is in our memory and is confused with the object. The rope which is given here is perceived as



having the qualities of a snake which is given elsewhere. The subject of the erroneous judgment is always real. Error occurs only with respect to the predicate. The predicate is true elsewhere and not here. Error occurs because of wrong association of qualities. Kumarila also explains error as one of commission. Error, according to him, is wrong apprehension of one object as another object. It is partial misrepresentation. It is not akhyati or non-apprehension, but it is Viparita khyati or misapprehension. It occurs because of the wrong relation between the object and sense organ which perceives them.

The Advaita philosophers are not in agreement with the above view of error also. According to them, so far as the existence of error is concerned, it is bound up with its perception by someone, in the same place, and never perception in different places. The perception in the same place occurs only in superimposition. When error arises, it is entirely a new creation because of avidyâ which projects the unreal in the case of the real. So 'anythva' or 'otherwiseness' cannot refer to any cognitive activity, according to the Advaitins. Hence, they reject this theory of misapprehension also. They consider it as incomplete and so, cannot give us an explanation of the real nature of error.

From the above account, it becomes clear that the Advaitans rejected almost all theories of error advocated by the different systems of Indian thought. They considered Anirvacaniya khyati to be the only thing that can give a better explanation of what error actually is.

In-Text Questions - 2

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. Adhyasabhasya is the prologue to Sankara's commentary on _____.
2. Sankara begins his commentary on Brahmasutra with an analysis of _____ or Adhyâsa.
3. According to Sankara, the main purpose of the Upanishads is to provide the knowledge or vidya which will eliminate darkness, avidyâ, or _____.
4. In the concept of 'I', the self is seen as the _____ and the enjoyer.
5. According to Dr S. Radhakrishnan, attributing to the real what is different from it is what Sankara calls _____.



NOTES

B. State True or False:

1. Sankara's Adhyasabhasya is an independent piece of work rather than just a commentary.
2. The concept of Adhyâsa was introduced by Sankara for the first time in his Adhyasabhasya.
3. Sankara believes that ignorance or avidyâ can be both existent and non-existent at the same time.
4. According to Sankara, the self and the not-self can have their characteristics imposed upon each other.
5. Sankara's theory of Adhyâsa supports the notion that error is the superimposition of the unreal on the real.

10.6 SUMMARY

- The credit of establishing Advaita Vedânta as a sound philosophical system goes to Sankaracharya. He was a champion of knowledge and dedicated his life to selfless service (nishkâma karma) and devotion to God (bhakti). Hence, his life can be considered as an ample proof that selfless service and devotion may go well with spiritual enlightenment (jñâna).
- The main feature of Advaita Vedânta is to understand Brahman, the Supreme Reality. To understand or realize Brahman, one has to overcome ignorance by attaining knowledge, be liberated, and be in a vigilant state at the conscious level. Sankara repeatedly asserted that absolute can be realized only through and knowledge alone and action devotion are subsidiary.
- Advaita Vedânta recognizes the six *pramanas* or sources and criteria of valid knowledge. They are as follows: Perception or *pratyaksa*, inference or *anumāna*, testimony or *śabda*, comparison or *upamāna*, postulation or *arthapatti*, and non-cognition or *anupalabhi*. Advaitin accepts an objective factor in all knowledge. Even in illusory knowledge, the object is objectively given. Only its status is different from the objective content of valid knowledge.



- When a person mistakes a rope for a snake, he does have some knowledge- the knowledge of the illusory snake. An illusory object is described here as a 'private object' whereas a real object is content of public knowledge. While the rope is perceived by all who may look at it, the snake is perceived only by the man who has the illusion.
- Secondly, an illusory object endures only so long as the perception of it endures. It comes into being along with its knowledge and disappears along with it. But the real objects exist prior to their being known and continues to be the same afterwards.
- The illusory object is not completely unreal for the totality non-existent or unreal entity cannot make itself known, i.e. the illusory object cannot be expressed either as *sat* or as *asat*. It is *anirvacaniya* or inexpressible. Hence, the advaita theory of error is described as *anirvacaniyakhyati* (perception of *sat asat vilakshana*).
- Adhyâsa bhasya is the prologue to Sankara's commentary on Vedântasutras. More than a commentary, it is an independent piece of work which is important in many ways. It is really a short work with less than fifty lines. It is divided into five sections. Sankara presents his views without citing any traditional text or authority to support it. Sankara has distinguished between the self and the not-self and warned against confusing the two to be one.
- In the field of 'I' and 'thou', subject and object, which are opposed to each other in nature like light and darkness, when it is proved that they cannot exist inter-dependently, it appears to be still more illogical that their characteristics can be imposed on one another.
- Thus, neither the self nor its characteristics can be imposed one another. This false imposition is known as Adhyâsa. Sankara maintains that the self is the object of immediate experience. Saririka or embodied self is the self in the vyavahârîka context but the self in reality or asaririka is absolute and infinite. When we perceive the infinite self as the limited self or jiva, it is Adhyâsa.
- Sankara holds that the relation between mind and self also involves adhyâsa because this relation is false as there cannot be any relation between the self and the non-self. In spite of the self being the only reality, the not-self can be imposed upon it. This adhyâsa is the basis of the workings of Maya.

NOTES



NOTES

- In brief, the adhyâsa is of the nature of ignorance. When the Vijñānavādins tried to prove the internality of ideas stating that ‘what is internal appears as external’. They were actually proving its externality also.
- So, the Advaitins were of opinion that in order to distinguish between valid and erroneous as perception, we need both inner consciousness as well as external objects. Otherwise we will not be able to distinguish between them. The valid perception and erroneous perception will be the same. Sankara and his followers thus rejected Âtmakhyati vada of Vijñāna vada.
- But this view is rejected by the philosophers of Advaita and they hold that there cannot be any cognition of what does not exist. For e.g.: the horn of a rabbit cannot be seen either in reality or in illusion because it is absolute non-existence which can never be apprehended as existent and it cannot produce knowledge.
- To solve this, the Mādhyamikā Buddhists hold that it is very essence of cognition to manifest the unreal. But if the very essence of cognition is real, its manifestation can never be unreal and here also they are put into trouble. Hence the Advaitavadins reject the theory of error also.
- Sankara in his Adhyâsa bhasya criticizes this view of Prabhakara and says that Prabhakara fails to make the distinction between the cognition of nacre and the memory of silver. Actually, they cannot be turned into a positive experience here and now. Prabhakara’s view of ‘non-apprehension of the difference between those very two is self-contradictory because where there is non-apprehension of difference; it cannot be of the form ‘between the two’.
- It is held that the arguments of Akhyativādins are not proper and so, it is rejected. Kumarila Bhatta’s view of error is known as Viparita khyati, which is in essence the same as Anyatākhyati of Nyaya Vaisesika. The Advaita philosophers are not in agreement with the above view of error also.
- According to them, so far as the existence of error is concerned, it is bound up with its perception by someone, in the same place, and never perception in different places. The perception in the same place occurs only in superimposition.
- When error arises, it is entirely a new creation because of avidyâ which projects the unreal in the case of the real. So ‘*anythva*’ or ‘otherwiseness’ cannot refer to any cognitive activity, according to the Advaitins.



10.7 GLOSSARY

- **Atman**: The Ultimate Reality, sometimes loosely used in the sense of individual soul
- **Khyati vada**: Theory of error
- **Pramana**: Means of knowledge
- **Adhyâsa**: A false superimposition
- **Bhâsya**: Commentary or exposition of any text in ancient Indian literature
- **Jñâna**: Learning and knowledge of any subject

10.8 ANSWERS TO IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

In-Text Questions - 1

- A. 1. Advaita Vedânta
2. knowledge
3. postulation
4. Upamâna
5. anirvacaniyakhyati
- B. 1. True
2. False
3. False
4. True
5. False

In-Text Questions - 2

- A. 1. Vedântasutras



NOTES

2. superimposition
3. ignorance
4. doer
5. adhyâsa

- B.**
1. True
 2. False
 3. True
 4. False
 5. True

10.9 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Highlight the importance of Adhyâsabhâsya
2. Give a brief account of Arthâpatti.
3. What do you mean by Âtmakhyati vâda?
4. Briefly explain the Nyaya theory of Error.
5. Examine the importance of Anircaniya khyati in Advaita Vedânta.
6. Explain the important tenets of the epistemology of Advaita Vedânta.
7. Examine the concept of Adhyâsa in the philosophy of Sankara.
8. Elucidate the refutation of different theories of error by the Advaitins.

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**UNIT X: KABIR AND GURU NANAK:
 SYNCRETISM**

LESSON 11 KABIR AND GURU NANAK: SYNCRETISM



LESSON 11

NOTES

KABIR AND GURU NANAK: SYNCRETISM

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Structure

- 11.1 Learning Objectives
- 11.2 Introduction
- 11.3 Understanding the Concept of Syncretism
- 11.4 Sant Kabir Das
- 11.5 Guru Nanak
- 11.6 Summary
- 11.7 Glossary
- 11.8 Answers to In-Text Questions
- 11.9 Self-Assessment Questions
- 11.10 References/Suggested Readings

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, students should be able to:

- Understand the concept of syncretism
- Trace the background to the genesis of syncretism
- Explain Sant Kabir's contribution to the syncretic tradition
- Highlight the role of Guru Nanak in context of syncretism

11.2 INTRODUCTION

Diversity has been the hallmark of Indian civilisation since times immemorial, the existence of multiple religions has paved the way for practice and promotion of multiple cultures,

*Self-Instructional
Material*

261



NOTES

practices, rituals, value systems, etc. that have always remained as the defining features of India. Throughout India's history, religion has been an important part of the country's culture. The presence of multiple religions undoubtedly gives vibrancy, but at the same time, it proves challenging to establish peaceful coexistence among people of varied religious orientations. Instances of religious, cultural and ethnic conflicts are found in every phase of India's history; however, despite such instances and episodes of violence, India takes pride in its long tradition of religious pluralism, ranging from peaceful coexistence to actual inter-mixing or syncretism. On revisiting the history of medieval India, one finds the smooth blend of different cultures and beliefs that was facilitated through the policies, principles and the acts of various rulers of those times. And an equally important role towards promoting syncretism was played by the religious movements of medieval India- Bhakti and Sufism. The Bhakti and the Sufi movements were responses to the anti-syncretism and religious orthodoxy that were social realities in those times. The proponents of both movements transcended religious and communal boundaries and promoted the interests of humanity at large. Both movements revolted against all forms of religious formalism, orthodoxy, falsehood, priesthood, baseless rituals, blind superstitions, and hypocrisy, and attempted to create a new world order in which spiritual bliss was the ultimate goal. In a conflict-ridden society divided on cultural, religious and caste grounds, both the Bhakti and the Sufi saints spearheaded the task of unifying, enlightening and reawakening of people. The Bhakti and Sufi saints reminded people of their ethical obligations toward one another. The devotional songs and poetry of the Bhakti and Sufi saints are a clear reflection of the syncretic tradition.

The present lesson is a modest attempt to highlight the pioneering role played by two most prominent Bhakti saints—Sant Kabir Das and Guru Nanak towards syncretism. However, before discussing their role, it is important to understand the concept of syncretism and factors that help in the growth of syncretic trends.

11.3 UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF SYNCRETISM

'Lesson in diversity' is the defining feature of Indian politics, and the reflection of the same is through the intermingling of cultures, practices, dance, and art forms. Religion and its associated norms, traditions, rituals do not exist in isolation, they are a part of



the social system that is often influenced by external developments and forces. This results in religious and cultural syncretism. Some of the examples of syncretism evident in medieval India's language, art, architecture, literature, etc. will help the readers understand the concept better.

Many of the Sanskrit literature and epics, like the Upanishads, Bhagwat Gita, Ramayana and Mahabharata were translated to Persian by the Mughal rulers to facilitate the learning and acquiring knowledge from the same by the Persian readers. The combination of Hindu and Persian architecture during the medieval period resulted in creation of a new indigenous architecture. The finest monuments, forts, palaces, and landscaping that are a combination of Indian and Mughal architecture styles continue to be the rarest examples of uniqueness in style and magnificence to this day. The amalgamation of Hindu and the Persian art forms created the Kangra School of paintings. The shrines and dargahs built across India are a representation of the syncretic tradition where people irrespective of their different faiths and cultures continue to visit and pay obeisance even today. During the Mughal rule, Hindus and Muslims interacted both formally and informally, artists, saints, preachers, craftsmen, painters, traders migrated to India from Persia and other parts and their interactions with their Indian counterparts encouraged syncretic tradition in their respective domains. The Shehnai players of Benaras had been playing the instrument as an evocation to the god Shiva, sitting outside on the steps of the temple. The Islamic traditions have also incorporated elements from Hindu traditions. The Sufi shrines are known for their genre of specific musical traditions that have taken birth on the Indian soil. On the level of mystical belief and experience, an astonishing syncretism emerged between Hindus and Muslims, especially in the poetry of Kabir and of Guru Nanak.

The word syncretism has roots in the Latin word *syncretismus*, drawing on Greek *synkretismos*, which means 'Cretan federation'. Syncretism is popularly known as the combination of different beliefs or faiths. Syncretism includes the merging or assimilation of several originally different traditions, especially in the theology of religion, thus asserting an underlying unity and allowing for an inclusive approach to other faiths. The Oxford English Dictionary defines syncretism as "the amalgamation or attempted amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought. According to the Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology "it is the hybridization or amalgamation of two or more cultural traditions" Syncretism refers to the fusion of two or more thought systems. It involves the merger of original traditions especially in theology and mythology of religion.



NOTES

It can also be explained as the blending of the aspects of different cultures or religions into something new. Often, this process creates an entirely new culture/ religion/subculture. The main features of any syncretic occurrence are:

- A common community, such as a geographic community or a social group.
- Interactions of different cultures in the same community.
- Exchange of cultural ideas or features between different subgroups in the community.
- Eventual fusion of prominent cultural ideas from two or more cultures into a unique cultural philosophy or lifestyle.

The intermingling of culture, religions, and philosophies under the process of syncretism may or may not destroy the old ones but creates a new one. Such fusions are commonly observed in the field of religion. Religious syncretism

- It is possible when the religions move away from the essentialist doctrines and are willing to absorb beliefs from their environment.
- It promotes peace, harmony, coexistence, tolerance, and reconciliation.
- It brings about innovation and emergence of new sets of ideas/traditions/ value systems with or without destroying the existing ones.
- An important channel for dealing with religious diversity because it crosses boundaries and allows hybridity/hybridization.
- Outcome of one or multiple factors.

Medieval India documents the emergence of syncretic traditions that were an outgrowth of the anti-essentialist movements. Political, social and historical situations played an important role in the emergence of such movements as people during the 13th to 16th century were victims of oppression and exploitation on grounds of religion, caste, gender, class etc. Orthodoxy, blind ritualism, dogmatism, patriarchy, proselytisation, social hierarchy carried out many atrocities against people of lower caste, women and other marginalised sections. From the 14th century onwards in India, the emergence of Sufism and Bhakti as reform movements attempted to redefine social and religious values and played a role in fostering feelings of solidarity and brotherhood between people of Hindu and Muslim communities. Some of the features that defined the cult of Bhakti saints like Ramanada, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Chaitanya, Nimbarka were:



- Insistence on Bhakti or pure devotion.
- Promoted monotheism (oneness of God).
- Believed in freedom from the cycle of life and death. They advocated that salvation could be obtained only by deep devotion and faith in God.
- Stressed the singing of hymns with deep devotion.
- Connected with the common people by preaching and devotional songs in the local language.
- Condemned caste system, gender inequality, patriarchy, Brahminical order, idol worship and ritualism.
- Stood for equality for all men.

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In-Text Questions - 1

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. Indian civilization is known for its rich history of _____ diversity.
2. The Bhakti and Sufi movements opposed religious _____ and ritualism.
3. Syncretism involves the fusion of different _____ or cultural traditions.
4. The Kangra School of paintings is an example of the blending of _____ and Persian art forms.
5. The shrines and _____ built across India represent syncretic traditions.

B. State True or False:

1. Syncretism in medieval India often led to the destruction of existing cultural traditions.
2. Bhakti and Sufi movements in medieval India promoted monotheism and condemned caste and ritualism.
3. Syncretism refers to the rejection of all forms of religious and cultural blending.
4. Medieval Indian syncretism was influenced by interactions between Hindu and Muslim communities.
5. Syncretic traditions are limited to religious practices and do not influence art or architecture.



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11.4 SANT KABIR DAS

One of the most prominent figures related to the Bhakti movement was Sant Kabir Das. He is well known for his outstanding contribution towards initiating religious reforms and guiding mankind to search for eternal truth. As a good observer, he made note of all derogatory social and religious practices and outrightly rejected them. As a critique of the then existing social disorder and malpractices, Kabir Das sang hymns and couplets to enlighten people and tried to show them the right path. He rejected the traditional symbols of religion and the rituals associated with the religion like Temple and mosque, idol worship, bathing in holy water, reverence for scriptures, fasting, asceticism, and condemned the authority of priests and mullahs. He instead laid emphasis on a strict ethical code of life both for the Guru and the householder. He questioned and criticised the authority of Brahmas and Mullahs alike for their insistence on empty rituals and practices like fasting, roza, etc. Kabir instead preached religion of love, compassion, brotherhood, peace and humanity which he strongly held was possible by constantly repeating the name of the One God whom he identified as Rama, Hari, Govind, Allah, Khuda, Sahib, etc. To him, different religions were nothing more than the different paths to leading to one God. His own path of love and devotion to God was one which could be followed by all, irrespective of their religions.

Kabir's philosophy of life and his outright rejection of the contemporary inequalities, injustices and social disorder made him a legend. Kabir sought to liberate mankind from narrow divisions and guided them towards moral upliftment. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi affectionately coined the term the 'people's philosopher' for Kabir. Tagore had called Kabir 'Muktidoot' and his poems as '*Chir adhunik*' (ever modern). Dr. Ambedkar often from various platforms admitted to being the follower of Gautam Buddha, Kabir and Mahatma Phule as he was immensely influenced by the social philosophy of Sant Kabir Das. Evelyn Underhill, an English Anglo-Catholic writer, and pacifist known for her numerous works on religion acknowledged Kabir's contribution as a great religious reformer, and the founder of a sect to which millions of northern Hindus still belong.

Sant Kabir Das is a well-known mystic saint poet of Bhakti cult (devotion) of medieval India. Although there are disagreements over Kabir's date and place of



birth, most however, agree that he was born in the city of Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. He was a 15th century poet, and a contemporary of Sikander Lodi (1489-1517) and is known for his radical ideas. He belonged to a family of weavers (Julaha) who were indigenous converts to Islam but were strongly influenced by his teacher, the bhakti leader Ramananda. Kabir used local dialect and simple everyday language to reveal the hidden truth and arouse the conscience of the listeners. He spent most of his life in solitude and meditation, his oral preaching is a reflection of his sober and spiritual temperament. There is a dearth of information about the biography of Kabir however from his composition it can be concluded that he himself did not write any treatise and that his oral preaching was faithfully carried forward by his followers.

*"I don't touch ink or paper,
This hand never grasped a pen.
The greatness of four ages
Kabir tells with his mouth alone."*

It can be concluded that he himself did not write any treatise and that his oral preachings were faithfully carried forward by his followers in various historical periods. Kabir's Dohas (couplets) and Bhajanas (devotional songs) of the finest spiritual, lyrical and poetic quality are compiled and are preserved with reverence in the Adi Granth, Panchvani, Sarvangi, Bijak and the Granthavali that continue to hold relevance in present times. He transcended the bounds of religion, rose to greatest heights both in his spiritual thoughts and actual practice. He did not associate himself completely with either Hindus or Muslims.

He was popular among both Hindu and Muslim masses alike because he connected well with the feelings and sentiments of the people during his travels far and wide. He visited Persia, Afghanistan and other places in the Middle East before settling down to end his days in Maghar in Northern India and conveying the message of love, empathy, oneness of God and fellow feeling to all. With a very inclusive approach and a philosophy that reflected the aspirations of the socially and economically marginalized of both the Hindu and Muslim communities he played a vital role in laying the foundation of a strong culture of syncretism. Kabir's apparently simple 'Dohe' contains the essence of the great philosophical ideas of syncretism. On close examination of Kabir's thoughts, principles and mode of preaching, it is found that he adopted a syncretic approach Kabir was a saint of the Nirguna Pantha. He opposed the Indian caste hierarchy, idol



NOTES

worship and blind rituals but his views on Brahma and Maya were borrowed from Hindu Dharma. He was influenced by Sufi mysticism and their idea of minimalist living. From the teachings of his Guru Ramanand, he incorporated the elements of nonviolence, morality, and bhakti. He was equally influenced by Buddhism regarding the idea of salvation as freedom from the cycle of birth & death. His life and acts symbolized syncretism - Muslim Parents but Hindu Guru, called his supreme God- Rama; considered a great Hindu saint. He combined ideas, traditions, and practices from different strands of Hinduism and Islam. The iconoclastic saint, Kabir is a symbol of syncretic culture in India.

Kabir, a Nirgun Saint: He did not align himself with any religion, preached worshipping the formless. He strongly advocated for the faith that was driven by a sense of oneness and community and was devoid of any desires for personal gain.

“Sab mera main sab ka,

Tahaan doosra nahin

(All are mine, I belong to all,

There is no other),” says Kabir.

According to Kabir, the supreme reality is One although it has been called by different names such as Sahab, Allah, Khuda, Rama, Rahim, or Brahma. Wisdom, he believed, lies in getting at the basic unity underlying the multiplicity of names. In his opinion bhakti or devotion is one's emotional, pure, unalloyed, and personal connection with God. The mode of devotion is not to be prescribed or dictated by anyone. Under the influence of Sufism, Kabir denounced idolatry, image worship and polytheism, and adopted the strong monotheism of Islam. But he outrightly rejected the spiritual significance of dance and music as practiced by the Sufis nor did he attach merit to reading of scriptures. He instead recommended listening to the *naad* or music within.

Chahe geeta bachiye ya padhiye quran, tera mera pyaar hi har pustak ka gyaan!

(Whether one reads the Geeta or the Quran, all holy texts essentially speak of love.)

According to Kabir, the search for the divine should be conducted inside one's own self and not outside. To him, worshipping a stone idol or shouting in the mosque is as meaningless as performing rituals, pilgrimage to holy places, or Haj.



Kabir preached equality for all men: He emphasised the unity of God following which he strongly condemned inequality practiced on irrational grounds. Egalitarianism was another principle of Islam which Kabir accepted under the influence of Sufism. Kabir forcefully and with reasoned arguments denounced the Hindu caste system. Many of his couplets are an expression of his thoughts and ideas. He played a pioneering role in reconciliation between the Hindus and the Muslims by also addressing mixed gatherings of both Hindus and Muslims and making disciples from both. He did not tolerate division between man and man for social reasons; he urges all to be humane and good to all. He stood for social equality, imparting with force and preaching by practice of his Guru, Ramanand.

Jati pati puchai na koi

Hari ko bhaje so Hari ka hoi

It means none shall inquire into thy caste. He who shall recite the name of the Lord will be claimed by Him.

Spoke against age old religious and social practices: Kabir strongly condemned the practices that were then a part and parcel of Hindu and Muslim ways of life such as animal sacrifice, lust for magical powers, idol and temple worship, repetitions of mantras, pilgrimages, fasts, worshiping innumerable Gods and Goddesses, bathing in the holy waters, monopoly of the religious leaders. He highlighted the faults with self-styled Sufis, Yogis and sanyasis and condemned social practices like the sati system and child marriage too. He held that God who dwells in the heart of every being can be pleased not by rituals or ceremonies but through complete self-surrender to Him.

Jaise til mein tail hai,

Jyon chakmak mein aag

Tera sai tujh mein hai,

Tu jaag sake to jaag

(Just as the sesame seed contains oil

And fire is within the flintstone,

Your God is within you,

Wake up if you can), ”



NOTES

Though his vocabulary is replete with Hindu spiritual concepts, he strongly opposed dogmas prevalent in Hindu religion. He opposed superstitions of all kinds and to break the blind belief that when people die in Maghar, they go to hell, he himself settled in Maghar during his last years and breathed his last.

Promoted religion of humanity

Kabir's idea of one God and one-humanity is truly Islamic. He strongly advocated for Hindu-Muslim unity, and besides that he held that humanity is the true religion which means helping people; fellow feeling, being kind, fair, generous to all is the true religion. In the Upanisadic style, Kabir tells us that the Hindus and the Muslims are only different manifestations of the same substance. By using terms employed by both systems, Kabir tells us that it is only the difference in names, and all are the children of one God, the purpose of all religions is to promote humanist approach among all. Kabir was free from religious prejudices against either. He followed the path of mysticism, the bhakti, and the Sufi tradition. Though infamously religious in outlook, he was not a slave to either Hinduism or Islam. He refused to accept the sanctity of both Vedas and Quran to be the revealed scriptures and at the same time denounced the Brahmins and the mullahs alike to be sole custodians of their religious rights and authority. Sant Kabir stressed that the purity of heart and soul and service to mankind are more important than performing rituals or following religious edicts. He says in a doha:

Bada hua to kya hua, jaise ped kahjoor Panthi ko chaya nahin, phal lage ati door

What use is a date palm which grows tall? It gives no shade, and its fruits are quite far-off and inaccessible.

Another famous couplet of Kabir encapsulates his humanist philosophy sending across the message of love and affection.

Pothi padh padh kar jag mua, Pandit bhayo na koye, dhai akshar prem ke, jo padhe so Pandit hoye

Meaning that one who understands love and masters the art of winning the hearts of people is a learned scholar. Kabir henceforth rejected organised religion and emphasised on a humanistic approach.



Encourages on performing worldly duties

In the Hindu tradition *sannyasa* or renunciation from the material world is considered the final stage of the ashram systems. But Kabir denounces renunciation as he argues that in the guise of *sanyasa*, young people get disillusioned and deceive themselves into thinking they have renounced. He believed that liberation lies not in leading an isolated life but in taking this life as a battlefield and not escaping from fighting. Kabir opined that one should aspire to be *liberated* while *living* life and performing one's duties towards fellow beings. Kabir had full faith in the Hindu doctrines of rebirth/transmigration and karma and stood for purity of life, high moral code, truthfulness, mercy, self-discipline and control, complete self-surrender to God and devotional worship for the attainment of salvation (*Mukti*). Thus, he has tried to bring out the fundamental unity of Islam and Hinduism.

Kabir was undoubtedly an innate thinker and social reformer who was much ahead of his time. He spent his entire life establishing a well-knit society by spreading awareness about certain practices that were doing more harm than good. Kabir was an oral mystic poet who speaks of inner sound and light, who urges meditation, devotion, and nonattachment, and who reminds people relentlessly of death and the transitory nature of all relationships. Equally important is his role as a social critic and satirist who reminds us of the injustice of caste, the omnipresence of greed, the stupidity of puffed-up authority and hypocritical religiosity. His unique and novel way of attacking the odds, challenging the hegemonies of his times and appealing to the masses to establish a fair, egalitarian society based on humane values has indeed gained him recognition beyond time and space, making him relevant even today.

11.5 GURU NANAK

Guru Nanak laid the foundation of one of the youngest of the world's major religions, namely Sikhism. He is known as a Bhakti saint, like Kabir. Kirat Karna - earning one's living by working honestly; Naam Japna - remembering and reciting God's name through meditation and Vand Chakna - selflessly serving and sharing income, resources, etc.

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NOTES

with everyone, including the less fortunate- were the philosophical basis of Guru Nanak's teachings. The voice of Guru Nanak was a voice of compassion, love, empathy, co-existence and a plea for peace and unity in the conflict ridden and divided society of those times. He strongly opposed the empty ritualism, derogatory social practices, orthodoxy, victimisation of poor, weak and women on social and economic grounds. Guru Nanak's religious philosophy stood in opposition to the Vedantic philosophy and drew elements from the Nirguna saints for its theological opposition to the caste system. Guru Nanak carried forward the legacy of Kabir's thought that rejected caste and religious differences espousing opposition to scriptural knowledge and rituals. He travelled far and wide during his lifetime, and spoke strongly against injustices and inhuman practices in the name of caste, religion, gender, class etc. His teachings were carried forward by the successive nine Gurus both in theory and practice. The followers of the teachings of Guru Nanak and his successors came to be known as the Guru's disciples or Sikhs.

Guru Nanak was born in a Khatri family at Talwandi (Nankana Sahib) in the district of Seikhpur (now Pakistan) to parents, Mehta Kalu and Mata Tripta. Guru Nanak's birth in 1469 in the then divided Punjab was at a time when the socio-political environment was in a flux. Although Guru Nanak was born in a Hindu family, he had the opportunity to learn Hindi, Sanskrit, and Persian. The recorded accounts of Guru Nanak's life describe him as an extraordinary person who used to surprise the elders and teachers with his expansive knowledge, understanding, and rational thinking on all matters, especially spiritual ones.

In his growing age, he raised reasonable arguments about the prevailing rituals and customs of the society and even refused to participate in such rituals and ceremonial activities which he found were baseless and orthodox. And one such was when he refused to put the sacred thread (Janaeu) on the "Upanayana ritual". He was married and had two sons. In his early twenties, Nanak moved to Sultanpur, an important town on the main road between Lahore and Delhi, where he worked as a clerk in the Lodi administration. From his early childhood, he was more interested in living in solitude but at the behest of his father, Mehta Kalu, he engaged himself in various professions and engaged with people of different faiths, many of whom could identify the miraculous side of Nanak. He led the normal life of a householder but was more inclined to spend time in company of spiritual people who could satisfy his inquisitiveness



to understand the real purpose of life. When he was about thirty years old, he had an experience that he described as a revelation—a direct encounter with God that shaped the rest of his life. He travelled far and wide throughout his life and spread the message of peace, harmony, unity, tolerance, equality, and justice to all people at all places. During the last years of his life, he settled in Kartarpur on the bank of the river Ravi, where he put into practice whatever he preached throughout his life.

In the times of Guru Nanak, Hindus and Muslims were living in proximity and in continuous formal and informal interaction with one another. Their interaction resulted in periods of cooperation and syncretism, and periods of religious discrimination, hatred, intolerance, and violence. People learned various languages like Hindi, Persian, and Sanskrit as did Guru Nanak. During his travels to different places Bhai Bala, a Hindu and Bhai Mardana, a Muslim were his lifelong companions. Mardana belonged to the Mirasi community, a caste of Muslim bards who used to play rabab, a Persian string musical instrument of Afghan origin to give music to Guru Nanak's devotional hymns. Guru Nanak outright denounced the atrocities of the ruler and condemned the rituals and ceremonies that were derogatory, inhuman, and promoted inequality. People in those times were divided on the grounds of religion, caste, gender, and class. He took the challenge to establish peace and harmony by showing the right path towards coexistence.

The divine hymns of Guru Nanak praised the “One”, the Supreme Lord, who cannot be defined by human categories or confined to human institutions. He brought together the religious doctrines of Hindus and Muslims, in a spirit of reverence, acceptance, regard and cordiality. Guru Nanak acknowledged the Muslim Allah and the Hindu Lord of the Universe in the belief that both are one. He never criticised any religion but remained forever critical of the atrocities of rulers and the practices, rituals forced upon them by the religious leaders to exploit the downtrodden, poor, meek, helpless and ignorant people. With his noble ideals and humanitarian values, he played a pioneering role in bringing Hindu Muslims together, spreading the message of peace, love, compassion, tolerance and harmony. He became the revered Guru of both Hindus and Muslim masses alike as can be authenticated by a popular proverb among people that describes Nanak as the Guru of Hindus and the Pir of Muslims.

“Guru Nanak Shah Fakir Hindu ka Guru, Mussalman ka Pir”



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Teachings of Guru Nanak

Monotheism

Guru Nanak preached the truth of monotheism. There is only one God (Ik Onkar) who dwells in every creation. God is one and formless. He is Nirguna devoid of all attributes. He is absolute. God is the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of the Universe. According to Guru Nanak, we may remember him differently by using various names like Ram, Rahim, Govind, Gopal, Hari or Jagadish but the truth that God is only one, is undeniable and permanent. Guru Nanak discarded the polytheism of Vedic *rishis* and rejected the hierarchy of gods and goddesses in Hinduism. The Sikh faith founded by Guru Nanak is strictly monotheistic in its belief system, which represents combining the elements of the Nathpanthi movement and Sufism, but with adaptations and innovations, not in their original form which has given new meaning to old concepts. Guru Nanak Bhakti or true devotion, is the only way of establishing communion with God and this was also the way of the Vaishnava Bhakti saints too. They both happen to be monotheists, but there was one fundamental difference in perception. The God of Nanak was non-incarnate and formless (nirankar), eternal (akal) and ineffable (alakh). The monotheistic bhakti of Nanak, therefore, was nirguna bhakti and not saguna – which was the case with the Vaishnavites who believed in various human incarnations of God. Guru Nanak adopted the notion of bhakti from the Vaishnava bhakti tradition but gave it a nirguna orientation.

Universal Brotherhood and Amity

Guru Nanak preached universal brotherhood and amity among people. He rejected the then followed customs, religious traditions along with their entire stream of dogmas and doctrines. like the concept of God, the incarnation of God, the caste system, transmigration and karma, soul and salvation, hell and heaven, gods and goddesses, and idol worship. Guru Nanak denounced oppressive rulers and their allies too. He raised his voice for universal liberty and the establishment of a benevolent rule of justice for all and gave to the world a unique, revolutionary and liberating philosophy of universal humanism based on liberty, love, respect, justice, and equality, applicable to all. He advocated abolition of all distinctions based on caste, religion, and creed. He proclaimed:



Call everyone high, none is low, the only potter (One Lord) had fashioned alike. And his light pervades all creation (SGGS, M 1, p. 62)

He did not preach his ideals but also gave a practical shape to his teachings in this regard. He introduced the systems of *Sangat* (holy congregation), *langar* (community kitchen) and *pangat* (persons sitting together in rows to eat) encouraging all high or low; men or women; rich or poor; Hindu or Muslim to sit together. With such practices and institutions a spirit of brotherhood, co-existence, service, love and respect for all were fostered and they soon became symbols of equality and fraternity which till today are an intrinsic part of the Sikh way of life.

Rejected renunciation and promoted the philosophy of spiritual salvation

Guru Nanak strongly rejected renunciation and held that salvation is possible while engaging in the worldly affairs and performing one's duties towards family and community. According to Guru Nanak, the world is part of God's creation and reflects divine purpose. Man must live in it and is expected to remain unaffected by impurities (lust, greed, anger, selfish desires, slandering). Further, man must engage in good deeds and improve upon the human condition through love, compassion and service. Guru Nanak thus brought marriage and family within the ambit of religion. Guru Nanak believed that spiritual salvation of the soul is possible not by withdrawing to jungles and living life of an ascetic but by continuing to perform duties in this world itself and man need not wait for heaven for deliverance. God's grace can be attained through contemplation/ remembering of his name that would enable one to fight the evils within -lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego which would facilitate one's salvation- the ultimate goal. To explain his thoughts, Guru Nanak gives the analogy of lotus that remains dry in the water and thus shares the message that one must live in this world and yet remain untouched by the impurities. This aspect of his teachings is brought out best in the *Siddha Goshti*, the verses that describe his meeting with several ancient sages in the mountains.

Opposed formalism and promoted humanitarianism

Guru Nanak rejected formalism and orthodoxy in religion and stressed that man's spiritual growth combined with reasoned, rational, inclusive and fair approach towards all is



NOTES

more important than performing ceremonies and rituals. Guru Nanak urged his followers to give precedence to ethical and humane values in place of materialism and self-centred approach. Guru Nanak was a humanist thinker who advocated for equality, justice, liberty and development of all. He sought to liberate the ordinary populace from the hold of the priestly classes, whose interest lay in making religion abstruse and inaccessible and establish society based on inclusive and democratic principles. According to Guru Nanak, true religion lies in upholding the virtues of equality, justice, and dignity of all life; it lies in the affirmation of one race and one brotherhood; it lies in selfless service, making a living through righteous ways; sharing the possessions- money and resources with others especially the needy. Guru Nanak stressed practical virtue over formalism.

Initiated the tradition of Inter faith dialogue

Guru Nanak was a pioneer of inter faith dialogue. He did not criticise any religion or ritual but from his early childhood, he took the bold step to understand the logic and reason behind the religious practices and rituals, which he felt was extremely necessary to dispel ignorance and blind faith. As a young child Guru Nanak had his first open di-a-logue with his teacher Gopal Pandit and also engaged in a polite di-a-logue with his Mus-lim teacher Maulvi Ku-tubudin. During his travels, he promoted the culture of dialogue among various religious groups, whether it was the yogis of the Himalayas or the maulvis of Mecca. His message is that all religions have merit, and it is necessary to learn from each other to ensure harmonious living. The culture of inter faith dialogue initiated by Guru Nanak was essentially important for peaceful co-existence between people of diverse faiths in addition to promoting the environment of learning from one another, thus facilitating growth of syncretic tradition too.

Gender equality

In times of Guru Nanak, patriarchy received religious sanction and women were relegated to an inferior position. They were victims of many socially ill practices like sati, child marriage, polygamy, purdah among other. Guru Nanak made a radical departure from Hinduism by openly speaking against the unequal barriers that the Hindu society had erected between man and man, and between man and woman. The Sikh Gurus laid the foundations of a healthy, egalitarian, and progressive social order. He not only condemned the established religious social order of the time that victimised



women but also challenged the established orthodoxy with the radical assertion that women were worthy of praise, respect and honour. Guru Nanak asserted that without women life would cease to exist- she is the birth giver, nurtures and cares for all and that both men and women are infused with the same divine light. Instead of being denigrated and mistreated, women should be cherished and respected. Guru Nanak was progressive thinker and a social reformer who confronted the conservative outlook with reason and a scientific approach.

Guru Nanak, the first guru of the Sikhs led a modest life of profound spiritual devotion and divine wisdom. He spent his life bringing people of diverse faiths together, spreading messages of love, kindness, benevolence, tolerance, and harmony. Guru Nanak's philosophy is rational, scientific, reasonable, wise and the core values are humane. His successors carried forward the message of Guru Nanak both in letter and spirit, faithfully preserved in the holy scripture, Sri Guru Granth sahib ji. The Sikh philosophy is indeed thought-provoking and imbued with a depth of wisdom and continues to provide direction to the followers of the faith irrespective of time and space. Guru Nanak laid the foundation of a religion that was novel in approach and practices as he stressed on three cardinal principles- Naam Japna, Kirat Karna and Wand Chakhna and established the institutions of Sangat, Langar, Gurdwara and Pangat that continue to play an important role in the Sikh way of life.

Conclusion

Syncretism emerged in response to historical contexts of cultural exchange, conflict, and interaction, often as a means of fostering social harmony and mutual understanding among disparate groups. The genesis of syncretism is deeply rooted in periods of intense cross-cultural encounters, where the blending of practices and beliefs often served as a bridge between different communities. Sant Kabir's contribution to the syncretic tradition is particularly noteworthy. His poetry and teachings embody a synthesis of Hindu and Muslim devotional elements, advocating a path of personal spirituality and devotion that transcends sectarian divides. Kabir's focus on a universal divine presence and his critique of ritualistic practices exemplify how syncretism can promote spiritual unity and tolerance. Similarly, Guru Nanak's role in the context of syncretism was pivotal. As the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak sought to integrate elements of Hinduism and Islam while emphasising a monotheistic and inclusive vision.



NOTES

His teachings fostered a syncretic approach that challenged established norms and sought to unify diverse communities under the common tenets of truth, equality, and devotion to one God. The exploration of syncretism through the contributions of Sant Kabir and Guru Nanak reveals a rich tradition of blending and harmonising diverse spiritual and cultural elements. Their efforts underscore the power of syncretism in bridging divides and fostering an inclusive, tolerant society. Understanding their contributions provides valuable insights into how syncretic traditions can shape and enrich cultural and religious landscapes, promoting unity and mutual respect.

In-Text Questions - 2

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. Kabir Das believed that different religions are merely different paths to the same _____.
2. The teachings of Kabir Das are preserved in scriptures like the Adi Granth and _____.
3. Kabir rejected _____ and emphasized a strict ethical code for both the Guru and the householder.
4. Kabir Das was influenced by the Bhakti leader _____.
5. Kabir Das settled in _____ during his last years and challenged superstitions associated with the place.

B. State True or False:

1. Kabir Das wrote several treatises on his teachings.
2. Kabir Das believed that the repetition of God's name was crucial to spiritual practice.
3. Kabir Das was a proponent of idol worship.
4. Kabir's teachings emphasized humanity and the unity of all religions.
5. Kabir Das advocated for a life of renunciation and isolation from society.



11.6 SUMMARY

NOTES

- Indian civilization has a rich history of religious diversity, leading to a vibrant but challenging coexistence among different religions.
- Despite episodes of religious conflict, India has a tradition of religious pluralism and syncretism.
- Medieval Indian rulers and religious movements like Bhakti and Sufism promoted syncretism, blending different cultures and beliefs.
- Bhakti and Sufi movements opposed religious orthodoxy, ritualism, and social divisions, advocating for spiritual bliss and human unity.
- Syncretism, or the blending of different beliefs and practices, has shaped India's art, architecture, and literature, evident in examples like Mughal translations of Hindu epics and the fusion of Hindu and Persian architecture.
- Syncretism involves the interaction and fusion of diverse cultures, often creating new cultural or religious systems without necessarily destroying existing ones.
- In medieval India, syncretic traditions emerged as responses to social oppression and exploitation, promoting feelings of solidarity and brotherhood among different communities.
- Bhakti saints like Kabir and Guru Nanak played key roles in fostering syncretism, emphasizing devotion, monotheism, equality, and opposition to caste and ritualism.
- Sant Kabir Das was a prominent figure of the Bhakti movement, known for his religious reforms and teachings against social and religious malpractices.
- He rejected traditional symbols and rituals of religion and emphasized a strict ethical code, focusing on love, compassion, and humanity.
- Kabir believed in one God and preached that different religions are merely different paths to the same divine truth.
- Known as the "people's philosopher," he influenced many, including Dr. Ambedkar, and his works are preserved in various scriptures.



NOTES

- Kabir was born in Varanasi, belonged to a family of weavers, and was influenced by the Bhakti leader Ramananda.
- His oral preachings, compiled by his followers, remain relevant today, transcending religious boundaries.
- Kabir's teachings combined elements from Hinduism and Islam, promoting syncretism and unity.
- He opposed idol worship, caste hierarchy, and blind rituals, advocating for a minimalist lifestyle and internal spiritual search.
- Kabir emphasized equality and condemned social inequalities, advocating for humanity as the true religion.
- He rejected renunciation, promoting the performance of worldly duties with a focus on moral and spiritual growth.
- Kabir's legacy includes his contribution to religious reform and his role in establishing a culture of syncretism in India.

11.7 GLOSSARY

- **Syncretism:** The combination or amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought.
- **Bhakti Movement:** A medieval Indian movement emphasizing devotion to a personal god and rejecting caste and ritualism.
- **Sufism:** An Islamic mystical tradition focusing on the inward search for God and shunning materialism.
- **Pluralism:** The existence of multiple groups, beliefs, or values within a society, often with an emphasis on their coexistence.
- **Medieval India:** The period in Indian history from the 8th to the 18th century, characterized by the rise of various dynasties and the development of a syncretic culture.



- **Dargah:** A shrine built over the grave of a revered religious figure in Islam, often a Sufi saint.
- **Monotheism:** The belief in a single, all-powerful God.
- **Nirguna:** A concept of God without form or attributes.
- **Adi Granth:** The primary scripture of Sikhism, also known as Guru Granth Sahib.

NOTES

11.8 ANSWERS TO IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

In-Text Questions - 1

- A.** 1. religious
2. orthodoxy
3. religious
4. Hindu
5. dargahs
- B.** 1. False
2. True
3. False
4. True
5. False

In-Text Questions - 2

- A.** 1. divine truth
2. Bijak
3. rituals
4. Ramananda
5. Maghar



NOTES

- B.** 1. False
2. True
3. False
4. True
5. False

11.9 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. What is understood by religious syncretism?
2. What historical characteristic has been a hallmark of Indian civilization?
3. How did the Bhakti and Sufi movements respond to religious orthodoxy in medieval India?
4. What are some examples of syncretism in medieval Indian art and architecture?
5. How did syncretic traditions emerge in medieval India?
6. Write a brief note on Kabir's life and philosophy.
7. What were some key beliefs of the Bhakti saints like Kabir and Guru Nanak?
8. How has syncretism proven to be useful? Substantiate your answer with examples.
9. Guru Nanak played an important role in bringing people of different religions together. Do you agree? Discuss it considering his contribution and message.
10. How did Kabir Das's teachings contribute to religious syncretism in India?
11. Why did Kabir Das reject renunciation and what alternative did he propose?
12. How did Kabir Das address the social inequalities of his time?



11.10 REFERENCES/SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT XI: ABUL FAZAL: MONARCHY

LESSON 12 ABUL FAZAL: MONARCHY



LESSON 12

ABUL FAZAL: MONARCHY

NOTES

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Structure

- 12.1 Learning Objectives
- 12.2 Introduction
- 12.3 Fazal's Royalty for the State
- 12.4 Fazal's Societal Division
- 12.5 Fazal's Ideal Sultan-Akbar
- 12.6 Discourse of Justice
- 12.7 Army and Land Revenue System
- 12.8 Summary
- 12.9 Glossary
- 12.10 Answers to In-Text Questions
- 12.11 Self-Assessment Questions
- 12.12 References/Suggested Readings

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, students should be able to:

- Discuss the state and saltant of Fazal.
- Examine the justice system, ideal state and system of army and land revenue.
- Evaluate how Akbar tried to implement the advises of Fazal in his ideal administrative activities in his renowned work Akbar Nama.

Self-Instructional
Material

287



NOTES

- Know about Akbar, who consistently talked about the welfare of his people.
- Describe how Fazal showcases a high degree of tolerance and open-mindedness, as well as a strong sense of justice.

12.2 INTRODUCTION

Many distinguished historians contributed to the study of Medieval India, and Abul Fazal (1551–1602) is one of the most well-known among them. There are several reasons for this, including the prominence of intellectual themes in his writings, his persistence in appealing to reason in “the face of religious and cultural norms, and a novel approach to his goal”¹. It was impossible for him to maintain his “historical outlook without being deeply entangled with the political, social, economic, and religious realities of the time period under consideration”².

Even though Fazal has not left a treatise on political theory in the traditional sense, it is not difficult to evaluate him as a political thinker. We must first enlighten ourselves of the prejudices that his ornate style has fostered in some of his critics’ minds to arrive at an accurate assessment of his contribution to political philosophy. If we take a closer look at Fazal’s *Akbar-Nama* and *Ain-i-Akbari*, the only two works that provide us with direct knowledge of the subject, we will discover that he is not always so rhetorical in all of his writings³. In the *Ain-i-Akbari*, in particular, it is matter of fact and straight forward for the most part, though not occasionally as dry as dust as a gazetteer. No matter how significant Fazal’s influence on Akbar’s political theory and policies may have been, we would be well not to exaggerate the extent of that influence. In addition to Akbar’s own character, several other variables shaped his government and gave shape to his state⁴. Those who recall the events of that day will remember that Fazal entered the arena after his patron and friend and left it before the emperor died. Political concepts in Islam originate from a variety of sources. Historically, some of it may be traced back to pre-Islamic sources, and a significant portion of it was founded on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. The division of India into numerous smaller kingdoms at the start of the Mughal Empire resulted in a significant deal of political instability regularly. Finally, after a long battle, the Mongol king Babar defeated Ibrahim Lodi, the final monarch of the Delhi Sultanate, and took control of the region.



Abul Fazal approached history from a logical and secular perspective. A novel methodology for collecting facts and marshalling them based on critical examination was also implemented by him⁵. With chapters on “administrative norms, methods, and topographical accounts of various historical research and writing provinces, he substantially extended the area”⁶.

NOTES

12.3 FAZAL’S ROYALTY FOR THE STATE

There is no higher dignity in God’s eyes than that of royalty, and those who are wise drink from the fountain of its auspiciousness. For those who seek further evidence, the fact that royalty is both a remedy for the spirit of rebellion and the reason why subjects obey is ample proof of the point made. It can even be seen in the meaning of the name *Padshah*⁷, in which Pad represents stability and possession, and Shah denotes origin and lordship. Thus, a king is the source of all strength and possession in a society. If monarchy did not exist, the whirlwind of strife would never subside, and greedy ambition would never be able to restrain themselves. Under the weight of “the world, this immense marketplace, would lose its affluence, and the entire planet would become a barren wasteland”⁸. However, in the light of imperial justice, some choose the route of obedience with joy, while others abstain from violence out of dread of punishment, and some are forced to choose the path of righteousness out of need. Shah is also a name given to someone who outperforms his peers, as evidenced by words such as *Shah-swar*⁹ and *Shah-rah*¹⁰; it is also a term applied to a bridegroom, in which case the world, in the role of the bride, betrothed herself to the king and became his worshipper. Shah is also a name given to someone who outperforms his peers, as evidenced by words such as *Shah-swar* and *Shah-rah*. Men who are foolish and short-sighted are unable to distinguish between a true king and a greedy tyrant. This is also not surprising, given that both have a vast treasury, a large army, cunning servants, obedient people, an abundance of wise men, many skilled workers, and a bunch of means of enjoyment in common. Men with greater insight, on the other hand, see a distinction¹¹. The items that have just been listed are long-lasting in the former, but they are of limited duration in the latter’s case. Moreover, the former does not identify with these things because his goal is to alleviate oppression and provide for everything good in the world. The last is restrained by the external manifestations of royal power,

Self-Instructional
Material

289



NOTES

pride, the slavishness of men, and the desire for pleasure; as a result, instability, unsettledness, strife, oppression, faithlessness, and robbery can be found in every corner of the world¹².

Fazal views royalty as “a divine light or perhaps the reason behind the art of perfection for the Sultan”¹³. This is referred to as *Farr-i-Izidi*¹⁴ (the divine light) in modern language, while it is referred to as *Kiyan Khura*¹⁵ in ancient language. In its presence, men bow their heads in adoration and place their foreheads on the ground as if they were submitting to God. However, if the Badshah discriminated against “people based on their caste, religion, or social class, he could not be considered a decent ruler. According to him, the monarch had been endowed with magical powers, and it was impossible to stand against him or share his authority with anyone else. As a result, everyone is required to obey his orders”¹⁶. In Abul Fazal’s opinion, Akbar was the ideal king, which is why he referred to Akbar as “a complete man who could never make a mistake”¹⁷.

The agent of God was not permitted to discriminate between the numerous religious beliefs represented in the society. The development of a theory to support a tolerant religious policy was urgently required at this time. No specific religion was granted sovereignty; this was not the case. It took on an all-encompassing nature. They believed that “Religions were fundamentally the same, with different paths. Abul Fazal used logic in Islam”¹⁸ and the *Shariat*¹⁹. While Barani was doing so, he could not come up with an explanation for their authority over others. He argued that the principle of monarchical sovereignty was more applicable in a multi-religious society such as India. Because the monarch was supreme above all religions, sovereignty was not associated with any religion in this context. The excellent ideals of different faiths were advocated by him, and as a result, he brought together people of other faiths to work for world peace. He needed to maintain such characteristics by establishing a religious affiliation that was right for him. He brought relief to himself and his people by releasing them from the shackles of their own thinking. From Abul Fazal, we can deduce that a sovereign must be tolerant of current ideologies. He should recognise his people’s old methods as necessary and complimentary to modern life. Abul Fazal explained Akbar’s views on social reform by portraying him as having a logical approach to the issue. Fazal claimed that he did so because he wished to build a “Hindustan” that would stand out more confidently in the international community²⁰.

Self-Instructional



12.4 FAZAL'S SOCIETAL DIVISION

To put it another way, he described sovereignty and the state in terms of society. Following this, he divided “the population into four groups: warriors, craftsmen, and merchants; learned; and others. The learning class, according to him, was the third most significant. He degraded this class based on the socioeconomic reality of his period”²¹. Based on the Greek tradition, he also divided human beings into three categories: noble, base, and intermediate, according to their characteristics. Nobles were individuals who possessed superior intelligence, sagacity, administrative ability or composition of eloquence, and personal courage to carry out military duties. Various occupations were represented in the base and intermediate portions. These were the characteristics of self-centered people who carried out their activities primarily for their own benefit rather than the benefit of others.

The views of Abul Fazal on human beings, particularly the lower classes, whom he referred to as “base” or “ignorable,” echoed in significant part the prejudices of the contemporaneous upper classes, according to Satish Chandra. According to this interpretation, individuals belonging to aristocratic families and the upper castes should not aspire to a portion of state authority²². Those in charge of running the state should be reserved for noble families and the upper castes. As a result of the predominance of wicked sectors in society, royal tyranny was justified because only a monarch who possessed the required traits could maintain control over these sections of society. Second, for Fazal, it was “the most significant element for any Sultan who had been indulged with the sacrosanct features of *Farr-i-Izidi* which help to bring the societal stability by not allowing any personal struggles”²³. It was also his responsibility to “restore balance and contribute to the world’s flourishing by combining individual talent with respect for others”²⁴. As a result, maintaining one’s proper station in life required stability and even dignity”²⁵. Akbar is recorded as saying that the *Daroghas* should keep a close eye on their flock to ensure that no one out of covetousness abandons their own trade or occupation. In another place, we are told that “Akbar admired Shah Tahmasp’s”²⁶ assertion that- “When a tedious takes to learning, he does it at the price of his errands”²⁷”.

The divinity of sovereignty defied all attempts to limit the power and authority of the sovereign in the most obvious way. Abul Fazal divides one of his many classifications of human beings into three types based on their behavior in various contexts: People



NOTES

whose loyalty to the king, Akbar, is unwavering and undemanding are the noblest of souls, and this is a virtue in and of itself. Akbar is the noblest of souls²⁸. These individuals, who have built a business out of their service and have demonstrated their commitment in exchange for tangible benefits, are placed below them on the hierarchy of importance. The worst of “the worst show no signs of loyalty. Defeating rebels becomes a cleansing procedure for the ruling elite in mediaeval court literature”²⁹. It was not only those who defied imperial authority which constituted the rebellious, according to Abul Fazal; “even those who snubbed to capitulation to the Mughal glorious rule”³⁰, constituted rebels because “they were defying the divine destiny manifested in history’s teleology”³¹.

In-Text Questions - 1

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. Abul Fazal was a historian and political thinker in _____ India.
2. The two significant works of Abul Fazal are _____ and _____.
3. Fazal viewed _____ as a divine light essential for societal stability.
4. According to Fazal, sovereignty should not be associated with any specific _____.
5. Fazal divided society into _____ groups based on their characteristics and roles.

B. State True or False:

1. Abul Fazal left a traditional treatise on political theory.
2. Ain-i-Akbari is a straightforward and factual document for the most part.
3. Fazal believed that a king should discriminate based on caste and religion.
4. Abul Fazal’s views on human beings echoed the prejudices of the contemporaneous upper classes.
5. Fazal did not advocate for a tolerant religious policy.

12.5 FAZAL’S IDEAL SULTAN-AKBAR

Fazal stated in his most renowned *Akbar Nama* that Akbar was consistently brilliant in his decisions about the welfare of his people. He possessed a high degree of tolerance



and open-mindedness, as well as a strong sense of justice. He brought stability to “the state and promoted excellent governance to ensure and empower the economic growth, peace, and the safety of his people”³². He confirmed that everyone could practice their religion freely. His political beliefs were unambiguous, and they were geared toward the expansion of the state’s borders. As a result, Abul Fazal used moral arguments to defend his imperialist policies. In the words of Harbans Mukhia, Abul Fazal sees “the sovereign principally as a patriarchal figure who bestows absolute power to his illegitimate children³³”. Everything that the ruler does, all presents Mansabs or awards granted to his nobles, princes, or peasants, are all considered favours; no one gains anything by their own merits or efforts. Abul Fazal’s, on the other hand, binds the king to provide paternal care to his citizens as part of his authority. It appears that Abul Fazal’s favourite term for the monarch is “subjects have been committed to the king by God,³⁴” which he uses in conjunction with the metaphors of shepherd, gardener, and physician. Buddhism, Greco-Roman, ancient Egyptian, Assyrian, and biblical philosophy are a few of the cultures and streams of thought included in this concept. Obviously, enumeration of the necessary characteristics of a ruler has been a fundamental issue in mediaeval political thinking. In Barani’s words, a fierce ambition to conquer and rule virtually depleted all of these traits. For Babur, successful governance meant that the town walls were strong, the subjects were prosperous, provisions were on hand, and the treasury was fully stocked. Although there are several discussions of kingship “in Abul Fazal’s writings, the common thread is the blend of paternal love towards his subjects and the observance of absolute peace without discernment; the other conditions vary depending on the context, and at times they are out of step with one another”³⁵. There is a more excellent vision to Abul Fazal’s view of “sovereignty than simply listing the characteristics of a king. The True King must grasp the spirit of the age,³⁶” says Abul Fazal.

12.6 DISCOURSE OF JUSTICE

It was also the king’s responsibility “to provide justice to his subjects, always punish those who wronged them, and guarantee that justice was used to benefit the innocent”³⁷. He believes that “a king should be kind and harmonic during administering justice and regard his subjects as his children and himself as their father”³⁸. He should remember



NOTES

that he was sent to earth by God to bring about peace and justice for all. He serves as “a conduit for their well-being. Therefore, he should always maintain his neutrality and ensure that no one is harmed because of his actions. His judgements should be transparent, and he should make every effort to establish a civilised society during his reign³⁹”. People’s fundamental necessities should be taken care of by him. When it comes time for the monarch to pass judgement, he should strive to put himself in the shoes of the culprit. He should consider every part of the circumstances surrounding the crime and make his judgement only after doing so. According to tradition, if “the Sultan desired to expand the goodness of his realm, he should always praise good people and punish offenders for promoting the good action in future by them”⁴⁰.

According to Abul Fazal’s fundamental concept, the king should not be reliant on any religious figure. Instead, a high moral standard should be maintained, and he should be aware of the moral and spiritual aspects. With the help of Iranian traditions, he attempted to demonstrate this concept of state and sovereignty. The idea of justice for all, he believes, should be free of any bias in a holy religious society and should apply to all people, regardless of their religious affiliation. Therefore, he advocated for the eradication of *Jizyah*⁴¹. He persuaded us that Akbar’s conquests were not motivated by spiritual or religious differences but rather by the need for justice because Indian politics was founded on fairness and tolerance, which he referred to as *Dar-ul-Sulh*⁴² (the Way of the Sulh).

Humayun did not have the opportunity to update the previous administration. By understanding the Delhi Sultanate, Akbar amended the constitution and instituted a system of government and administration for the kingdom⁴³. At the district and sub-district levels, he did not make any modifications to the administrative structure. His land revenue system was nearly identical to that of his predecessor. What distinctive or novel enabled the Mughal Empire to become more potent than the Delhi Sultanate is essential. So, what were those innovative policies that allowed Akbar to rule such a significant and stable political and administrative framework for a long time? To provide excellent governance, it is necessary to have a robust and well-planned administrative organisation. The absence of fear of a vicious assault is also vital for the state’s well-being and stability. All of this would not have been feasible in Akbar’s empire if the state had not been supported by clever and devoted officers and soldiers, as the state could only beat the enemy with their assistance⁴⁴. Despite popular belief, the Mughal government did not represent a continuous continuation of the Delhi Sultanate. He



modified the official designations of the individuals involved. His construction of a provincial administration, which was modelled after the central system of government, was his most significant achievement. To ensure better control, explicit norms and regulations were developed. Abul Fazal believed that advocates held the highest position among all of the officers in his administration. According to him, advocates should possess characteristics that enable them to simultaneously resolve the king's private and social concerns.

Following the division of the state into numerous levels, as depicted in 'Kautilya's Arthashastra, each group had a variety of officers. They were all personally responsible for the state's operation and liable to the king'⁴⁵. As a result, they were always working to improve the general public's lives. The *Ain-i-Akbari* contains the same notion as the *Ain-i-Akbari*. Akbar split his empire into three divisions: the Subas, the Sarkars, and the Mahall's. He appointed a chain of officers at various levels, all of whom were under the jurisdiction of ministers at the top of the hierarchy⁴⁶. Because the officers' religious beliefs were not allowed to interfere with their administrative duties under this arrangement, it was adopted by his successors and him. Because Akbar desired a sovereign rule, he placed a high value on it. Therefore, he organised and centralised the administration of his company. Under the king's rule, there were petty landowners known as Zamindars or Jagirdars, who were responsible for their respective lands. Other chieftains were frequently restrained by the monarch and his army (landlords). A class is known as Bhumia also received some land from the Jagirdars as a reward. The Bhumia were the legal owners of the property, and as such, they were exempt from paying any taxes on it. However, his domain was always considered inferior to that of the Jagirdari⁴⁷. The monarch also had direct sovereignty of "apart from the rest of the kingdom. The majority of this property would be near the capital. During the Sultanate, this system thrived"⁴⁸. The Mughals did not interfere with it since the landowners (chieftains) retained control of the lands by keeping them in possession of individuals aligned with the rulers of Delhi:⁴⁹.

Throughout the Mughal Empire, there was a comprehensive and centralised patrimonial system. They gave many kinds of ranks and hierarchies in this system, which was based on the *Mansabdari* system of Persia⁵⁰. These levels were divided into two categories: *Zat* and *sawar*. Each Mansabdar was vested with certain powers (*Zat*) and commanded a mounted force of horses (*Sawar*)⁵¹. The ruler granted him the ability to withstand his opponents. Sixty-six ranks are mentioned in the *Ain-i-*



NOTES

Akbari. Those who were deserving received presents from the system at the time. All the Mansabdars were directly responsible to the ruler. They were also in charge of collecting revenue on the king's behalf and were paid in cash⁵².

Abul Fazal divided the Mansabdars based on the availability of their numbers and strength⁵³. Through this arrangement, a community with many classes between the people and the ruler came into being, and a hierarchical system was established⁵⁴. To summarise, Indian civilisation during the Middle Ages had a complex structure of rank and position based on military strength. The Military might be elevated to the level of a status symbol, and the entire framework was built around it⁵⁵. The Mughals followed this pattern to maintain peace in their kingdom, and they made no attempt to change things.

Abul Fazal was a firm believer in the importance of hierarchy, but he was more concerned with the need for talent in the kingdom. He was unconcerned by a person's social background, even if they were exceptionally gifted. He claimed that *Akbar* was moved by the spirit of the time because he recognised and rewarded genius in people of all social classes⁵⁶. It is important to note that "the Mughals did not inhibit with the Indian caste structure and did not attempt to disrupt the fundamental outline of Indian civilisation. They also did not inhibit with the administration of justice, economy, and finances"⁵⁷.

12.7 ARMY AND LAND REVENUE SYSTEM

Akbar's administration and his land revenue system were continuations of the Delhi Sultanate's administration. The provinces of Akbar were divided into two groups: the Sarkars and the Parganas. In each Sarkar, several Parganas were subdivided. There was a Shiqdar in charge of general administration and an Amil in land assessment and income collection⁵⁸. There were a variety of other positions available, such as treasurer, Qanungo, and others. During the harvest time, "there was a great army assigned to look after the matters of production⁵⁹". The land revenue system served as the foundation for the state's financial infrastructure.

The income policy of Akbar was based on the *dahsala* system⁶⁰, which was a ten-year scheme. It was "a logical progression from the method of measurement



introduced by Sher Shah-the region between modern-day Lahore and Allahabad, until the 19th century”⁶¹. As a result of this arrangement, state demand was expressed as a cash rate based on locally produced goods and locally priced goods. The Dahsala referred to average production and prices during the previous ten years, not a ten-year settlement. It was calculated from scratch, then averaged in cash using new data from the last decade. Clearly, the greatest demand was for land revenue. As a result, the peasants were stressed. This was the most pressing condition that where “the peasants were obliged to meet under menace of severe implications, including eviction and loss of life, if they did not meet the demand”⁶².

It was introduced in several regions, including “Lahore, Allahabad, Gujarat, Malwa, Bihar, and Multan, and was based on the extent way”⁶³. Crop sharing was the second approach employed. Finally, the collection of revenue could be accomplished by a variety of alternative means in other domains. It took many intelligent inspectors to check all these ways, and they all failed.

Abul Fazal relates that during Akbar’s reign, the emperor instituted a system of collecting taxes on an individual basis. This arrangement permitted the farmer to pay their tax based on the amount of produce they had harvested. Thus, in exchange for whatever produce he obtained, he merely had to pay the tax. This system differed from the previous one, which was used in the Mughal Empire, where an entire village was required to pay the tax as a single unit of payment. In this arrangement, every farmer was required to pay the tax regardless of whether he produced a productive crop. This was because the tax was to be shared evenly among all farmers.

Consequently, when Akbar became emperor, he modified the system, taking steps to improve the living conditions of farmers in the process. For example, a farmer might pay his tax based on the amount of produce he produces or his financial situation. However, “the tax collection authority rested with the zamindars or landlords and the *ameer*. They exploited farmers by making them pay the tax even when a drought, flood, or other natural disaster was imminent”⁶⁴. The zamindars and landlords ignored Akbar’s orders not to collect tax during natural calamities. Akbar took several preventative actions to ensure that farmers were not exploited in the future. He kept an eye on the zamindars to see who was taking advantage of the situation and who was not. As a result, he “successfully reimbursed some of the money to the farmers who had been forced to pay the tax”⁶⁵; however, he was unable to maintain control over his



NOTES

entire kingdom, and this type of exploitation of the peasantry became popular among the landlords as a result. During Akbar's reign, this practice was still practised in many parts of India.

Akbar possessed a big and powerful army, which he used to ensure the smooth operation of government and administration. The Mughal army was made up of "cavalry, infantry, artillery, elephants, and camels, among other things"⁶⁶. However, there was no straight forward method of determining the size of Akbar's army. The Mansabdars were responsible for maintaining troops by their commitments, which were represented by their sawar rank. It was written in 1581 by Montserrat that there were 45 thousand cavalries, five thousand elephants, and many thousands of infantry, all of whom were paid directly from the royal treasury.

In-Text Questions - 2

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. _____ was a prominent historian of medieval India.
2. The _____ was a detailed record of the administration under Akbar.
3. Fazal viewed royalty as a _____ light.
4. The _____ system was a land revenue system introduced by Akbar.
5. Akbar maintained a large and powerful _____ to ensure smooth governance.

B. State True or False:

1. Abul Fazal left a treatise on political theory in the traditional sense.
2. Akbar's administration was characterized by decentralization and inefficiency.
3. Fazal believed in the importance of talent over social background in governance.
4. The dahsala system was based on the average produce of the past ten years.
5. Jizyah was a tax historically levied on Muslims in Islamic states.

Conclusion

Abul Fazal, on the other hand, was Akbar's valued courtier, and he had a genuine admiration and awe for the emperor. During his early years, he and his family were subjected to the most severe form of persecution at the hands of the orthodox Ulama,



which shaped his solid belief in religious tolerance. This proved to be the foundation of a long-lasting friendship with Akbar, which continues to this day. Few could deny that Akbar possessed the finest and noblest characteristics of mind and heart, which were unquestionable. It is no surprise that Abul Fazal recognised in Akbar the attributes of a ruler, philosopher, and hero. To defend, justify, and exalt Akbar and his acts, Abul Fazal was compelled to do so by his official position as well as his personal beliefs about religion and politics.

Akbar and Ashoka were forced to engage in a series of battles at “the beginning of their reign to solidify their positions and expand the scope of their empires. However, once they had attained stability, they proposed notions of peace, religion, and brotherhood”⁶⁷. Several questions arise in this context: Why did Akbar require the services of Sulh-kul during his reign as king? Wasn’t he able to manage his administration promptly? Was it essential for him to introduce Deen-i-Ilahi? Were you under the impression that he was influential in keeping peace and order throughout his vast empire? It is possible that he invented the concepts of Sulh-Kul and Deen-i-Ilahi to make his subjects happy and inspire confidence in other groups like the Rajputs and Marathas to do so.

However, even though Abul Fazal rarely mentions Akbar’s mistakes or “the inadequacies of his policies, he was undeniably one of the greatest intellects and theorists that the nation has ever shaped”⁶⁸. As a result, his concept of the social compact and his notion of divine origin of sovereignty are flawed. In fact, he is said to have combined “Hobbes and James I’s perspectives in his writings (and he went much beyond James I in his claim for the sovereign)”⁶⁹. However, the fundamental rationality that underpins Abul Fazal’s ideas ought to be respected, if not admired. It is safe to say that “no one else in India has ever lectured sovereignty in the same way”⁷⁰ as he did.

12.8 SUMMARY

- Abul Fazal was a prominent historian and political thinker of Medieval India.
- His works, Akbar-Nama and Ain-i-Akbari, reflect his logical and secular approach to history.
- Fazal viewed royalty as a divine and essential institution for societal stability.



NOTES

- He emphasized the importance of a just and tolerant ruler who does not discriminate based on religion or social class.
- Fazal's societal division included warriors, craftsmen, merchants, learned individuals, and others, reflecting the socio-economic realities of his time.
- He believed that only noble and aristocratic families should hold state authority, justifying royal tyranny to maintain societal order.
- Fazal's philosophy was influenced by Greek traditions and aimed at creating a balanced society with respect for individual talents.
- Abul Fazal was a prominent historian of Medieval India, noted for his intellectual themes and novel approach in his writings.
- Fazal's works, Akbar-Nama and Ain-i-Akbari, provide insight into his political thought and influence on Akbar's policies.
- Fazal viewed royalty as divine and essential for societal stability.
- He believed that the ideal king, like Akbar, should be tolerant, just, and focused on the welfare of the people.
- Fazal emphasized the importance of justice and the king's role in providing it impartially.
- He advocated for the abolition of Jizyah and promoted religious tolerance.
- Akbar's administration was characterized by centralization and efficiency, with a focus on economic growth and stability.
- Fazal believed in the importance of talent over social background in governance.
- Akbar's land revenue system was based on the dahsala system, stressing the need for fair tax collection.
- Akbar maintained a large and powerful army to ensure smooth governance.

12.9 GLOSSARY

- **Akbar-Nama:** A historical account written by Abul Fazal about the reign of Akbar.



- **Ain-i-Akbari:** A detailed document on the administration and culture of Akbar's empire.
- **Sovereignty:** The supreme power or authority, especially in the context of a monarch.
- **Base:** Individuals primarily motivated by self-interest rather than the common good.
- **Intermediate:** A category between noble and base in Fazal's societal classification.
- **Jizyah** - A tax historically levied on non-Muslims in Islamic states.
- **Dar-ul-Sulh** - A term meaning "the Way of the Peace," referring to a state policy based on fairness and tolerance.
- **Mansabdari System** - A bureaucratic system used in the Mughal Empire to rank officials and military personnel.
- **Zat and Sawar** - Ranks in the Mansabdari system indicating personal status and number of cavalry maintained.
- **Dahsala System** - A land revenue system introduced by Akbar, based on the average produce of the past ten years.
- **Zamindar** - A landowner responsible for collecting taxes from peasants.

12.10 ANSWERS TO IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

In-Text Questions - 1

- A. 1. Medieval
2. Akbar-Nama, Ain-i-Akbari
3. royalty
4. religion
5. four



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- B.** 1. False
2. True
3. False
4. True
5. False

In-Text Questions - 2

- A.** 1. Abul Fazal
2. Ain-i-Akbari
3. divine
4. dahsala
5. army
- B.** 1. False
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. False

12.11 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Who was Abul Fazal and what is he known for?
2. What are the titles of Abul Fazal's two significant works?
3. How does Abul Fazal view the concept of royalty?
4. According to Fazal, what qualities should a monarch possess?
5. Critically explain the political and social views of Fazal.
6. Explain the Fazal's army and land revenue system stated in his ideal type of state.



7. What were Fazal's ideas regarding the ideal Sultan and justice?
8. What are the two main works of Abul Fazal that provide insight into his political thoughts?
9. What was Akbar's policy on religious tolerance?
10. What system did Akbar introduce for land revenue collection?

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