मास्टर्स इन कौटिल्य राज्यशास्त्र और अर्थशास्त्र

पेपर 02 - भारतीय राजकीय, आर्थिक और सामाजिक विचार

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- Harshada Sawarkar
sawarkar.harshada123@gmail.com

Types of State in Ancient India

Types of State in Vedic Age –

Ancient constitutional writers hardly discuss the different types of state.

This is probably due to their having flourished in an age when monarchy had become the prevailing type of State.

Had a book on Dandaniti been written by a citizen of an aristocratic or republican state, we may have got some interesting discussion about the nature and types of different states like monarchy, aristocracy and democracy and their relative merits and defects.

But curiously enough this does not seem to have happened.

Our writers again and again revolve round the same type of state - Monarchy.

Only a few of them passingly refer to the Sangha (republican) state.

Apart from the frequent references to Vishpatis and Janapatis, the Rigveda frequently refers to specific tribes like the Yadus, the Purus, the Anus, the Turvasas, etc.

Vishvamitra's prayers are said to have protected the Bharata people.

विश्वामित्रस्य रक्षति ब्रह्मेदं भारतं जनम्। (RV, III.53.2)

The notion of a Rashtra or a territorial state gradually evolved in the later period.

One finds it clearly referred to in the Atharvaveda.

The Taittiriya Samhita of Krishna Yajurveda refers to a ritual, a partial performance of which could secure a king over-lordship over his tribe (visha) but not over the country (rashtra).

The Brahmana literature frequently refers to the emperor as the ruler not over all the tribes but over the whole Earth bounded by the sea.

It is clear that the nation of a territorial state was fully established at this time.

Monarchy was the normal form of the State in the Vedic period.

Raja (a king), Maharaja (a great king), Samrat (an emperor) are the different terms by which kings were designated according to their power and prestige.

Some of them were also called Svarajas and Bhojas - what precisely these terms indicated, is difficult to determine.

Probably they were feudatories and zamindars.

...तानन्वारोहामि साम्राज्याय...तानन्वारोहामि भौज्याय...तानन्वारोहामि स्वाराज्याय...तानन्वारोहामि वैराज्याय...तानन्वारोहामि राज्याय...तानन्वारोहामि पारमेष्ठ्याय...

In the description of the coronation, the ritual is sometimes described as securing *Rajya*, *Svarajya*, *Bhaujya*, *Vairajya*, *Maharajya* and *Samrajya* to one and the same individual.

A doubt, therefore, naturally arises as to whether these terms really denoted different types of states or monarchies.

It is, however, not unlikely that it is the desire to emphasize the omnipotence of the ritual that is responsible for the priest claiming that the King who is receiving the holy coronation from him, can attain to all the different positions referred to above.

This conjecture becomes more probable when a passage in the *Aitareya Brahmana* states that the different types of states like *Rajya*, *Bhaujya*, *Vairajya* and *Samrajya* flourished in different provinces of the country.

In the later Indian history one always comes across a large number of kings, enjoying different degrees of autonomy and ruling as feudatories of an emperor (*samrat*).

It is not unlikely that such feudatories existed in the Vedic period as well; they may have been known as *bhojas* and *svarajas* and their feudal lords as *samrats*.

The territorial extent of the dominion of a *samrat*, as compared to that of *svarat*, cannot be definitely defined.

Most of the states in Vedic period were small. The dominion of a *samrat* was perhaps not much bigger than that of an ordinary king.

Military glory and achievements were probably more responsible for the King's higher title than the extent of his dominion.

Rajya probably denoted a smaller but independent kingdom.

The statement in the *Aitareya Brahmana* that kings were common in the Madhyadesha and emperors in Eastern India would support this interpretation.

Vairajya denoted a republic, a state which had no king.

States, where the principal executive authority was vested in two rulers, were also not unknown in ancient India.

One such state existed at Patala in Sindh, where the sovereignty was vested in two different kings hailing from different houses.

The Arthashastra (VIII. 2) also refers to such a state; probably it used to come into existence when two brothers or cousins, being claimants to the same state, preferred to rule it jointly instead of dividing it into two parts.

But just as two swords cannot remain in the same scabbard, two kings can hardly rule in harmony, when the power of each is unlimited and extends over the same kingdom.

Such a state must have been often torn by groups and parties supporting the power of each ruler.

One can, therefore, well understand why the Arthashastra does not approve of it.

द्वैराज्यवैराज्ययोः। द्वैराज्यमन्योन्यपक्षद्वेषानुरागाभ्यां परस्परसङ्घर्षेण वा विनश्यति। वैराज्यं तु प्रकृतिचित्तग्रहणापेक्षि यथास्थितमन्यैर्भुज्यत इत्याचार्याः।

To avoid discord, very often the brother or cousin rulers of a Dvairajya state would divide the kingdom between them.

It would appear that though the kingdom was divided, the two rulers would hold joint consultations on all important matters.

When the two kings were ruling in harmony, the state was called a two-king-state (dorajja in Prakrit and dvirajaka in Sanskrit).

When they were pulling in opposite directions, it was called a self-fighting state (viruddharajja in Prakrit and viruddharajya in Sanskrit).

अरायणि वा गणरायणि वा जुवरायणि वा दोरज्जणि वा बेरज्जणि वा विरुद्धरज्जणि वा।
(आचाराङ्ग सूत्र)

The Vedic literature sometimes refers to kings meeting together in an assembly.

यत्रोषधी: समग्मत राजान: समिताविव। (ऋग्वेद)

Also, the person alone can become a king who is permitted to become one by other kings.

यस्मै वै राजानो राज्यमनुमन्यन्ते स राजा भवति न स यस्मै न। (शतपथ ब्राह्मण)

These passages probably refer to the existence of an oligarchy (अल्पलोकसत्ताक राज्य), where power was vested in a council of nobles, each member of which was entitled to call himself a king and had a right to elect the chief of the state, who also was called a king.

This type of state continued to exist down to the 6th century B.C. in some parts of North-Eastern India.

Side by side with monarchical and oligarchical states, there also existed republican governments in ancient India as early as the Vedic age.

A passage in the Aitareya Brahmana states that the people in the vicinity of the Himalayas have a virat (kingless) type of the state and are, therefore, called vi-rat or kingless.

The same passage earlier referred to the kings of the easterners and the southerners and the titles that were borne by them, carefully stated that it is the people in the vicinity of the Himalayas - not their kings - were called virat.

It becomes quite certain, that these people had a non-monarchical or republican form of government.

Mahabharata also refers to the powerful Grama-s on the bank of River Sindhu.

These can be called as city-states.

सिन्धुकूलाश्रिता ये च ग्रामणीया महाबला:।

Coins issued by a number of cities have come to light.

It is quite probable that at some period of time they were city-states, rather than capitals, issuing coins on their own authority.

They might have brought under their control some of the outlying villages, but the government was usually carried on by the aristocratic classes in the city itself.

Normally, however, states in ancient India were unitary in character. King was the fountain source from which the ministers and provincial governors derived their power.

Mudrarakshasa – The Signet Ring

Dramatist - Vishakhadatta

The only political drama in Sanskrit Literature. Acts – 7

The play is an example of creative writing, but not entirely fictional.

It is dated variously from the late 4th century to the 8th century CE.

Mudrarakshasa contains a number of important statements regarding the principles and policies of government.

1. Cāṇakya had employed spies everywhere, for finding out what is going on in the city; one of these, Nipuṇaka by name, enters and relates his discoveries during the course of his wanderings.

Disguised as a mendicant, he had gone to the house of the merchant Candanadāsa, with whom the wife and son of Rākṣasa were staying; there he happened to pick up a ring belonging to Rākṣasa, which he hands over to Cāṇakya and which is the pivot on which the plot of the story hangs.

In pursuance of his plans, Cāṇakya gets a certain letter written by Śakaṭadāsa (professional writer and a friend of Rākṣasa) and then he seals it with Rākṣasa's ring and gives both the letter and the ring to Sidhārthaka, one of his trusted emissaries, with certain secret instructions.

Next, he tries to induce Candanadāsa to deliver over the family of Rākṣasa; but Candanadāsa declines and remains firm on his loyalty to his friend, even though threatened with capital punishment. For the present, Cāṇakya orders him to be kept under arrest.

2. Rākṣasa is introduced and is shown as plotting variously for the overthrow of Candragupta; he, too, employs spies to wander about in Pāṭaliputra and collect information.

Virādhagupta, one of the spies, who was disguised as a snake charmer, comes and narrates how all the plans of Rākṣasa had gone wrong.

Further, how all his schemes to kill Candragupta had been invariably foiled by the vigilance of Cāṇakya and how all his allies and friends, including Śakaṭadāsa, were arrested on a suspicion of being involved in the attempts on the life of Candragupta.

In the meanwhile, Sidhārthaka, acting upon Cāṇakya's private instructions, rescues Śakaṭadāsa and brings him to Rākṣasa.

Rākṣasa takes off some of the ornaments from his person and gives them as a reward to Siddhārthaka (these ornaments were given to Rākṣasa by his ally, prince Malayaketu).

Siddārthaka takes a ring, on which, there was signature of Rākṣasa, for sealing up the ornaments in a box and being questioned about it, states that he found it near the house of Candanadāsa and then restores it at his desire to Rākṣasa who gives it in Śakaṭadāsa's keeping.

Siddhārthaka outwardly takes service under Rākṣasa while inwardly he remains Cāṇakya's spy.

3. Cāṇakya secretly arranges a fake quarrel with Candragupta, meant as a trick to mislead Rākṣasa.

Candragupta orders the celebration of the Kaumudi festival and Cāṇakya forbids it. However, when the festival was forbidden, Candragupta sends for Cāṇakya to know why the festivities were forbidden.

A fine scene ensues between them in which the monarch retorts Cāṇakya and the latter taunts him as being ungrateful and insolent.

Cāṇakya resigns office and leaves the king and the king proclaims that he would rule independently of him. Thus, to all it appears that they are thoroughly separated.

Rākṣasa’s agent brings the news of this quarrel to his master, who is highly pleased at it and believes that it would be easier to overthrow Candragupta, now that he has no longer Cāṇakya to advise him.

In the meantime, Malayaketu, accompanied by Bhāgurāyaṇa, comes to see Rākṣasa who was reported to be suffering from headache.

Bhāgurāyaṇa seizes this opportunity, to create a suspicion about Rākṣasa’s sincerity, in his master’s mind by telling him that the deserters from Candragupta come to him wishing directly to deal with him and not through Rākṣasa.

The latter, he further suggests, is not so much the foe of Candragupta; and in case Cāṇakya were somehow dismissed, there would be nothing to prevent him from allying himself with Candragupta.

Malayaketu overhears the conversation between Rākṣasa and his agent and his suspicion is thereby deepened. He, however, goes forth to see Rākṣasa, who advises him to lead an expedition against Pāṭalīputra at once.

5. The scene now shifts to the camp of Malayaketu near Candragupta's capital. One Jīvasiddhi, who was known as a friend of Rākṣasa but was in reality a spy of Cāṇakya, enters into the presence of Bhāgurāyaṇa and Malayaketu.

In the absence of Rākṣasa, supposedly he requested to permit him to leave the camp. When pressed to give the reason for doing so, he says he is disgusted with the conduct of Rākṣasa and wants to leave him before it is too late.

Malayaketu overhears Jīvasiddhi's speech and the latter succeeds in poisoning the mind of the prince against Rākṣasa by his allegation that it was Rākṣasa and not Cāṇakya, who employed the poison-maid against Malayaketu's father and killed him.

After he left, the guards bring in Siddhārthaka, whom they had caught leaving the camp without a permit on the plea that he was a servant of Rākṣasa.

On his person are found that old letter which Cāṇakya had given him and a box of ornaments, both sealed with Rākṣasa's seal. The letter is couched in such ambiguous terms and the ornaments are easily recognized by Malayaketu to be the same that he had formerly given to Rākṣasa.

Therefore, it becomes apparently clear that Rākṣasa was in secret communication with Candragupta, which deduction is further corroborated by the oral testimony of Siddhārthaka.

When charged with treachery, Rākṣasa denies it as being the fabrication of the enemy.

However, he is at a loss to explain the fact of the letter being in the handwriting of his friend Śakaṭadāsa.

Further, he happened to be wearing at that time an ornament, which he had bought unsuspectingly from a person who was in reality an agent of Cāṇakya; that ornament had originally belonged to Malayaketu's deceased father and was later in the possession of Candragupta.

Malayaketu recognizes the ornaments and Rākṣasa finds himself in a fix; he could not well say that he bought it, since Candragupta was hardly likely to sell it.

Finally, Malayaketu taxes him with having murdered his father by means of the poison-maid. All this circumstantial evidence completely overwhelms Rākṣasa, whom Malayaketu now disowns and who thus finds himself without an ally.

6. Malayaketu’s expedition proves a failure owing to dissension among his own followers and Bhāgurāyaṇa, Bhadrabhaṭa and others and he takes him captive.

Rākṣasa goes to Pāṭaliputra to save his friend Candanadāsa who was ordered to be impaled by Cāṇakya for sheltering his (Rākṣasa’s) family.

7. Candandasa is being led to the place of execution by the Cāṇḍālas. Rākṣasa arrives on the scene; he announces himself to the Chāṇḍālas who take him into the presence of Cāṇakya.

The latter explains to him how all his plans, including the forged letter, were intended to bring matters to that particular culmination, it being his (Cāṇakya's) desire to induce Rākṣasa to take up the post of the chief minister of Candragupta.

After some hesitation, Rākṣasa accepts it; the life of his friend Candanadāsa is saved; and all ends happily as originally designed by Cāṇakya.