

BLOCK II

Political Concerns and Key Ideas

BLOCK II INTRODUCTION

This block deals with political concerns and key ideas through focusing on individual thinkers. Unit 5 is titled Ved Vyasa: Rajdharma (Shantiparva). The Shantiparva of Mahabharata is a discourse on statecraft conveyed by Bhishma to Yudhishtira and largely describes the functions, duties of a good king, both during normal times and during period of emergency, finally signifying the importance of welfare state. Manu's views on Social Order and Laws are covered in Unit 6. *Manusmriti*, or 'The Laws of Manu', is considered to be one of the most authoritative texts in the *Brahmanic* tradition which lays out social and civil laws and codes of conduct which are necessary for the maintenance of *dharma*. Unit 7 is titled Kautilya - State and Duties of Kingship while Unit 8 deals with Kautilya's *Mandala* theory. Kautilya is father of Indian political science; however, his works have not been given due importance and analysis not only in India but outside India as well. Long before the West witnessed separation of state and church under modernity in 16th century, Kautilya had already advocated independent status of polity away from religion. His *saptanga* theory is a systematic and coherent theory of state power which was unmatched even by Machiavelli. He may not have advocated democracy but Kautilya said that welfare of the people was central to stability and security of a kingdom. Interstate relations and foreign policy find a prominent place in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. He has tried to explain the dynamics of interstate relations through his *Mandala* theory. Kautilya can be easily considered as the pre-modern founding father of theory of Political Realism later expressed by Machiavelli and Morgenthau. Unit 9 is titled *Digha Nikaya* - The Idea of Chakravartin. *Digha Nikaya* is collection of the dialogues, mostly of Buddha himself, as they appear to his earliest disciples in a series of one hundred and eighty six discourses which, according to Rhys Davids, will occupy a place in the history of human thought similar to the Dialogues of Plato. Buddhist theory of kingship implied that state power would not only be used for punishing, taming or controlling society, but also more positively to create a new just moral social order. Zia-Ul-Barani's views on Royal Authority and Just Rule have been highlighted in Unit 10. His ideas have been considered significant in understanding medieval polity and other strands of thinking that existed in that period of history. Barani represented and championed the idea of political expediency in Islamic history which he has conveyed to the ruler by way of his *nasihats* (advices). Unit 11 deals with Abul Fazal's Monarchical Authority and Popular Well-being. There was predominance of intellectual elements in his writings and an unflinching appeal to reason against religious and cultural traditions. His interpretation of history was integrally linked to the political, social, economic and religious realities of that period and strove to address the plurality and diversity of Indian society at large that Akbar wished to rule in the best possible manner. Unit 12 is titled Akka Mahadevi: Critique of Social Order. She was a woman saint from Medieval India who claimed like many other 'enlightened' people of her time and age (in India) that differences like those of sex/gender, good fortune, wealth or caste (*jaati*) didn't matter in the quest for the 'Knowledge of ultimate reality'. The last unit 13

discusses Kabir's ideas on Religious Boundaries and the Quest for Social Harmony. The universal and transcendental nature of Kabir's influence is highlighted by the fact that his legacy is equally claimed by people of different faiths. He advocated a direct relationship with God through love and devotion and his ideas cannot be bracketed that easily within one religion or sect.



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UNIT 5 VEDA VYASA RAJDHARAMA (SHANTIPARVA)*

Structure

- 5.0 Objective
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Vyas and Mahabharata
- 5.3 Origin of State
- 5.4 Kinship
- 5.5 Government
- 5.6 Justice and Dandaneeti
- 5.7 Inter –State Relations
- 5.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.9 References
- 5.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

5.0 OBJECTIVES

The epic *Mahabharata* is full of political advice that a person requires in his life. It supports real-world approach. People commonly figure out this epic to say that pure idealism does not work in real life. Even if somebody look at real political advice, *The Mahabharata* is not very far from realist thinkers like Sun Tzu and Machiavelli. It has real-world strategies. It emphasizes on political power and military conquest. Lord Krishna essentially justifies use of plans in national interest and inevitability of war in times of crises. A number of political strategies, policies and approaches emerge from *The Mahabharata*. Our politicians, leaders, ministers, officers, policy makers and Indians at large can remain Indian in spirit and succeed at diplomacy and other fronts of authority. The question is from where we draw our inspiration. A simple reference makes us at comfort and confident.

- To understand the relevance of Mahabharata in Historical, Political and Cultural Aspect.
- To identify the political thought in Mahabharata and comparison with the modern political theories.

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- Mahabharata represented as cultural education transmitting knowledge from one generation to other generation.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

There is always a question comes to our mind that our great epics are having any relevance in political thought? The answer is certainly yes. Mahabharata is a great epic, which is not only a historical text but also it, is a text for educators. Researchers have an opinion that Mahabharata has been used to educate by one generation to other generation as a knowledge system. It is a philosophical text, which shows the multiple viewpoints about the society, human relations, and politics. It treats human beings as a multilayered being.

The *Shantiparva* of *Mahabharata*, a discourse on statecraft conveyed by Bhishma to Yudhishtira, largely describes the functions, duties of a good king, both during normal times and a during period of emergency, finally signifying the importance of a welfare state. In the ancient time when "law was the command of the sovereign" and citizens had to obey the orders of the king. Does the *Shantiparva* contain principles on the lines of sarvajana sukhino bhavantu? Kingship in ancient India characterized as 'benevolent, patriarchal autocracy bound down by many instructions of service to the people. The duties of King considered a servant of the people. It expected that the king devote his life to the service and welfare of the people of his state. He was expected to assume different roles in accordance with the situations, such as abolishing the enemies, imposing punishments upon the wicked, giving rewards upon the good, sacking offenders etc. All duties of the king should be performed according to the provisions of dharma, which are to be respected in every possibility, not by the king but also by his public. The *Shantiparva* definitely maintains, "The king should involve all the public in their respective duties and instruct them to perform their allocated functions according to dharma". The *Mahabharata*, like Kautilya's *Saptanga* theory believes in the seven elements of the state-Raja, Mantri, Kosa(Treasury), Danda(Military), Mitra(Friend), Rashtira and Nagar. The head of the state, council of ministers, treasury, punishment, allies etc were as important in ancient times as today.

5.2 VYAS AND MAHABHARATA

The Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Smirities represent ancient Indian Political Thought. The political ideas found in the great epics *Mahabharata* is very complex and comprehensive. Vyasa, the author is a mythical figure of uncertain identity. Vyasa means arranger or compiler. Though various authors of ancient time are so designated, the term is used especially as a title of the compiler of Vedas, who has also been the author of *Mahabharata*. Just as we find the series of fourteen different Manus, so the Puranas tell of twenty-eight Vyasas who compiled wisdom in different periods. The arranger of *Mahabharata* is *Krishna Dwapayan Vyasa* and it is between the decedents of his two sons Dhritrashtra and Pandu, that the Mahabharata was contested.

Mahabharata is a historical Text, some of the noted historians as DD Koshambi consider *Mahabharata* to be a historical text. It is a longest epic that has also been used for educating the general public for their day to day life. It is a compilation of existing knowledge that was available at that period of time.

Mahabharata is important in the point of view of politics, because it discuss broadly in ancient Indian Political thought. The *Shantiparva* and the *Rajdharmanusasana* chapters which present a man-made and systematic view of the political thought of ancient India. In the *Shantiparva* of *Mahabharata* *Dandniti*, *Rajdharma*, *Shasanpadhiti*, *Mantri Parishada* and *Kar-Vyavstha* is discussing more about Duties of king and government system, different organs of the government and so on. *Shantiparva* establishes the principles of origin of monarchy-Rajtantra, and it is in the *Shantiparva* of *Mahabharata* that we come across the political thought of Bhishma, which forms the subject-matter of this chapter. Bhishma's discourses in the *Shantiparva* as his most convincing description of *Rajdharma*. Yudhishtira at the end of the Great War asked Vyasa about the duties of kings as well as those of the four varna's. The sage referred him to the well-informed and great intellectual Bhishma, who was well versed in all the duties. *Rajdharma*, as given by Yudhishtira interpreting the basic ideas of Bhishma. Just as the rising sun scatters unholy darkness, so does the *Rajdharma* destroy all evil significances in this world. *Shantiparva* consists of 365 chapters and 13,716 numbers of Verses, and it further divided into three sub-parvas:

- (i) *Rajadharmanushasana Parva*: This part describes the duties of the king and his governance.
- (ii) *Apaddharmaanushasana Parva*: This part describes the rules of conduct when one faces emergency.
- (iii) *Mokshadharma Parva*: This Parva describes the behavior and rules to achieve moksha or salvation.

5.3 THE ORIGIN OF STATE

The origin of state, which is a major aspect of politics, has been defined in the *Vana parva* in *Mahabharata*. The *Shantiparva* clarifies that in the state of nature, the institution of state did not exist. There was no kingly office and the people there had sense of thine and mine. The point towards the fact that the absence of the ruler coincided with the absence of private property. Nearly all classical works and anthropological evidence make us determine that there was a golden age of harmony and happiness when people led happy and peaceful lives. This harmonious and happy life was destroyed by the discovery of the art of agriculture, which empowered people to produce more than they could consume. For the first time, they established houses, stored rice, and divided the fields with boundaries naming them as individual properties, but people began to snatch away the rice of others without their consent. This led to a search for some authority to protect their fields and properties.

Shantiparva speculates at one place that people went in search of a king in order to protect their property, family and Varna's. They were also prepared to give him a certain share of their own property. Under such circumstances, Manu, finally accepted kinship to protect property, family and Varnas. From the 67th chapter of *Shantiparva*, we come to know that there was a contract of people to get rid of sinfulness. *Shantiparva* also explores the origin of the state on the grounds that when sinfulness prevails in the world, men cannot own and enjoy their own wives, animals, fields and houses. *Shantiparva* states that in the absence of the king, inter-mixture of castes would take place. Further, *Shantiparva* also stated that Dharma is meant to aid the acquisition and preservation of wealth - if Adharma increases, it causes confusion among the varnas. Therefore, it is believed that the king's preservation of Dharma signified nothing but the defense of the social order based on family, property and the caste system. We can see the conditions existing in the state of nature, the necessity to uphold Dharma, protection of property, family and Varna system by the King.

This might have resulted in the creation of the state. From the above there are two points that come out clearly – (i) First, in the *Shantiparva*, we find the origin of the state or kinship, (ii) second, two theories of origin of state have been given - (i) the divine origin theory and (ii) the social contract theory. When Manu became the king with a large army, he set out to make conquest. People began to fear King and observe Dharma. This theory contains three elements - (1) the people lived under the law of jungle. (2) with the object of improving the situation, Brahma created the King, who was chosen by the people, (3) a contract was made between the King and the people.

Society and state are institutions which are very closely inter related. Ancient Indian political thinkers while dealing with the subject took recourse to legends and mythology and regarded the state as a divine institution which was created by god to ensure security and justice for mankind against the law of the jungle, which had somehow set in among them at the end of the golden age. The theory of divine origin speculates that the state is the creation of God, and the king rules in his name. The origins of this theory found in the *Rigveda*, which mentions that Brahma created the Kshatriyas or protectors. The *Mahabharata* also refers to it many times. The divine origin of state is further elaborated through the story of Prthu Vainya. His supernatural appearance, coronation by the Gods, and the entrance of Vishnu into his body, clearly indicate the divine origin of Kingship.

Matsyanyaya is known as the theory of force, and it pre-supposes an inherent propensity of man to encroach upon his weaker neighbor, and to be prone to commit acts of disorder and aggression. The *Shantiparva* refers to the seven elements of state, but it does not enumerate them in the same order as mentioned in other works like those of the Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and the *Manusmṛti*.

All the experts admit that the Atman (king) is an important element of the state. The king is the head of the state; He is the fountain of justice. He has to deal with

judicial, taxation, religious and cultural problems. He has to protect and regulate the Varna organization and Ashram system.

Amatya (minister and officials) is the second constituent of the state. In the *Shantiparva*, a sachiva is king's helper and Amatya is regarded as his private secretary. The Amatya is an important element of formation of state in ancient India.

Treasury (Kosa) is another constituent of the state. The co-relation of king and his treasury is emphasized. The king should take care of seven limbs and Kosa is one of them. The rich treasury depends up on the righteous king.

Durg was considered the strength of the sovereign. It was believed that with a well-equipped fort, a king could defend his country against stronger enemy.

The next element Mitra (ally, Friend) is an important principal of state. Ally refers to different kinds of friends. Bhishma in the 80th chapter of the *Santiparva* says that there are four kinds of friends or allies-(1) *Sahartha* are those who are hereditary friends (2) *Bhajamana* (3) *Sahaja* are the kin-related ones and (4) *Kritrima* are the ones who had been turned into friends by gifts etc. In the 69th chapter of *Shantiparva*, it is said that when a king is attacked, then for his defence against the aggressors, he should see that the bridges over rivers are destroyed and water from ponds is not taken out.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Discuss the three sub-parvas in *Shantiparva*.

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5.4 KINSHIP

As R.S. Sharma says that "the cardinal supposition of Shantiparva in Chapter 67 is the appropriate theory of the origin of state. It is scientific because it involves the King and people. The people's obligation to pay taxes and render military services to the King clearly implies the presence of the elements of Kosha and Danda. Thus, four important elements of the state out of seven can be clearly distinguished in the statement of the contract theory of the origin of the state." *Altekar* observes that "the state was regarded as a divine institution; the King's right to govern was partly due to his divine creation and partly due to the

agreement of the subjects to be governed by him, in order to eliminate anarchy. " The aims of the state in *Mahabharata* was to safeguard property, to maintain law and order in society. The main aim of man's life was fourfold as *Dharma, Artha, Kama & Moksha*. Therefore, state's main aim is to give help to people to attain all these aims. The 59th chapter of *Shantiparva* deals with danda and dandniti. It states that God helped humanity to escape from the law of the jungle by giving it a King. The King became a tyrant and the enraged sages destroyed him with their supernatural powers and asked Prathu (after him the whole world was named Prithvi) and swear to rule according to the principles of Dandniti. The sages asked Prathu, particularly, to consider the Brahmins above punishment and save the world from inter-mixture of castes. The duty of the King was to uphold Dharma and Varna Vyavastha.

According to *Mahabharata* the creation of the word, 'Raja' refers to the origin of 'Rajya'. To begin with, Bhishma bases the Kings authority in the first chapter of *Shantiparva* upon a rigid understanding of the King's origin. The *Shantiparva* contains a list of five spheres of activity - orientations for a very good King - (1) defense (2) War (3) administration according to the Dharma (4) formulation of policies (5) the promotion of the happiness of the people. A King should be generous, modest and pure and should never refuse the performance of his duties towards his subjects. The protection of the people from outside ecological threats and internal enemies is the pre-eminent duty of the power in the political system.

5.5 GOVERNMENT

The king was the real executive. He has to perform the executive functions as established by dharma. The king was both an appointing and a removal authority. The *Shantiparva* suggests to the appointment of the ministers by the king. He has to keep in view one's long administrative experiences and code of conduct. In inter-state relations, it was the duty of the king to appoint the spies and ambassadors. It was his duty to get information about the defense of state. The king had to perform some financial duties. He must realize one-sixth tax from the subjects in lieu of giving protection. On this ground, king has been treated as the servant of the people. Personal safety is an important duty of the king. He must be safe from external threats. The protection of all the Varna's was one of the important duties of the king. There are some welfare duties of the king. The occupation of Trade and commerce also contribute to the economic prosperity of state, so the king have to treat the merchants harmoniously. For the defense of country and promotion of trade and commerce, the easy means of communications are essential, so the king has to build roads throughout his empire. It is the king's duty to help the subjects with financial assistance during draught, flood and famine, as during such periods, they suffer more. The Vedas are the supreme source of dharma, so, their preservation is essential. Preservation of Vedas may be done by punishing those who create difficulties in the way of Vedic studies.

In *Shantiparva*, Rajdharma is understood as the duties and obligations relevant to political and administrative activities. Through government, peace, law and order

essential to maintain in the state. The main work of government is the happiness of the people, ensuring to provide justice is the other aim of the government. In the state, the King is the head of the government. In good governments, administration people sleep carefully, fearlessly. Executive was made of the combination of King, ministers and other officials. Besides executive, legislature and judiciary were two other organs of government. However, importance given to the executive mainly. In *Shantiparva*, there was a great emphasis on the above ministers. In the absence of the dutiful and able ministers, King cannot run government properly.

In *Shantiparva*, King advised to keep the intelligent, dutiful ministers. Bhishma's general attitude towards the standard of the King government. In *Sabha Parva*, there is description about purohits. The duty of these Purohits was to bring King on 'Sanmarg' by these good sentences and speeches. These Purohits were intelligent, polite and belonged to high families. The Rajpurohits were fearless, Dharma followers and guided the King on various occasions. Therefore, protection of the people, in a wide sense, material and moral alike, was the chief function of the government.

5.6 JUSTICE AND DANDNITI

Dandniti, the term used in Mahabharata means the science of coercion. Viewed in the context as a whole, it is best rendered as the science of governance. As the reins check the steed or as an iron hook controls an elephant, so dandniti keeps the world under restraints. It destroys every evil as the sun destroys the darkness. About the importance of dandniti, Bhishma says, that if dandniti is destroyed, the three Vedas will disappear and the duties of the four varnas will mix up. On the destruction of dandniti and instability of Rajadharma, all people suffer from many evils. It is the prime duty of the king to be fully versed in dandniti. Danda protects the people and it awakes those who sleep; hence, Dand is called as Dharma. Because of the fear of danda (punishment), the sinners do not indulge in sin, people do not kill others. If danda is not observed, everything will be enveloped by darkness. There are four ends of life-Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha. Dharma is regarded as human justice and the set of duties. The concept of Dharma is the truth; it is the morality in true sense. All religious exercise is Dharma and it is the law. Artha includes all the means necessary for acquiring worldly prosperity. Artha refers to one of the ends of life on one hand, and on the other to one of the purusharthas that satisfies human desires. Kama refers to the desires in man including the sexual urge. Moksha in the fourth and the highest end of life. It paves the path for the progress of soul. Bhishma explains the fundamental importance of the king's office for justice and dandaniti. According to Bhishma, people can live happily only if they live under the law. He also describes the four sources of law- *Devasammat*, *Arsha Srota*, *Lok Sammat* and *Sanstha-Sammat*. In the time of emergency, the ordinary rules must be suspended. If the people are in distress, the king must come to their aid with his treasure. If government face a crisis, as on the outbreak of war, it is justified adopting financial measures. In emergency, king should take his subjects into

confidence. He should explain the whole situation to them and then impose extra tax. For the sake of saving life, it is right to make a treaty with an enemy. The treasure and the army are the sole root of the government. *Shantiparva* is one extended argument for the assigned interest of the community in the welfare of the king and government.

5.7 INTER-STATE RELATIONS

It is an important division of the polity of inter-state relations that discussed by Bhishma. The king should breakup the enemy's ranks by straightforward as well as cunning and diplomatic means. The powerful king must not neglect even his weak enemy, for even a small spark causes a flame and even a slight poison causes death, while the enemy taking refuge in a fort even if he is equipped with a single horse troubles the kingdom even of a prosperous king. Even after making a treaty with the enemy, he should not trust him. In the 95th chapter of *Shanti Parva*, it is said that Svayambhu Manu has included the practice of *Dharma Vijaya*. If a king obtains victory through recourse to Adharma, then only he prepares the ground for his own eventual destruction. Virtuous people, by taking choice to Dharma, can certainly defeat the evil-doers.

In Inter-State relations, spy system and ambassadors are a must. In the *Santi Parva* of Mahabharata, we see the Indian soul and culture. Various political ideas discussed very well through the epic. Duties of kings, citizens, ministers and rights of them discussed equally in *Santi Parva*. Origin of state, foreign policy, inter-state relations discussed well in *Shanti Parva*. To conclude, we say that *Shanti Parva* in Mahabharata is considered an unperishable treasury of history, religion, diplomacy, polity, philosophy & thought not only for us, but for the whole humanity.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. What do you understand by Dandniti?

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5.8 LET US SUM UP

Bhishma's theories of Rajdharma and Dandniti in the context of his remarkable development of the old Smriti concept of the whole duty of the King are notable. Rajdharma is used in Mahabharata in two meanings, the royal duties and the political (dandniti). Its later sense is confirmed by the fact that one whole section of the *Shantiparva*, dealing with the rules, relating specifically to the art of government, is known as the *Rajdharmanushasana Parva*. Therein, it has been regarded as the most important science and as the refuge of all other branches of knowledge. Dandniti's full knowledge is indispensable for a ruler. If strictly followed by the rulers, it leads to prosperity and wellbeing of the rules. So Rajadharma is not only related to dandniti, but the performance of the former is wholly dependant upon the latter. Among his most notable and original contributions are his theories of Rajadharma and Dandniti, his theory of the king's authority, his theory of public rights of the social classes and the community, his view of the principles of government, his discussion of the moral standards of the king's policy in exceptional circumstances. The functional importance of Rajdharma is supported by its ethical significance. Rajdharma that is the Kshatriya's dharma is the foremost of all dharmas and that without it, people would be ruined.

Indian political thought is recognizing the *Shantiparva*, which dealt with every aspect of human life. It deals with political institutions and entire panorama of human life it deals with the concept of state and the concept of Dharma. Both these terms are the backbone of Indian political thought and these concepts was supported by Indian philosophy. Therefore, contemporary Indian political thinkers have unanimously accepted raj dharma as the basis of Indian polity. It provides multiple viewpoints about governance. It leaves the conclusions to the reader to accept any of the viewpoint. It is a dialogical text. Shantiparva is capable of addressing the issues of governance even today.

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5.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Your answer should highlight following points

Rajadharmanushasana Parva: describes the duties of king and governance

Apaddharmaanushasana Parva: describes the rules of conduct in an emergency

Mokshadharma Parva: describes the behaviour and rules to achieve *moksha* or salvation

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

2. Your answer should highlight following points

- *Dandniti*, is the term used in Mahabharata means the science of coercion
- It is the best rendered as the science of governance
- As the reins check the steed or as an iron hook controls an elephant, similarly dandniti keeps the world under restraints
- It destroys every evil as the sun destroys the darkness
- *Danda* protects the people and it awakes those who sleep

UNIT 6 MANU SOCIAL ORDER AND LAWS*

Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Sources of Law
- 6.3 Rajdharma: The Duties of the King
- 6.4 Social Laws
 - 6.4.1 Marriage
 - 6.4.2 Women
 - 6.4.3 Mixed Castes
- 6.5 Criticism
- 6.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.7 References
- 6.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

6.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is to acquaint you with the ideas of *Manusmriti* on preservation of social order and polity. After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain what Manu means by social order
- What are the main social laws prescribed by Manu
- Place *Manusmriti* in a social context
- Recount the main criticisms against *Manusmriti*

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The *Manusmriti*, or ‘The Laws of Manu’, is considered to be one of the most authoritative texts in the Brahminical tradition which lays out social and civil laws and codes of conduct which are necessary for the maintenance of *dharma*. It prescribes the conduct for men and women of the four social classes or *varnas* – Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra – and rules of interaction between them. In addition, it lays out rules of conduct for people in the four stages of life, *ashramas* – *brahmacharya*, *grihsthashrama*, *vanprastha* and *sanyasa*. It also

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prescribes rules and obligations for the King – *rajadharma* – and laws related to civil matters like business and contract. The purpose of these rigid social rules and boundaries is to preserve *dharma* – the social order marked by hierarchical *varna* system, where the Brahman enjoys most social privileges and Shudra the least. The proper sphere of activity for the Brahmin is study of the Vedas and begging, for Kshatriya is statecraft, for Vaisya it is trade and moneylending, and for Shudra is to serve the above three. The Shudras are not entitled to an education. All four *varnas* enjoy *complete* control over the women of their social category. Thus the ‘Laws of Manu’ do not contain a distinction between secular and religious laws. It is the social law which dominates the political as well as the personal sphere. Even the kingly functions are aimed towards preservation of the social order.

Historians do not consider ‘Manu’ to be *one* historical person. Rather, what we know as the ‘Laws of Manu’ is handiwork of several Brahmin individuals, which was compiled in early centuries of the Common Era in Northern India. Manu appears to be a mythological figure in Brahminical tradition and later in the Hindu religion, who has often been called the first human being.

The 2694 stanzas divided in twelve chapters of *Manusmriti* talk about a range of issues: caste restrictions, dietary restrictions, restrictions on women, rites of marriage, death and sacrificial ceremonies, purification rituals, penalties for breaking these rules and rules of polity to be followed by kings. The social laws of Manu offer us a glimpse into how the powerful sections of early India, the Brahmins who composed the work, desired the society to be. A study of Manu’s social laws will also provide a glimpse of how society was sought to be organized, because the ideas contained in the book were *not* entirely new, but culmination of Brahminical tradition of social thought which traced itself to the Vedas. Such detailed and elaborate rules of social control were made to avoid chaos, or what Vedic texts have called *Matsyanyaya*, an anarchic situation where only the law of the stronger exists. Thus, *Manusmriti* appears to be an attempt by socially powerful sections of Indian society to retain and preserve the social order of their privilege, at a time when rapid historical changes were taking place.

6.2 SOURCES OF LAW

The *Manusmriti* forms part of the *smriti* canon of Hindu religious corpus, which refers to knowledge received from tradition. The other canon is *shruti* which refers to revealed knowledge or divine knowledge. The Vedas belong to the *shruti* group and occupy a somewhat superior position. The classification of religious knowledge between *shruti* and *smriti*, ultimately indicates two sources of law – the divine and traditional. Although, repositories of traditional knowledge claim that revealed texts are their source.

The Laws of Manu claim *four* sources of sacred law; the Vedas, conduct of virtuous men learned in the Vedas, conduct of holy men and self-satisfaction. It also claims that all the social laws prescribed in it are in strict accordance with the Vedas.

Tracing the origin of law to the divine is a way to command obedience, and to claim that the law stands above human scrutiny. Such a source also enables the dominant social sections of society to claim that they are eternally entitled to respect, wealth and political power. Because divinely ordained laws are unchanging and depend on the conduct of those already in power, they seek to bolster their position privileged position. For instance, historian *K.P. Jayaswal* explained that the divine origin theory of kingship was furthered by Brahmin king Pusyamitra Sunga in order to make his family's claim to the throne permanent, and to discredit the Buddhist theory of state which emphasized contract amongst people to decide their ruler.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1) Why is *Manusmriti* considered to be a part of 'smriti' tradition?

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6.3 RAJDHARMA: THE DUTIES OF THE KING

Why was the king created? The king was created to protect and control chaos and fear which prevailed in a society without a ruler. A Kshatriya who has received training in Vedic tradition and has gone through all the prescribed religious practices from childhood – the initiation (*upanayana*) and studentship – is fit to be king, according to Manu. A king is superior to all other living beings because he is made out of divine elements from the gods. Manu demands total obedience to the laws of the King. It is the king who preserves and protects the social order of the four *varnas*, the *dharma*. Hence, disobedience of the king is akin to sacrilege and invites severest reprisal. The instrument employed by the king to preserve and protect the social order is *danda* or punishment. Echoing *Arthashastra*, the *Manusmriti* claims that punishment is the king itself. It is punishment which watches over, which governs, and which protects. Manu warns that *danda* has to be applied after due consideration in order to lead towards happiness. Recklessly applied punishment destroys everything.

If *danda* is not employed, then 'the stronger would roast the weaker, like fish on a pit,' 'the crow would eat the sacrificial cake and the dog would lick the sacrificial viands, and ownership would not remain with anyone, and the lower ones (would usurp the place of) the higher ones.' These metaphors explain that the social order, where wealth, property ownership, education and religious

training is reserved for the three higher *varnas*, would crumble. 'All castes (*varnas*) would be corrupted (by intermixture), all barriers will be broken through.' Manu fears that in absence of punishment, the endogamous rules of marriage within the same caste, or between the male of a higher caste and female of a lower caste, would be broken and caste hierarchy and entitlement over power and resources would lose all meaning. An ideal king, therefore, has to be truthful to the social order and should observe justice and *dharma* by making sure that the social and economic restrictions placed by the *varna* order are not broken. A king who is of unsound mind, who is addicted to sensual pleasures and who is partial and deceitful will not be able to govern or adhere strictly to the caste order. Manu, therefore, spells out that 'The King has been created to be the protector of the castes and orders, who, all according to their rank, discharge their several duties.' A just King has to ensure that the castes do not break ranks – do not intermarry and do not take up occupations which are not prescribed for them. In addition, in dispensing of justice the King ought to 'with rigour chastise his enemies, behave without duplicity towards his friends, and be lenient towards the Brahmanas.'

The King should always remember his role as the protector of the social order. For this purpose, 'Let the king, after rising early in the morning, worship the Brahmins who are well versed in the three-fold sacred science and learned in (polity), and follow their advice.'

In order to strictly protect the caste order, the King should not only worship learned and aged Brahmins, but should also cultivate virtue and shun vice. Only a king who has mastered self-control and is free of envy, wrath and resentment will be able to ensure that each caste follows its stipulated occupation and does not come in contact with others socially through marriage. The *only* relaxation to this strict system of social rules could at times be made for the *brahmin*.

The king should shun all sorts of vices like excessive love for hunting, gambling, company of women, singing music and dancing, because they can lead him astray from ruling and cloud his judgement according to *Manusmriti*. Women for Manu are similar to property and other objects of desire, who should be possessed, but their 'use' should be controlled. This shall be elaborated upon in the section on Social Laws for women.

Thus, Manu not only invokes the divine theory of kingship, he also extols *danda* as the instrument of *rajadharma*. It is through punitive violence that things are kept in their place.

In order to carry out the everyday administration of the state, the *Manusmriti* offers a great deal of detailed practical advice to the King regarding appointment of ministers, foreign relations, conduct of war, system of spies and other juridical and civil functions.

Manu advises that the King should employ seven or eight ministers from families who have served him well, who belong to *noble* (upper castes) families, who are trained in the use of weapons and whose worth has been proven. The king should daily consult with them on matters of war, peace, administration of towns and

kingdom, treasury and revenue, defence and tributes. Tasks which are difficult for the King alone become far easier with the aid of trusted assistants. The most important issues should be discussed with the most trusted and distinguished Brahmin among his ministers.

Security from external enemies from outside is as important as maintenance of social order within the kingdom. The Laws of Manu advise the King to have skillful and knowledgeable ambassadors for conduct of diplomacy. For the ambassador enables the king to have allies – they negotiate peace or war. The king should rely on ambassadors to inform him beforehand of the enemies' designs. Defence should be the uppermost concern of a kshatriya king and by employing the four

expedients – conciliation, bribery, dissension and force – the king should protect his kingdom. As *Arthashastra*, *Manusmriti* advocates that against a powerful enemy conciliation should be tried first, followed by bribery and discussion. If all else fails, only then coercion should be adopted. Yet, the king ought to be prepared for any eventuality and is advised to build forts at convenient locations in towns and hills, well stocked with soldiers and weapons.

Regarding war, *Manusmriti* has a range of practical advice. The principle of *saam* (conciliation), *dam* (bribery), *dand* (force), *bhed* (dissension) is to be employed. Force is to be used only when other three strategies have *failed*. A king should only wage war when he is assured of his superiority and his enemies' weakness and all other forms of diplomacy have been exhausted. It is always advisable to have a weak but trusted friend than to make him an enemy. The text advises against waging war if the army of the king is weak and his ammunitions inadequate. In case the enemy is too strong, it is advised that the king should divide his armies into two and take refuge in some other friendly kingdom.

After the war if the King has managed to win, his aim should be to win friends rather than acquiring wealth and lands. *Manusmriti* seems to favour self-defence and friendship in inter-state relations rather than a doctrine of imperial expansion. In this regard, it differs from the *Arthashastra* which lays emphasis on imperial conquest.

The Laws of Manu advice the King to be extremely cautious of getting poisoned and assassinated, should have an elaborate system of spies to watch over not just the external enemies, but also the enemies within.

The *Manusmriti* envisages a system of administration which extends from village to the king. Village is the *unit* of local administration as each village is to have a lord, who shall report to the lord of ten villages, who in turn shall report to the overseer of twenty villages. The lord of the village shall see to it that the expected amount of – food, drink and fuel – is being supplied from the village under his command to the King. A minister of village affairs will oversee the functioning of all these lords. Similarly, a superintendent is to be appointed in each town who shall look after the work of officials in each department of town administration.

The king is advised to impose moderate taxes, just like the bee or a leech take only moderate amounts of food. The king who exploits his subjects digs his own grave. Different kinds of taxes in the form of revenue, fees, fines are to be levied. The property of corrupt officials is to be confiscated. In *no* circumstance though, the king can tax a *srotriya* – a brahmin who studies Vedas. In fact, the king is advised to donate and gift generously to the brahmins. Without a strong financial base and an efficient and honest administration to collect taxes, no kingdom can exist.

The *Manusmriti* expounds on the organization of justice functions to be performed by the king in civil and criminal matters. As already explained, 'justice' for Manu is primarily the proper maintenance of the four-fold *varna* order, with the brahmin male occupying the most privileged position, shudra the least, and with women being treated as property. Justice would also mean that the powerful positions of brahmin and the king, are retained. Thus, Manu writes, the Kings court of justice would comprise himself 'together with Brahmanas and experienced councillors.' And 'let him examine the causes of suitors by the order of castes (*varna*).' In case the king is not able to personally attend to the suits, then the responsibility should be delegated to a brahmin. Matters of civil suits concern: non-payment of debt, deposit and pledge, sale without ownership, concerns among partners, resumption of gifts, non-payment of wages, non-performance of agreements, recession of sale and purchase, disputes between the owner (of cattles) and his servants, dispute regarding boundaries, assault, defamation, theft, robbery and violence, adultery, duties of man and wife, partition of inheritance and gambling and betting.

Interpretation of the law should only be done by a *Brahmin* and never a Shudra. For 'The kingdom of that monarch, who looks on while a Shudra settles the law, will soon sink like a cow in a morass.' And 'The kingdom where Shudras are very numerous, which is infested by atheists and destitute of twice-born, soon entirely perishes.'

The king should see to it that minors, women, widows, and men of all castes are not robbed of their property. In general, men of all castes could be called as witnesses. Only in specific and urgent situations should sick men, women and minors be admitted as witnesses.

The punishments prescribed by *Manusmriti* reflect the caste order, with the leniency being reserved for the Brahmin and severity for the three lower *varnas*. For giving false evidence fine and banishment should befall on the three lower *varnas*, while a Brahmin can only be banished.

Similarly, Brahmin is exempt from corporeal torture and capital punishment. 'A Shudra who insults a twice born man with gross invectives shall have his tongue cut out; for he is of low origin.' While a Brahmin will be fined 12 panas for defaming a Shudra.

The laws place special restrictions on Shudras insulting the twice-born men, and prescribes severe corporal punishments. For instance a Shudra who spits on a

twice born man is to have his lips cut-off. In case a twice-born man insults a Shudra, only a fine may be imposed.

The civil and criminal law system prescribed in *Manusmriti*, while prescribing punitive measures for everyone determines the nature of punishment according to the caste of the accused, and the nature of violation of caste boundaries.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1) What is divine theory of the state and why is it important for Manu?

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6.4 SOCIAL LAWS

The preservation of social order – the hierarchy of caste system coupled with the control of women – is the main concern of *Manusmriti*. That is why we saw that even the *rajdharm* laid out by the text largely concerns itself with the King using the instrument of punishment to maintain this social order. However, special attention needs to be paid to how the *Manusmriti* idealized the social system. It advocated a social system where each caste stuck to its allotted profession, and interaction between them was bare minimum. Therefore, it restricted marriages between different castes, and saw mixed castes with contempt. This also required that additional restrictions be placed on women. Let us study these in more detail

6.4.1 Marriage

Marriage laws prescribed by *Manusmriti* adhere strictly to the caste ranking. It lays down that a Brahmin's first marriage should necessarily take place to a woman of equal caste. For his subsequent marriages he may take a woman from the three lower *varnas* as a wife. But the text strongly advises against a Brahmin man marrying a Shudra woman, warning that such a union will result in misfortune for the man. 'Twice-born men who, in their folly, wed women of the low (Shudra) caste, soon degrade their families and their children to the state of Sudras,' says the sage Manu. Technically, the Law of Manu states that a woman is permitted to marry those of her own caste and those of the higher castes. Similarly, a man may marry within his caste or to a woman from the lower castes.

Manusmriti elucidates eight rites of marriages that are recognized in the Brahminical tradition –, **Brahma** **Diava**, **Rishi** (Arsha), **Prajapatya**, **Asura**, **Gandharva**, **Rakshasa** and **Paishacha**. The gift of a daughter along with costly jewelry to a man learned in the Vedas is the Brahma rite. The gift of a daughter along with costly ornaments to priest who has come to perform a sacrifice ceremony is called the Daiva marriage. The giving away of the daughter in return of a pair of cow and bull from the bridegroom is the way of the Rishis. The gift of the daughter with blessings and honour shown to the couple is the rite of Prajapatya. When a bridegroom receives the woman after having given her and her kinsmen as much wealth as he could afford, is called the Asura marriage. The voluntary union of the woman and her lover from a desire of sexual intercourse is called Gandharava marriage. The forcible abduction of the woman from her home after slaying her kinsmen, is the way of the Rakshasas. Stealthy seduction of a woman who is intoxicated, sleepy or disoriented has been described as the most base and sinful way of union called Paishacha. The first six methods are approved for the Brahmins, the last four methods are approved for a Kshatriya, and the last four, with the exception of Rakshasas rite, are lawful for Vaisyas and Sudras.

As can be easily seen, marriage is supposed to maintain the superior position of the higher caste male. The *Manusmriti* recommends those forms of marriages where the bride's family offers costly gifts to the daughter, which along with her goes to the groom's household.

6.4.2 Women

From the foregoing discussion, it can be learnt that women have been depicted as beings who need to be guarded and controlled primarily by their families. The *Manusmriti* sees them as treacherous entities who can lead a virtuous man astray from *dharma*, and down the path of desires. They have been portrayed as assets which, if suitably controlled, can lead to pleasure and prosperity of the owner – the husband.

The duties prescribed by *Manusmriti* for women, expect women to train themselves and learn to take pleasure in their position as property owned by men. 'In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent,' say the Laws of Manu. A woman who leaves her father or husband to pursue her free will brings contempt upon herself and her family. *Manusmriti* prescribes that not only a woman should manage the household, but she should do it with cheerfulness. 'She must always be cheerful, clever in (the management of her) household affairs, careful in cleaning her utensils, and economical in expenditure.'

A woman is not only to be treated as valuable property by men, but the text goes on to demand that she should cultivate herself to be treated as such. That is the *dharma* for women. Thus, the foremost duty of a married woman is to be unconditionally loyal to her husband. Even if the husband possesses no good qualities the wife should cling to him. 'Though destitute of virtue, or seeking

pleasure (elsewhere), or devoid of good qualities, a husband must be constantly worshipped as a god by a faithful wife.' 'A faithful wife who desires to dwell (after death) with her husband, must never do anything that might displease him who took her hand, whether he be alive or dead.' Even after the death of her husband, the woman ought not to remarry, and should maintain her 'chastity'. No such burden is placed upon men who lose their wives.

The control of 'their' women must be exercised by men of all castes. 'Women must be guarded against their evil inclinations.' A woman's desire, howsoever trifling needs to be controlled. Manu is careful to note that 'No man can completely guard women by force.' Therefore, he suggests that the best means to control women is to assign them responsibility: collection and expenditure of man's wealth, 'keeping (everything) clean, in religious duties, in preparation of his food, and in looking after the household utensils.' It is not force but woman 'who of their own accord keep a guard over themselves, are well guarded.'

The social order prescribed in *Manusmriti* rests on the basis of control over women and their labour. It is through control of women that *varna* boundaries are sought to be maintained. In addition, this control secures the woman's body and labour for the exclusive enjoyment and use of men. This order of control of women across *varnas* creates the situation where the woman herself would learn to value the control exercised over her by a man as a form of protection and recognition.

6.4.3 Mixed Castes

Although *Manusmriti* lays great stress on maintenance of social order, it seems to recognize that a perfect order where each caste maintains conjugal boundaries and sticks to its stipulated profession, is more of an ideal than what concretely exists. It suggests that in the time of composition of *Manusmriti*, inter-caste marriages did take place. In its attempt to establish a complete social order, the *Manusmriti* strives to take into account all permutations and combinations of marital relations that could possibly take place between different *varnas* and tries to place the offspring out of such unions into proper social categories. Intermarriage between men and women of *varnas* leads to production of what can be referred to as mixed castes. The *Manusmriti* not only defines which castes are produced out of unions across *varnas*, but also fixes the personal qualities of such castes, the occupations they ought to occupy and the social restrictions that should be placed upon them. In *anuloma* marriages, between a higher caste man and a lower caste woman, the progeny although associated with the father's caste are still considered base-born (*apsada*). The *Manusmriti* considers progeny out of *pratiloma* marriages, between lower caste man and higher caste woman, as even more base.

The detailed description of mixed castes seems to be an attempt by writers of the *Manusmriti* to place various categories of people who may have existed at that time in the hierarchies of *varna* order, defining their occupation and social position.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1) Why and what kind of restrictions does *Manusmriti* place on women?

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6.5 CRITICISM

Manusmriti is a text which attempts to weave the diverse peoples of Indian subcontinent of its time into one social whole, by describing the obligations and duties of each and how they were to relate to each other. It was an attempt to create social order in a diverse social field, It will, however, be inadequate if we conclude our assessment of this ancient text with this charitable view which sees it as an attempt to unify a diverse reality. The text needs to be placed in its historical context. *Manusmriti*, thus, is not a simple commentary on religion, politics, ideas of justice, administration and society. It is, infact, a text produced by Brahmins to consolidate their social and political position, and to place themselves at the very top of a graded society. The ideas of virtue, religion, justice, law and ethics propounded in the *Manusmriti* are all geared towards maintenance of a social order which secures political, social and economic power in the hands of the three upper *varnas* – the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, while extracting labour and service from shudras and women. The instrument for maintaining this social order is *danda*, which explains the significance attached to political power in the text.

In addition to being a manual for rule, the *Manusmriti* is also an ideological text because it seeks to self-validate itself by claiming divine source. By virtue of being recognized as a religious text within the Hindu tradition, it exerts great power over how people think and what they believe. It is for this reason that after hundreds of years, it continues to be relevant because the hierarchy advocated by *Manusmriti* still afflicts India. On December 25, 1927 Dr. B.R. Ambedkar led the burning of the ancient text. In his historic speech at Mahad Satyagraha he said, “It is not that all the parts of the *Manusmriti* are condemnable, that it does not contain good principles and that Manu himself was not a sociologist and was a mere fool. We made a bonfire of it because we view it as a symbol of injustice under which we have been crushed across the centuries. Because of Manu's teachings, we have been ground down under despicable poverty. The counts in the indictment of the hereditary Hindu priest are numerous and appalling. He is a

clog on the wheel of civilization. Man is born, becomes the father of a family and then in time dies. All along the priest shadows him like an evil genius."

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1) Whose interests do the Laws of Manu serve? Give examples.

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6.6 LET US SUM UP

The social laws enshrined in *Manusmriti* allow us to study ideas and practices on politics, statecraft, social organization, religion and ethics which were prevalent in early India. As a text, it is a valuable source to explore the history of early India. The fact that *Manusmriti* is the culmination of hundreds of years of thought by Brahminical thinkers adds to its value as a historical text. A study of *Manusmriti* also teaches us the value of locating such texts in their social context, which also helps us in understanding its continued relevance in religion and politics. The elaborate rules prescribed in the text for conduct and obligation of individual reflect the pressing concern to maintain the social order. As the book itself admits the purpose of statecraft, of ethics and of punishment is to ensure that the *varna* system continues in the form in which it is idealized in the text. As possessors of great social privileges, the Brahmins of that time seem to have been fearful of change which might undermine their powerful position, hence, their great fear of chaos which referred to a situation where *varna* rules will not be observed. The thrust of the book is towards preservation and protection. Even in inter-state relations, the *Manusmriti* exhorts rulers to prefer friendship and peace rather than enmity and conquest.

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6.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Your answer should highlight the following points
 - Difference between *smriti* and *shruti* texts with examples
 - The multiple authorship of *Manusmriti*
 - The fact that it is part of Brahminical tradition of thought

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Your answer should highlight the following points:
 - The claim that Kingship is divinely created hence sacred
 - The identification of king and his actions with God's actions
 - It is used to generate legitimacy among the masses
 - It is used to suppress critics of the King

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) Your answer should highlight the following points:
 - A woman is never to be independent and must always remain subservient to men
 - No freedom to make life choices for marriage and work
 - Woman should cultivate loyalty towards husband
 - No freedom even after husband's death

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Manu Social
Order and Laws

1) Your answer should highlight the following points:

- The interests of the Brahmins/Kshatriyas/Vaishyas vis-à-vis Shudras
- The interests of men vis-à-vis women



UNIT 7 KAUTILYA STATE AND DUTIES OF KINGSHIP*

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2. Kautilya: His Work and His Times
- 7.3 Kautilya's Views on State
 - 7.3.1 *Swami* or the King
 - 7.3.2 *Amatya* or the Minister
 - 7.3.3 *Janpada* or the People
 - 7.3.4 *Durga* or the Fort
 - 7.3.5 *Kosha* or the Treasury
 - 7.3.6 *Danda* or Sena or Coercive Power of State (Armed Forces, Secret Service and Police)
 - 7.3.7 *Mitra* or Ally/Friend
- 7.4 Comparisons with Western Political Thinkers
 - 7.4.1 Kautilya and Plato
 - 7.4.2 Kautilya and Aristotle
 - 7.4.3 Kautilya and Machiavelli
- 7.5 Assessment
- 7.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.7 References
- 7.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

7.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit would familiarise students with the political ideas of Kautilya, also known as Chanakya. After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand Kautilya's views on state
- Describe the Saptanga theory and its elements

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- Explain the duties of King prescribed by Kautilya
- Critically examine Kautilya's political views and their contemporary relevance

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Kautilya, ancient Indian political thinker was a multi-dimensional personality whose famous work, *Arthashastra*, is studied across disciplines like political science, international relations, diplomacy, security studies, economics, management and public administration. He is considered as one of the finest ministers and politicians in India. His views on politics and state continue to resonate in contemporary India; however, it is widely believed that his works have not received enough attention *not* only in India, but outside India as well. The science of statecraft had been developing in India even before Kautilya and he did not take credit of being a pioneer in this field. He had compiled famous works and theories before him and gave his own views on them covering various areas like politics, economy and diplomacy. There were at least *four* distinct schools and *thirteen* individual teachers of *Arthashastra* before Kautilya. However, it is very likely that Kautilya's masterpiece superseded them which made them redundant leading to their disappearance. It is, therefore, necessary that Kautilya's work is studied to analyze its resilience through centuries in order to understand its contemporary importance for India.

7.2 KAUTILYA: HIS WORK AND HIS TIMES

There is *no* clear consensus about Kautilya's life and the times in which he lived. He is also known by the name Chanakya, based on his father's name *Rishi* (Sage) Chanak, who was a Brahmin. Another name given to Kautilya is Vishnugupta since he is believed to be a follower of Lord Vishnu. The name, Kautilya, comes from his 'kutil' gotra, which means shrewd and cunning. He lived at the turn of the fourth to third century BC and thus, was a near contemporary of Aristotle and Alexander the Great. The place of his birth is also disputed as according to different sources, Kautilya was born in Takshashila, Gola district in South India or Patliputra in Magadha. Kautilya played the central role in establishment of the Maurya Empire under Chandra Gupta (321-297 BCE) – the first pan-Indian state extending over most of the Indian subcontinent. Chandra Gupta was a student of Kautilya who overthrew the Nanda dynasty on the wise counsel of his guru, Chanakya who became Prime Minister in his court.

His book, *Arthashastra*, has 15 parts (or books), 180 divisions, 150 chapters and approximately 6,000 verses or shlokas. Details about the King, his ministers and other officers are given in Book 1. Book 2 lays down the duties of the various executive officers of the state and state's role in activities like agriculture, mining etc. Themes of law and administration are given in Book 3 while Book 4 highlights suppression of crime. Miscellaneous topics like salary of officials etc are covered in Book 5. Constituent elements of a state and foreign policy are detailed in Book 6. Book 7 also covers additional details on foreign policy.

Various calamities which may hamper functioning of a state are given in Book 8. Details pertaining to war preparations are given in Book 9. The art of fighting and its different modes are the main concern of Book 10. Book 11 describes how a conqueror should tackle oligarchies governed by a group of chiefs instead of a single king. Book 12 highlights how a weak king can overcome a strong king while Book 13 describes how to conquer an enemy's fort. Occult and secret practices are dealt with in Book 14 while the last book highlights logical techniques and methodology used in *Arthashastra*. There is a widely held belief that the text of *Arthashastra* was *not* available till it was discovered by Sanskrit scholar *Dr R Shamasastri*. He found the 17th century writing on a bundle of palm leaves from a pandit in Tanjore in 1904. He published the text in 1909 and its translation in 1915. However, *Subrata K Mitra* and *Michael Liebig* in their 2017 work have argued that there has been a continuous oral and written transmission of the *Arthashastra* across time as well as a lasting influence of Kautilyan thought on the politics in South Asia throughout the pre-modern duration. *Max Weber*, one of the foundational thinkers of modern social sciences was the first Western social scientist to recognise the significance of Kautilya in his works, *Politics as a Vocation* and in his sociology of religion studies on Hinduism. Apart from Dr Shamasastri, another Indian scholar who devoted his research career to Kautilya is *Dr R P Kangle* whose three volume edition of *Arthashastra* was published between 1960 and 1965. Another important translation of Kautilya has been done by *L N Rangarajan* (1992) which is a simpler and rearranged version of the original work. Sanskrit philologists and Indologists have extensively engaged with Kautilya's work. However, their focus clearly differs from the research approach of political science. It should be mentioned that Kautilya himself states in the very *first* paragraph of *Arthashastra* that his work is a treatise on science of politics.

Before understanding Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, one should know the concept of four *Purusharthas* which are goals of human life or aims and objectives of a soul. They are *dharma* (duty), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (desire) and *moksha* (emancipation of soul). The times before Kautilya were dominated by *dharma* (promoted by religion) and regulated by *Dharmashastra*. Pursuit of *dharma* was superior to three other goals of life. However, with *Arthashastra*, pursuit of *artha* became an end in itself while other three aims of life were subservient to it. Kautilya *separated* polity from religion, something similar that happened in 16th century Europe when supremacy of religion was challenged by state's authority. *Dharmashastra* pertains to more social, moral and religious aspects while *Arthashastra* is more political and economic in nature. It is similar to *Nitishastra* as both are policy oriented and give due importance to discipline, punishment and sanction.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1) Differentiate between *Dharmashastra* and *Arthashastra*.

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7.3 KAUTILYA'S VIEWS ON STATE

Kautilya's views on state are similar to what later came to be known as the social contract theory of origin of state. He had argued that *Matsya Nyaya*, which is the law of nature, needs to be eradicated. *Matsya Nyaya* means a bigger fish always swallows the smaller fish. It can be seen as a state of anarchy where the powerful dominate the weak. Similar views were later expressed by Thomas Hobbes. Kautilya said that people want security and peace and that is why; they chose Manu, as their king under the system of kingship. People agreed to pay one-sixth of their food grains and one-tenth of other goods including gold as tax to the king in return for a guarantee for their security. The king is duty bound to protect his subjects and ensure their well-being. The king has the power to inflict *danda* (punishment) to ensure order and stability in the society. The theory of state in ancient India before Kautilya argued that the state has to uphold the laws of *Varnashram* i.e. social laws based on traditions and customs. State had a minimalist function to intervene in situations where these laws were not obeyed. However, with *Arthashastra*, Kautilya broke this tradition and advocated that the state could make laws of its own. If there is conflict between *Dharmayajna* of state and *Dharmashastra*, the earlier would prevail.

Arthashastra could be used as a manual of statecraft by any king, it was mainly meant for the *vijigishu* (one who wanted to conquer whole Indian subcontinent) and such a king was described as *chakravarti* in later Buddhist texts. Kautilya described structure of the state in his *Saptanga* theory or seven organs/elements of state or seven *prakriti*. These are presented right at the beginning of Book 6. The text structure of the *Arthashastra* as a whole follows the sequence of seven elements, starting with *Swami* in Book 1. *Amatya*, *janapada*, *durga*, and *kosa* are covered in Books 2 to 5. *Danda* and *mitra* are dealt with in Books 6 to 14. *Saptanga* was not an original contribution of Kautilya as some earlier works have referred to this theory. The seven elements combine to form a state. The state can be compared to a living organism where individuals are regarded as its organs. These individuals lose their essence if they are separated from the state while at the same time, the state would also suffer if its organs or elements are damaged. Like Aristotle, Kautilya also believed in organic theory of state. He said that there cannot be a country without people and there is no kingdom without a country. The seven elements of state as described by Kautilya as explained below.

7.3.1 *Swami* or the King

The ruler is equivalent to the head in a human body. Kautilya did *not* believe in divine origin of kingship. He believed it to be a human institution. An ideal king, according to Kautilya is one who has the highest qualities of leadership, intellect, energy and personal attributes. The leadership qualities a king should have in order to attract followers include birth in a noble family, truthful, prowess, intellect, righteous, disciplines, enthusiastic, being stronger than neighbouring kings and having ministers of high quality. A king's intellectual qualities are reflected by desire to learn and to listen to others, grasping and retaining truthful views and rejecting the false claims. As far as personal attributes are concerned, a king should be eloquent and have a kind mind with sharp intellect. He should be amenable to guidance. The king should be just in both, rewarding and punishing. At the same time, he should eschew passion, anger, greed, obstinacy, fickleness and backbiting. Kautilya's political thought is influenced by a patrimonial state in which authority is primarily based on the personal power exercised by the ruler. The ruler's competence in statecraft is decisive for the power of the state and the welfare of the people. It should be highlighted that for Kautilya, the king is the first and foremost important factor as he is the independent variable while the other six elements of the state are dependent variables. Kautilya said that the king and his rule encapsulate all the elements of the state. State in Kautilya's conception is an absolute monarchy, but the monarch is *not* a despot who exercises unrestricted and arbitrary power. Kautilya opined that punishment should be used judiciously if the king wants to retain popular respect. Unjust exercise of authority could produce resistance and may even lead to revolt. The ruler is committed to welfare of the people which guarantees popular support for his rule ensuring political stability. According to Kautilya, a king who follows his duty of protecting his people justly as per the law goes to heaven, unlike the one who inflicts unjust punishment and does not protect his subjects. Kautilya's kingship could be called a system of *benevolent monarchy*. Some of the main duties assigned to the king by Kautilya are:

- Ensuring people's welfare and give due assistance to pregnant women, orphans, newly born, destitute and the elderly. According to Kautilya, a king's happiness lies in the welfare of his subjects.
- To maintain *dharma* or prescribed duties of all human being.
- To protect his subjects from internal and external threats.
- Protection of people from eight types of calamities – famine, fire, flood and drought, epidemic, rats and locusts etc., snakes and aquatic dangers, wild animals like tigers and crocodiles and evil spirits.
- Maintenance of law and order in the state.
- To ensure universal and free education for all the citizens based on Vedic system.
- To display *Atma vrata* (self-control) and to do this, the king had to abandon six enemies – *kama* (lust), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), *mana* (vanity), *mada* (haughtiness), and *harsha* (overjoy).

7.3.2 *Amatya* or the Minister

Amatya represents eyes of the state. Kautilya argued that the minister with the highest rank should be born in a high family and should be a native of the state. He should be under the control of the king. Further, he must be trained in all the arts and should be far sighted. He should be firmly loyal and endure adversaries through qualities like boldness, bravery, intelligence and should be energetic. The council of ministers is needed to provide stable and systematic administration. Highest grade appointments were given to ministers who had all the requisite qualities. Low grade ministries were given to ministers who were less qualified. Apart from the king, there are three top positions in the council of ministers – the *mantri* or the prime minister (closest political advisor of the king), the commander-in-chief (involved in military planning and conduct of foreign policy) and the crown prince who alternates between political and military assignments. These four posts form the supreme body of political deliberations. After them, there are posts like minister of finance, the chief justice, the head of public administration etc. Kautilya did not fix the number of ministers which depends on requirement.

7.3.3 *Janpada* or the People

Janpada represents the legs of the state and includes both, territory and population of the state. The people should be prosperous while the territory should have fertile lands, mines, forests and water bodies etc. The demographic and economic base of the Kautilyan state is the *rural* population. Vast majority of the population lives in the countryside engaged in agriculture and crafts. Small farmers from *shudra* caste are the main agriculturalists in Kautilya's state who have their own land or are tenants. Under land reclamation policy, Kautilya favours allotment of land to *shudra* peasants for cultivation. More land under cultivation would increase state's economic capacity. Forests are located in the countryside which has economic and strategic significance. Forests provide timber, charcoal, dyes, medicines and bamboo leaves etc. Forests also serve as habitats for elephants which are used for civilian and military purposes. A state should have well-trained war elephants. Kautilya believed that the rural population has a stronger physical and mental make-up than the urban population and that is why; he did not approve of the urban style entertainment like alcohol consumption and gambling for the countryside.

7.3.4 *Durga* or the Fort

Durga represents the arms of a state. Security of treasury and army would depend on fortification of the state. Kautilya says that on the frontiers of the country, every quarter will have a fort well equipped to defend against the enemies. In total, four forts shall be constructed in places that are naturally suited for defence. A land fort is the easiest to capture while a river fort is more difficult. A fort situated on a mountain is most difficult to capture. Kautilya has detailed many types of forts in *Arthashastra*.

- *Audak* fort is surrounded by water body.

- *Parvat* fort is built amidst high mountains. These forts play an important part while defending against an external attack.
- *Dhanvan* fort is surrounded by desert.
- *Van* fort is situated amidst dense forest. Kautilya further says that the capital should be built at the centre of the kingdom and it should be divided in four districts, one for each caste.

7.3.5 Kosha or Treasury

Kosha is considered as the mouth of the state. Kautilya opined that the wealth of the state shall be acquired lawfully, either by inheritance or by king's own efforts consisting of gold, gems and silver. The wealth should be enough to allow the country to withstand a calamity, even if the calamity is of longer duration in which there is no income generated. Treasury is located in the fortified capital which is used to finance the army, the royal court and the state apparatus. Good financial resources can improve the poor status of armed forces, but a powerful army cannot survive without money. The main tax of Kautilyan state is the tax in kind, one-sixth of agricultural production output goes to the state. Kautilya also recommends special levies to be charged on alcohol, gambling, road tolls, sale of jewellery, commercial sexual services etc. He also cautioned that excessive taxation is economically and politically counterproductive which would lower economic output and pauperise the people.

7.3.6 Danda or Sena or Coercive Power of State (Armed Forces, Secret Service and Police)

Sena is equivalent to brain in a human body. The soldiers should be strong, obedient, not averse to long expeditions, with powers of endurance, skill in handling all weapons and experience of many battles. They should keep their wives and sons contented. They should have no interest other than that of the king and should share his prosperity and adversity. A strong army is required to ward off internal and external threats to a country. Kautilya has described six types of army.

- **Clan army:** Constitutes of hereditary soldiers like kshatriyas, as son of a soldier becomes a soldier. Kautilya gives maximum importance to this type of army. Such soldiers are loyal to the king and know different types of war strategies.
- **Hired soldiers or militia army.** Mobilisation of militia army is time consuming compared to a standing army.
- **An army constituted by the corporations.**
- **An army raised by recruiting the assistance of friendly countries.**
- **A fighting unit made up of prisoners of war i.e. enemy soldiers caught during a war.**
- **An army made up of tribal people.**

Coercive power of state includes the army, secret service and the police. The commander-in-chief or *senapati* belongs to the inner most circle of the king and

is responsible for military strategic planning and conduct of military operations during a war. *Arthashastra* highlights a well developed defence industry where state run manufacturers produce military equipments like chariots, siege engines, tents, trolleys etc. Kautilya did *not* comment on *naval warfare* as he did not say anything about a sea-going navy. Army, according to Kautilya, is divided in four services – infantry, cavalry, chariots and war elephants. Kautilya has highlighted four basic forms of warfare.

- *Mantra-yuddha*: war by counsel or use of diplomacy by a weaker king who finds it unwise to fight against a strong adversary.
- *Prakash-yuddha*: regular warfare where opposing armies fight according to established rules and regulations.
- *Kuta-yuddha*: irregular warfare including ambushes and raids in enemy territory.
- *Tusnim-yuddha*: includes covert operations like sabotage and targeted killings.

Kautilya advises that if the war becomes inevitable, efforts should be made to avoid a *prolonged* war and offensive is recommended in case there is overwhelming superiority over an already weakened opponent. He favoured *tusnim-yuddha* or covert war where mental faculties like intelligence, foresight, psychological skills and ingenuity matter. Kautilya had also given due importance to elaborate system of *spies* in the kingdom. They would keep an eye on the working of ministers and any type of adverse public opinion against the king and also information about other kingdoms. A spy could be in a disguise of *kapatik* (disciple), *udasthita* (recluse), *griha paitik* (house holder), *vaidehak* (merchant), *tapas* (ascetic), *satri* (classmate or a colleague), *tikshana* (firebrand), *rasada* (a poison specialist) and *bhikshuki* (a mendicant woman).

7.3.7 Mitra or Ally/Friend

A *mitra* represents ears of a state. According to Kautilya, an ideal ally is one who is a friend of the family for a long time, constant and powerful in support, amenable to control, shares a common interest, can mobilise his army quickly and is not someone who would double cross his friends. Kautilya says that the king should focus on strengthening first six elements of the state. In the *modern* international relations lexicon, it would mean *internal balancing*, as the state tries to gain strength purely on its internal resources. If a state's resources are underdeveloped compared to other states, Kautilya advises that state to have external alliances in order to have time for internal development. The alliance can be terminated if the state has reached a position where it is not weak in comparison to other states or if the alliance hampers internal development of the state. In Kautilya's scheme of things, a best friend is the state that gives up its own sovereignty and becomes a vassal state. Like this, the external ally effectively becomes an internal factor by accepting the status of a vassal state.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1) What are the duties of a king as prescribed by Kautilya?

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7.4 COMPARISONS WITH WESTERN POLITICAL THINKERS

7.4.1 Kautilya and Plato

There are constant comparisons between Oriental and Occidental thinkers. Kautilya on one hand is often compared to his Western counterparts (Occidental) thinkers like Plato, Aristotle and Machiavelli. There are similarities between Kautilya and Plato.

- Both the thinkers thought that the state should be ruled by the learned and elites, an idea which does *not* endorse democracy.
- Plato favored slavery while in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, *caste system* has been *maintained*. Functional specialisation was important to their concept of social structure. Plato *never* discussed slavery formally and his views need to be extracted from some remarks made by him in his works, *the Republic* and *the Laws*.
- They also *share* their *contempt* towards *common man*. Plato said that common man is nothing but a bundle of appetites, while Kautilya said that common man is inconsistent and unsteady.
- Kautilya advocated conquest of senses (*indriyajayah*) which is similar to Plato's concept of virtue which favors conquest of self or the inner enemy.
- Both prefer their king to be from the military class. Plato's guardian is *kshtriya swami* of Kautilya.

There were some differences as well between the two ancient stalwarts. Plato favoured the aristocrats to do *two* functions, to rule and do intellectual activity. On the other hand, Kautilya wanted Brahmins to do intellectual activity while the rule would be done by the *kshtriya* king. Plato was a philosopher, while Kautilya was a seasoned *politician* apart from being a philosopher. Kautilya has made

substantial contribution to the field of diplomacy and foreign policy, while these aspects did not find much mention in Plato's works.

7.4.2 Kautilya and Aristotle

Both the thinkers were almost contemporary of each other. The other similarities between them are:

- Aristotle and Kautilya were *teachers of successful kings*. Kautilya was teacher of Chandra Gupta Maurya while Aristotle was tutor of Alexander the Great.
- Both of them believed in the *organic* theory of state.
- They had similar views regarding *republican* states. Aristotle advocated thoughtfulness, good conduct and well trained citizens. He also said that the state should be organized to develop a class of virtuous men and philosophers who could assert supremacy of reason. Kautilya also attached importance to the king to preserve solidarity of the state. He also emphasized the importance of the individual and the value of human endeavor to secure best life under the king.
- Kautilya and Aristotle have discussed economics and sociology of slavery. *Both* supported the institution of *slavery*. Kautilya, at the same time, prescribed punishment for practicing slavery and seems more liberal than Aristotle.

Similarities notwithstanding; there are many differences between Kautilya and Aristotle. Aristotle gave a definite concept of the origin of state, while Kautilya was more interested in statecraft and how to make the state stronger. Aristotle defended slavery on psychological grounds, but that was *not* the case with Kautilya. Aristotle even condemned and denounced accumulation of *wealth* while Kautilya supported it as it was the basis of *kama* and *dharma*.

7.4.3 Kautilya and Machiavelli

Kautilya's Arthashastra has much in common with two books written on kingship by Niccolo Machiavelli, *Prince* and *the Discourses*. They pursue the same value, how a prince can acquire, maintain and enlarge his power. They also champion the cause of *centralised monarchy* against all forms of government. Ironically, Kautilya is often called Indian Machiavelli despite the fact that the *Arthashastra* was written some 1800 years *prior* to Machiavelli's works and remains much *broadier* in scope. The denial of legitimate importance to Kautilya and his works points towards the prevailing Eurocentrism in political science and international relations. Compared to Machiavelli, Kautilya's conceptualisation of state power is systematic and comprehensive. Machiavelli had basic understanding of the elements of state power and how to measure it. He, however, *failed* to form a systematic and coherent theory of state power which could parallel Kautilya's *saptanga* theory. Another difference between them pertains to use of *morality* by the king. Kautilya said that a good ruler should also be a good man. On the other hand, Machiavelli said that it is not necessary for a prince to have virtues, but it is

very necessary to *seem* to have them. Kautilya did *not* subordinate ethics to politics and barring certain conditions, he advised the king to uphold morality and good behaviour. In Kautilya, separation between politics and morality is unimaginable and political power acquires legitimacy so far it promotes human happiness. Machiavelli believed that morality and power are mutually exclusive. Machiavelli had asked the prince to adopt *two* qualities of *animals*, bravery of lion and cunningness of fox. Kautilya, in his *other* work, *Rajnitishastra*, advised the king to learn twenty qualities from twenty different animals. For ex, from a lion, the king should learn to undertake a task well-prepared irrespective of the fact whether the task is big or small. From the cock, the king should learn four things – getting up in time, fighting, division of responsibility among allies and enjoyment of one’s prey after attacking it oneself. Qualities like bravery, devotion to master and quick awakening could be learnt from the dog. It is *not* clear whether Machiavelli was influenced by Kautilya, but a *trans-cultural* migration of Kautilyan thought via Iranian and Arab cultural space to Europe is not impossible to imagine.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1) What are the similarities in the works of Kautilya and Plato?

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7.5 ASSESSMENT

Arthashastra was of the same vintage as Aristotle’s *Politics* and *unlike* Plato and Aristotle, *Arthashastra* is *broader* in scope and approach. It embraces all the aspects of political, military, social, economic and cultural life and diverse components of state power that are the constitutive elements of the state. However, there is *no* dearth of Kautilya’s critics. Banabhatta in his work, *Kadambari*, had criticised *Arthashastra* for being *shrewd* and *immoral*. *Vijnaneshvara* in his work, *Mitakshara* said that a king should follow *Dharamshastra* for welfare of the people, not *Arthashastra*. Debates aside, Kautilya should be rightly regarded as the father of Indian political science as his work is a treatise on science of politics. In modern times, however, all elements of the state given by Kautilya may not be necessary for the existence of a state. In the modern conception of state, elements like the king or the sovereign, territory and population only are needed for a state’s existence. *Amatya* or the minister

would form part of the government in contemporary context. There is a tendency to dismiss Kautilya's state as a *police* state, but one cannot dismiss welfare functions of Kautilya's state. He also declared independent status of polity *separating religion* from it. Kautilya argued for a benevolent monarchy instead of any other form of government to achieve stability and solidarity in the state. He was not a votary of democracy and in contemporary times, one may wonder how Kautilya would deal with issues like difference of opinion, gender, diversity, human rights etc.

7.6 LET US SUM UP

Kautilya is the father of Indian political science; however, his works have not been given due importance and analysis has not been done not only in India, but also outside India as well. Ancient Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle continue to dominate classic political thought while Kautilya remains on the fringes reflecting *Eurocentrism* on political science and international relations. Long before the West witnessed separation of state and church under modernity in 16th century, Kautilya had already advocated independent status of polity away from religion. His *saptanga* theory is a systematic and coherent theory of state power which was *unmatched* by Machiavelli. He may not have advocated democracy, but Kautilya said that the welfare of the people was central to stability and security of a kingdom. Kautilya's figure stands tallest amongst the community of Indian political scientists and there is a need to further analyse his works in contemporary context.

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7.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Your answer should highlight following points

**Political Concerns
and Key Ideas**

- *Dharmashastra* covers social, moral and religious aspects
- *Arthashastra* is more political and economic in nature

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Your answer should highlight following points

- Ensure public welfare
- Maintain *dharma*
- Maintain law and order
- Protect people from threats and calamities

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) Your answer should highlight following points

- Both prefer rule by elites
- Contempt towards common man
- Prefer king to be from the military class



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UNIT 8 KAUTILYA MANDALA THEORY*

Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Concept of *Mandala*
 - 8.2.1 Peace Politics or *Upayas*
 - 8.2.2 War Tactics or *Shadgunyas*
 - 8.2.3 Role of Envoys
 - 8.2.4 Role of Spies
- 8.3 Views on National Security
- 8.4 Realism and Kautilya
- 8.5 Glimpses of Arthashastra in India's Foreign Policy
- 8.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.7 References
- 8.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

8.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading Kautilya's views on state in the last unit, students would be introduced to his views on diplomacy and statecraft in this unit. Centuries may have passed but Kautilya's views on foreign policy continue to find a place in India's contemporary engagement with the world. After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Comprehend Kautilya's views on foreign policy of a state
- Describe the six methods in foreign policy (*Shadgunyas*)
- Examine *Mandala* theory and its contemporary relevance

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Interstate relations and foreign policy find a *prominent* place in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. He has tried to explain the dynamics of interstate relations through his mandala theory. Kautilya has also explained *upayas* (peace politics) and *shadgunyas* (six war tactics). These were operational tips to the conqueror to

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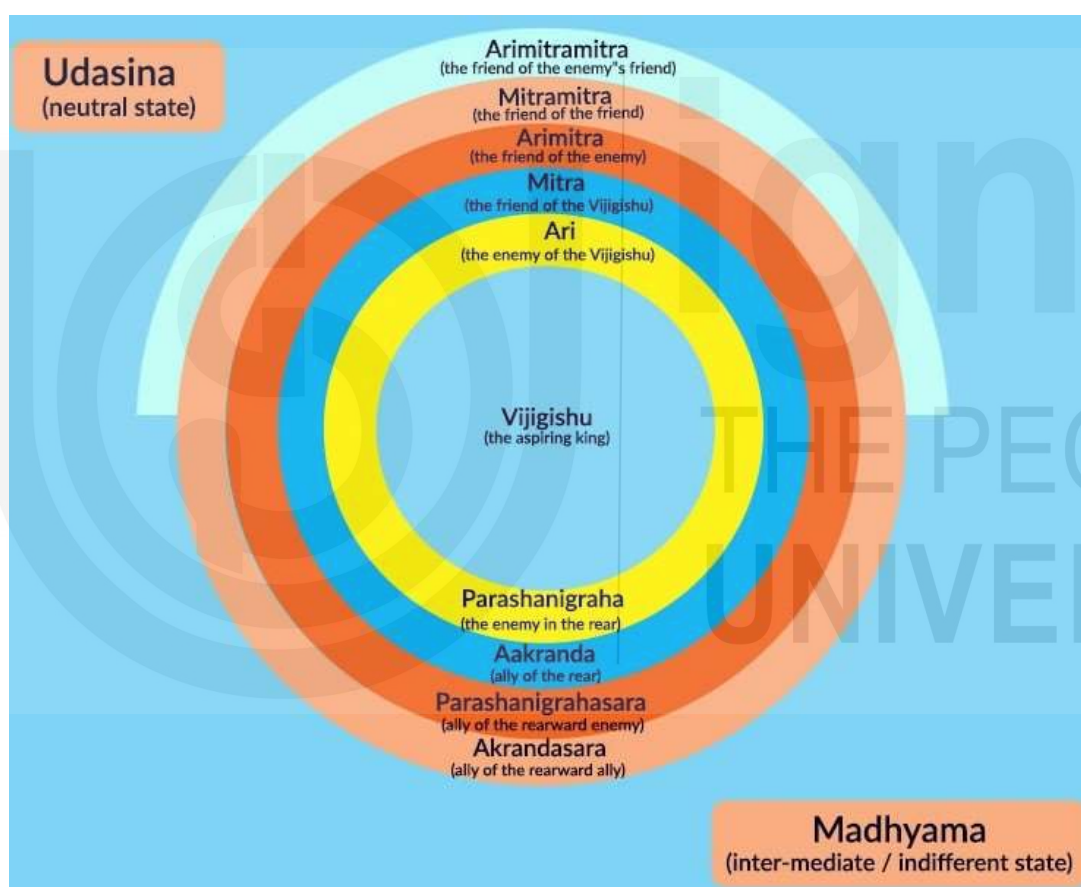
conduct his foreign relations in times of peace and war. He also emphasised that a king should have a detailed system of diplomatic relations with different states and insisted on a sound system of espionage or intelligence to protect the state from internal and external threats. Kautilya argued that welfare of a state depends on its active foreign policy and he highlighted that there are links between the domestic factors and foreign policy of a state. He emphasised an active foreign policy which could be used by a king to further his kingdom's interests. Apart from highlighting Kautilya's views on foreign policy, this unit would also underline his arguments with respect to national security, a theme which is of critical importance in contemporary international politics dominated by geo-political interests.

8.2 CONCEPT OF MANDALA

Mandala is a Sanskrit word which means circle. Indians have ascribed pictorial characteristics to the universe representing it in essential form. *Mandala* projects the world in terms of geometry. Kautilya used the shape of mandala to develop a political geometry that accounts for different political realities. In the *seventh* book of *Arthashastra*, he described international relations as a *mandala* system. It was *not* a new concept given by Kautilya as it was earlier discussed by Manu and there were indirect references to it in *Rigveda*. However, it was Kautilya who gave a comprehensive theory of *mandala* for security and survival of state. Kautilya argued that acquiring power and its expansion is the main aim of any state. He argued that power and success are inter-related. Power and success resulting from its use are of three types. Intellectual strength (*mantra shakti*) gives the power of good counsel; a prosperous treasury and a strong army give physical power (*prabhav shakti*) and valour is the basis of morale and energetic action (*utsah shakti*). The success resulting from each one is, correspondingly, intellectual, physical and psychological. Kautilya further said that conducting relations with a state would require special insight and skill. He gave importance to geography and economic foundations of a state. In ancient India, due to lack of advanced means of transport and communications, there could not be a central government which could extend its control in far-off areas. India was divided in a number of small states and each state was tempted to annex its neighbours. Strong states would try to expand their territory while the weaker ones would try to maintain their independence by paying tribute to them. Kautilya described foreign policy of small states constantly at war with each other and not of big empires like the Mauryan. Kautilya listed six guiding principles of foreign policy as listed below.

- A king would enhance resources and power of his kingdom to embark upon a campaign of conquest
- Enemies to be eliminated
- Cultivation of allies
- Adoption of prudent course of action
- Peace to be preferred to war
- King must behave as just in both, victory and defeat

The central premise of the *Mandala* theory lies in locating the position of a kingdom as an enemy or ally with respect to the intending conqueror and the kingdom's spatial placement in the *mandala*. Kautilya treats the *vijigishu* (the conqueror or the ambitious king) as the reference point of the *mandala* theory and advocates four basic circles. In the first circle, there are three primary kings forming a circle, the *vijigishu*, his friend and his friend's friend. Each one of them possesses the five elements of sovereignty, such as the *amatya*, the *janapada*, the *durga*, the *kosha* and the *danda*. Hence, a circle of states would comprise of 18 elements (3 primary kings plus five elements of each which is equal to 15). This also applies to three other circles of states - *ari* (enemy of the *vijigishu*), the *madhyama* (the indifferent king) and the *udasina* (the neutral king) kings forming the core of each of the three circles. Finally, the *mandala* theory would consist of four primary circles of states, 12 kings, 60 elements of sovereignty and 72 elements of states. The 12 kingdoms are shown in the figure below.



Source: www.thetruepicture.org

- *Vijigishu*: The king who aspires to be the conqueror
- *Ari*: Shares border with *Vijigishu*, an enemy
- *Mitra*: Friend or an ally of *Vijigishu*, shares border with *ari*
- *Ari-Mitra*: Friend of *ari*, shares border with *mitra*
- *Mitra-Mitra* : Friend or an ally of friend
- *Ari Mitra-Mitra*: Friend of enemy's friend
- *Parshnigraha*: Enemy in the rear of the *Vijigishu*
- *Aakranda*: Friend in the rear behind Parshnigraha

- *Parshnigraha-asara*: Friend of *Parshnigraha* behind *Aakranda*
- *Aakranda-asara*: Friend of *Aakranda* behind *Parshnigrahasara*
- *Madhyama*: Indifferent kingdom
- *Udasina*: Neutral Kingdom

The four circles are explained as below.

- Circle 1: *Vijigishu*, his friend, friend's friend
- Circle 2: *Ari* (enemy of *vijigishu*), his friend, friend's friend
- Circle 3: *Madhyama* (the indifferent king), his friend, friend's friend
- Circle 4: *udasina* (the neutral king), his friend, friend's friend

The ordering principle of *mandala* scheme argues that a direct neighbour is an enemy (*ari*) while an indirect neighbour is a friend (*mitra*). It is commonly expressed as – enemy of my enemy is my friend. First and third circles would be hostile to the *vijigishu* state while second and fourth would be friendly. It is not an iron law and exceptions would always be there. The *Madhyama* or an indifferent king in any of the circles could turn out to be an ally or an enemy and intervene in favour of the victor by supporting him or decide to be neutral (*udasina*) or an enemy (*ari*). The victor's policy should be to turn as many of the kings as possible into allies or take neutral position.

8.2.1 Peace Politics or *Upayas*

There are four *upayas* – *sama* (conciliation), *dana* (concession or gift), *danda* (punishment) and *bheda* (dissension) to realise an objective or aim and they have existed since the period of epics and the *Dharmashastra*. These *upayas* were to be used in times of peace by the king in his foreign relations. He said that foreign relations would be determined by *self-interest*, not by ethical concerns. Modern states have been practicing what Kautilya had advocated but nobody would say so. It is pertinent to mention that there is a hierarchy in use of these *upayas* in the order as *sama*, *dana*, *bheda* while *danda* or use of force would be the last resort. These tactics can be either used alone or in combination as well. In the case of allies and enemies, a combination of these methods ensures success because the different methods mutually reinforce each other. 20th century classic realist, Hans J Morgenthau, in his book *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, (1966) has given methods that can be used in balance of power. These methods are similar to those echoed by Kautilya, but Morgenthau does not give any reference of Kautilya. The methods discussed by him include divide and rule, compensation, armaments and alliances. The four *upayas* given by Kautilya are explained below.

- ***Sama***: There are five meanings attached to *sama* or conciliation. One, merit (actual or fictitious) of the target person is praised. Adulation is used to soften up the counterpart to erode his will to resist. Pedigree, personal qualities, occupation and good nature of the target are praised either personally or to a third party. Second, mutual connections like common kinship, ethnicity or social status and commonalities like taste

and education are often invoked to psychologically disarm the opponent. Third, the counterpart is made to believe that cooperation with the opponent is in his best interests. Fourth, benefits like material gains or other advantages are highlighted to the opponent and lastly, concession and compromise is promised to the opponent irrespective of the fact whether it would really materialize or not. Giving a high rank or awarding an honor is also a method of conciliation with a potential enemy.

- **Dana:** In case conciliation does not work out, one has to take recourse to *dana* or gifts. It may include cash payments, valuables, making territorial concessions or even handing over hostages. Doing a small favor to the opponent is likely to make him obliged. *Dana* would mean a price is to be paid for achieving one's objectives but the price is to be kept as low as possible to have a good deal. *Dana* should be combined with *sama* to achieve effective results. Bribery could be one of the possible meanings of *dana* and state could use small expenses to achieve bigger political and economic gains. The state can prevent rebellions through bribery which would save economic and military resources which could be diverted towards foreign affairs.
- **Bheda:** The third *upaya* involves sowing discord, is also called divide and rule. By using methods like selective preference or discrimination, actors are isolated from each other and seeds of dissension are planted against each other in their thought process. Alliances of states that threaten the security of one's own state should be broken or weakened. The attempt should be to prevent formation of such alliances. The first three *upayas*, *sama*, *dana* and *bheda* refrain from the use of force, but not the threat of use of force.
- **Danda:** It is the use of force or punishment and in inter-state relations, it means war. War is very risky and costly and that is why; Kautilya preferred covert actions – *tusnim-yuddha*. Sabotage and assassinations of leaders of a rival country are an effective means to achieve one's own state interests. Covert operations have low cost while they can achieve bigger gains. Kautilya highlighted normative concerns and said that only those wars and covert actions are legitimate which aim for *political unification* of Indian subcontinent. Wars for mere plunder or indiscriminate destruction are morally reprehensible.

8.2.2 War Tactics or *Shadgunyas*

In Book 7 of the *Arthashastra*, Kautilya has argued that a state has six options to carry out its foreign policy and they are applicable in different set of circumstances. He wanted to politically unite the Indian subcontinent in the same way as Machiavelli wanted Italy's political unification and liberation from foreign domination. Kautilya did not argue for military conquest of states bordering Indian subcontinent and he did not even mention any kind of maritime expansion. War and peace are two extremes and depending on certain circumstances, the king shall try to achieve either of them. The would-be

conqueror shall apply the six methods with due regard to his power. He shall make peace with an equally powerful or stronger king; he shall wage war against a weaker king. A king would go to a war if he has military superiority, if enemy's undertakings are about to collapse due to a calamity or a part of enemy's kingdom can be conquered as he is busy fighting elsewhere. Kautilya classified war into three categories – open war where time and place to fight are pre-decided, secret war is a sudden assault and undeclared war using covert operations. On the other hand, a king would try to achieve progress through peace if he can turn enemy's allies against him, if the king and his rival have grown or declined equally in a same period of time or the king can ruin enemy's undertakings by covert operations etc. When the degree of progress is the same in pursuing peace and waging a war, peace is to be preferred. For, in war, there are disadvantages such as losses, expenses and absence from home. If the state factors of an enemy are destroyed, they cannot be seized and appropriated by the victorious power which is the true aim of fighting a war for Kautilya. That is why; Kautilya speaks of injuring or weakening an enemy, but *not* its annihilation or destruction. If an enemy's *prakriti* is destroyed beyond its fighting capability, it would be counter-productive for the victor. Kautilya said that the constituent elements or the seven *prakritis* is the basis of *shadgunyas*. In foreign relations, the ratio between the power potential (*prakriti* aggregate) of two or more states is decisive and before making foreign policy decisions, the ruler and his advisers should ascertain relative weaknesses and strengths of their kingdom. To know the capabilities of opponents, Kautilya laid emphasis on *secret service*. Based on this assessment, there are six foreign policy options in front of a king as explained below.

- **Sandhi or peace:** If the king is in a weaker position in relation to his adversary, a policy of peace and accommodation is prescribed. This time period of peace would be used by the king to build military capabilities to move from a position of inferiority to strength. New foreign policy options would open up once strong capabilities are attained.
- **Vigraha or war:** This policy is prescribed if the king has military superiority over its rivals as war can be won without too much loss. The king should only destroy the fighting capability of the opponent, *not* its *prakriti*. The winner should treat the defeated with generosity and leniency.
- **Asana or neutrality/wait and watch:** Policy of *asana* is prescribed by Kautilya if the rival of a king has *equal* power potential. Again, neutrality buys time for the king to upgrade his military capabilities and as that is achieved, the king should switch to active and offensive foreign policy.
- **Yana or coercion:** If the king's adversaries decline or stagnate while the king grows stronger, he should follow the policy of coercion and military mobilization. Covert operations could be used to obtain far reaching concessions from the enemy and his surrender could be ensured even without fighting a war.

- **Samshrya or alliance:** If the king does not see a possibility of surpassing the capabilities of an adversary in the near future, than he should have an alliance with other states. It would be a defensive alliance, but the king should work to make it offensive against the common adversary.
- **Dvaidhibhava or duplicity:** Depending on a variety of complex situations and configurations, Kautilya has prescribed a policy of diplomatic *double* game. This policy is very demanding with respect to intelligence, deception, foresight and psychological aspects.

8.2.3 Role of Envoys

Envoy or *duta* was responsible for conducting diplomacy with other kingdoms. They were deployed in courts of other rulers and played an important part in conducting foreign policy. The envoys belonged to a noble family and were well versed in all types of sciences. They required a good memory in order to recall their conversations with important people in foreign kingdom. The envoys were divided in different categories depending on their qualities. The top most envoys had the power to negotiate on behalf of their king and they stayed in the country of their accreditation for a longer time to tilt the balance of power in favour of his king. Others could not exceed the brief given by the king while the lower most were mere messengers who would pass on the king's message and fetch the reply. Certain immunities were enjoyed by the envoys like they could not be killed, had freedom of movement in the state and were exempted from paying ferry and custom duties. The king was advised by Kautilya to keep an eye on the envoys through spies and guards. Duties of the envoy included the following.

- Sending information to his king
- Ensuring maintenance of the terms of a treaty
- Upholding his king's honor
- Acquiring allies
- Instigating dissension among the friends of the enemy
- Acquiring clandestinely gems and other valuable material for his own king
- Ascertaining secret information and showing valor in liberating hostages held by the enemy

8.2.4 Role of Spies

Kautilya favoured a highly developed system of espionage and intelligence gathering and their utility in some cases exceeded that of the envoys. *Intelligence* was the most important activity during the war. Any information corroborated by three different spies shall be taken to be true while any agent who was consistently unreliable shall be eliminated. There were agents who were based in one place like the intelligence officer, spies under the cover of monks, merchants or ascetics. Another type of agents was that of roving agents like the assassin or the secret agent. There were *double* agents also who spied for two kings. The

king should make efforts to uncover enemy agents operating in his territory. The intelligence was transmitted by a code and the transmitters would not know the identity of the information gatherer.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1) Discuss Kautilya's views about *Sandhi* or peace.

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2) What are the duties of an envoy?

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8.3 VIEWS ON NATIONAL SECURITY

It was the duty of a king to protect his subjects from internal and external threats. To ensure this, an army was needed. In defending the kingdom from external threats, Kautilya has highlighted four basic forms of warfare.

- *Mantra-yuddha*: war by counsel or use of diplomacy by a weaker king who finds it unwise to fight against a strong adversary.
- *Prakash-yuddha*: regular warfare where opposing armies fight according to established rules and regulations.
- *Kuta-yuddha*: irregular warfare including ambushes and raids in enemy territory
- *Tusnim-yuddha*: includes covert operations like sabotage and targeted killings. He favoured this type of war where mental faculties like intelligence, foresight, psychological skills and ingenuity matter.

Apart from the physical defence of the kingdom, Kautilya also advised to prevent internal threats like rebellion, treachery and revolts. It was *rare* in his times, but Kautilya adopted a multi-pronged strategy towards national security. In the

domestic policy, the king should follow *dharma* or the ethical code while in the foreign policy; national interest is supreme with no room for idealism. By advising the king to keep the welfare of people a top priority, Kautilya argued that threats like hunger and epidemics should be prevented. He argued that famine affects the whole country and deprives the people of their livelihood. Kautilya explained that a *drought* had *twin* impacts on the economy. First, supply shock would create unemployment which would decrease tax revenue. Second, decline in tax revenue would reduce government's spending on public infrastructure and reduce growth in future income. Lower tax revenue would also reduce spending on defence. Hence, Kautilya linked economic prosperity with *national security* and advised the king to keep the economy in good health to ensure national security. He articulated the concept of *Yogakshema*, a combination of peace, prosperity and security. It was to be realised through *dharma*, *danda* and family (basic unit of society). *Health risks* and *food insecurity* are *non-traditional* security threats to any country in the *contemporary* context and Kautilya's emphasis on them in those times shows his *farsightedness*. He raised the quality of being farsightedness to the level of national security. He argued that a king should be farsighted enough to avail himself of the opportunities to right time, place and type of action. Similarly, he said that a minister should have logical ability to foresee things. Farsightedness would help the king in preparing for a potential threat well in advance.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1) What is the concept of *Yogakshema*?

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8.4 REALISM AND KAUTILYA

Despite having intrinsic theoretical value in international politics, *Arthashastra* has been largely *ignored* not only in India, but outside as well. Kautilya can be easily considered as the pre-modern founding father of theory of Political Realism later expressed by Machiavelli and Morgenthau. Roger Boesche in his book written in 2002, *The First Great Realist: Kautilya and His Arthashastra*, has argued that Kautilya was the first great, unrelenting political realist. Max Weber saw no role for any type of ideology in Arthashastra and talked about

Kautilya's trained ability to relentlessly gaze at realities of life. Some of the realist foundations in *Arthashastra* are:

- National interest being paramount in foreign policy
- Anarchic nature of inter-state relations
- Centrality of power in international politics

Classic realist, Morgenthau identifies ancient political philosophy from Greece, China and India as the starting point of his theory. The methods discussed by him to maintain a favourable balance of power include divide and rule, compensation, armaments and alliances which are similar to four *upayas* given by Kautilya. *The Peloponnesian War* written by *Thucydides* is usually seen as the *starting* point of Political Realism, but it must be mentioned that this book is a historical narrative that mentions realist thought by implication only. Henry Kissinger saw Kautilya as a combination of Machiavelli and Clausewitz. Clausewitz said that war is just an extension of domestic politics; Kautilya said that diplomacy is really a subtle act of war, a series of actions taken to weaken an enemy and gain advantages for oneself, all to achieve the final aim of conquest. Another important point is that *Arthashastra* is generally perceived as a realist treatise, an interpretation that heavily depends on Western theoretical frameworks. It is very often *forgotten* that *Arthashastra* frequently uses the word dharma which stands for morality or righteousness. It is not possible for a text not to have normative and moral foundations which cites dharma as part of governance and daily life. Kautilya's approach comes out as a holistic mix of idealism and realism.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Discuss the realist ideas given in *Arthashastra*.

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8.5 GLIMPSES OF ARTHASHASTRA IN INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

There has been a visible impact of Kautilyan thought on evolution of independent India's foreign policy, although it has been a slow and gradual process. There has been an eclectic mix of idealism and realism in India's foreign policy. India's first Prime Minister, J L Nehru followed an idealist foreign policy with emphasis on themes like anti-colonialism, disarmament, non-alignment, *Panchsheel* etc.

However, he followed a realist policy in India's neighbourhood where he sought to project India as the main power in Indian subcontinent. The realist turn started in India's foreign policy after the 1962 war with China. In 1971, under PM Indira Gandhi, India exercised wit and finesse by signing a Treaty of Friendship with the erstwhile Soviet Union to safeguard its sovereignty against the US-China-Pakistan nexus and India successfully helped in bifurcation of Pakistan as an independent state of Bangladesh was born. India began to understand the value of *military power* in international politics and India's acquired nuclear power in 1998. A state that does not back its diplomacy with military and economic power cannot protect its national interest. To increase its influence at the global level, India wants to be a permanent member of UN Security Council. India's strategic partners like the US, France, Germany, Russia etc have been instrumental in getting India membership in three export control regimes except Nuclear Suppliers Group. China's rise is a foreign policy challenge for India and New Delhi is building its defence capabilities keeping in mind the long-term threat posed by Beijing to India's security. India takes pride in its civilisation and cultural heritage reflected in its multicultural and inclusive ethos. China, on the other hand, is driven by *Middle Kingdom* mentality to dominate the world. India is standing up against China and to do so in future, New Delhi will require substantial hard power to deter China. Some of India's relations can be understood using Kautilyan thought. His famous saying that an enemy of my enemy is a friend is applicable to China-Pakistan relationship as both the nations see India as a common enemy. Since China is an enemy of India and Pakistan sees India as an enemy, hence, Pakistan has cultivated an all weather relationship with China. During the Cold War, China remained India's adversary and the former Soviet Union became an enemy of China, hence, India and Soviet Union came closer. India's membership in new groupings like the Quadrilateral Security Group or Quad is an attempt to balance China and alliance against a common enemy as was suggested by Kautilya.

8.6 LET US SUM UP

Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is a pioneering work in diplomacy and strategic studies. His contribution to international relations theory has *not* received the desired attention. Kautilya gave importance to geography and economic foundations of a state in conducting its foreign policy. He articulated the concept of *Yogakshema*, a combination of peace, prosperity and security to be realised through *dharma*, *danda* and family. It was rare in his times, but Kautilya adopted a multi-pronged strategy towards national security covering traditional and non-traditional security threats. The four *upayas* and *shadgunya* principles were important in carrying out foreign policy of a country. Kautilya is widely seen as a realist thinker, but he frequently mentions *dharma* in *Arthashastra*. A holistic reading of his work reveals that Kautilyan thought was a mix of idealism and realism. His vision continues to guide India's foreign policy even in the 21st century.

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8.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Your answer should highlight following points

- If the king is in a weaker position in relation to its adversary, a policy of peace and accommodation is prescribed
- This time period of peace would be used by the king to build military capabilities to move from a position of inferiority to strength
- New foreign policy options would open up once strong capabilities are attained

2) Highlight following points

- Sending information to his king
- Ensuring maintenance of the terms of a treaty
- Upholding his king's honor
- Acquiring allies
- Instigating dissension among the friends of the enemy

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Your answer should highlight following points

- It is a combination of peace, prosperity and security
- Achieved through *dharma*, *danda* and family (basic unit of society)

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Kautilya Mandala
Theory

1) Your answer should highlight following points

- National interest being paramount in foreign policy
- Anarchic nature of inter-state relations
- Centrality of power in international politics



UNIT 9 *DĪGHA NIKĀYA* – THE IDEA OF CHAKRAVARTIN*

Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Scope of *Dīgha Nikāya*
- 9.2 Evolution of Political Ideas and Polity
- 9.3 Initial Phase: Origin of Kingship as Quasi Contractual Arrangement
 - 9.3.1 Theory of ‘Great Elect’ (*Mahasammat*)
 - 9.3.2 Implications
 - 9.3.3 Psychological Foundations for Political Speculation
 - 9.3.4 Nature of the *Great Elect*
- 9.4 Second Phase: All Powerful Monarchical State
 - 9.4.1 Theories of Kingship
 - 9.4.2 Traces of Republican States
 - 9.4.3 Notion and Symbols of Sovereignty
 - 9.4.4 Seven Symbols of Sovereignty
 - 9.4.5 Ten Royal Virtues (*dasa-rājadhamma*)
 - 9.4.6 Elements of Regalia
 - 9.4.7 Buddhist Ideas on the Constituents of the State
 - 9.4.8 Objectives of the State
 - 9.4.9 Possibility of Abuse of Power by the State
- 9.5 Third Phase: The Idea of *Chakravartin* (*Cakkavatti*) and the State as an Instrument of *Dhamma*
 - 9.5.1 Dhamma and State
 - 9.5.2 The *ānā* and Dhamma
 - 9.5.3 The *Ānā* and *Attha*
 - 9.5.4 State as Ethical Instrument of the Dhamma

* Dr Ruchi Tyagi, Associate Professor, Kalindi College, University of Delhi

9.5.5 The Idea of *Cakkavatti*

9.5.6 Normative Kingship and the Creation of a just Social Order

9.5.7 Absence of State Religion

9.6 Limitations of *Śramanic* idea of Kingship

9.7 Let Us Sum Up

9.8 References

9.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

9.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is to familiarise you with the ideas of *Śramanic* tradition. After studying this unit, you should be able to understand:

- Scope of *Dīgha Nikāya*
- Origin of Kingship in *Dīgha Nikāya*
- Evolution of Political Ideas and Polity
- The Idea of *Chakravartin* in *Dīgha Nikāya*
- Correlation between State and Dhamma

9.1 SCOPE OF *DĪGHA NIKĀYA*

Dīgha Nikāya is a collection of the dialogues, mostly of *Buddha* himself, as they appear to his earliest disciples in a series of *one hundred and eighty six* discourses which, according to *Rhys Davids*, will occupy a place in the history of human thought similar to the Dialogues of Plato, the dialogues of *Buddha*, who is also the principal interlocutor, in conversation with his disciples are arranged according to their length. In the *Sutta Pitaka* or the Basket of discourses, there are four great *Nikāyas* or collections, out of which the *first two* form a single book and are collectively called *Dīgha Nikāya*, categorised in 34 long *Suttas*. Out of these, the twenty seventh *Agganna Sutta*, is known for the evolution of Buddhist thinking on the origin and the development of the state.

Buddhism is primarily understood as a religious and philosophical concept, but Buddhism is equally concerned with the mundane and transcendental world. Ideas of power and kingship seem out of context in early Buddhist philosophy. Scholars like S.J. Tambiah were convinced that the king enjoyed significant status in Buddhist philosophy, whereas others like Max Weber argued that it was apolitical. There are scattered references to power and kingship in Pali scriptures, but there is no direct theory supporting these references.

9.2 EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL IDEAS AND POLITY

B.G. Gokhale has outlined the evolution of Buddhist thinking on the nature and functions of the state in *three* distinct phases.

- The initial phase is contained in the theory on the origin of the state as it emerges from the *Mahāsammata* story.
- The second stage deals with the possibility of as all powerful monarchical despotism and a possible co-relationship between the two spheres of life, i.e. the *Dhamma* and the *ānā* (the regal). Here, the *ānā* provides protection and security to monasteries and *Dhamma* facilitated with *Vinaya* rules and mass acceptance for royalty and regalia.
- The third stage reflects emergence of *Dhamma* as a cosmic force and the state becoming an instrument of *Dhamma*, where the latter contains the power of the state, while regulating its behaviour; where the state draws its authority from the *Dhamma* and instructed by its depository, the *Samgha*; hence, subscribing to the idea of *Cakkavatti* or the ideal righteous ruler.

9.3 INITIAL PHASE: ORIGIN OF KINGSHIP AS QUASI CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENT

While referring to *Mandhata Jataka*, N.C. Bandyopadhyaya (317) and Law (94) have stated that the “chosen of all” have been considered the first king in the beginning of creation. V.P. Varma is of the considered view that the theory of the “Great Elect” was comprehensively discussed only in the *Dīgha Nikāya* [3-*Pathika Vagga*, 27(4) *Agganna Sutta*], which he has considered as the ‘most important book in the early Buddhist literature. The theory presents the cosmological speculation of the early Buddhists.

Explaining the evolution of mankind, Ernest Gellner, as referred by Collins, mentioned three historical stages of hunter-gatherers; agrarian society; and industrial society. These stages are defined in relation to the means or their absence of producing, accumulating and storing food and wealth; the forms of coercion and legitimation which accompany them; and to the social distribution and varieties of cognition. During 5th – 4th Centuries B.C., in Indian society, Brahmanism was more strongly established in the countryside than in the rising urban centres, where a competing plurality of ideologies were emerging. These urban centres, which arose from and encouraged a food surplus, were the market, military and administrative centres of small scale politics and not the metropolitan capitals of large empires. These polities were ruled by oligarchies, gradually turning into monarchies.

9.3.1 Theory of ‘Great Elect’ (*Mahasammata*)

[As narrated by Buddha and referred to by V.P. Varma (186-87)]

- Description of primeval conditions:** When this world began to re-evolve after having passed away, it was inhabited by ‘being made of mind’, ‘feeding on rapture’ (i.e. bliss, enthusiasm, carried away in spirit), ‘self-luminous’ (or full of light) ‘traversing the air, continuing in glory.’ In this period, there was

no distinction of sex. Beings were reckoned as beings only. It denoted subtle body/mind and emancipating person. It was a state of soul and spirit.

- ii. **Introduction of element of water:** After some time, the earth with its savour was spread out in waters. Some beings of greedy disposition tasted it and then craving entered into them. When other beings began to feast on the earth, their self-luminance declined. When it was gone, there was the manifestation of the sun, the moon, followed by the appearance of stars, night, day, months, half months, the seasons, the years etc. The beings continued for a long, while feasting on the earth.
- iii. **Appearance of soil & rice:** Due to the appearance of evil and immoral customs, specially “pride in their beauty,” vanity and conceit, the savoury earth disappeared. After its disappearance outgrowths of the soil appeared, it was clothed with colour, odour and taste. The beings feasted on the outgrowths for a long. Being well nourished, the differences in their beauty, which became more manifest and as a result generated pride and conceit. Due to the growth of pride, the outgrowths disappeared. Then creepers appeared, the beings fed on them for a long. Later, they also vanished due to the same phenomena of vanity and conceit. Then rice appeared and also sex differences. People divided off rice fields and set the boundaries creating ‘private property’, which, in turn, caused the appearance of evil & immoral customs; one’s notion of one-self; and pride in beauty and conceit.
- iv. **Stealing appeared:** Some greedy person stole another’s plot and started using it. In spite of being rebuked, he continued to do so. Thus, emerged stealing, censure, lying and punishment for crime and defiance of rules.
- v. **People agitated due to evils:** The beings got perturbed with the presence of these evils. In *Dialogues of Budha* (88), it is stated that ‘...Those beings went to the being among them who was the handsomest, the best favoured, the most attractive, the most capable and said to him: ‘come now, good being, be indignant, censure that which should rightly be censured, banish him who deserves to be banished. And we will contribute to thee a proportion of our rice.’ As *U.N. Ghoshal* states, people committed by saying, ‘(O king) thou who are a (mere) servant of the multitude and who receives the sixth part (of the produce) as thine wages.’ Thus, he consented to do so and was given a portion of their rice.

In other words, *Dīgha Nikāya* has projected that when greed, selfishness and theft appeared, in order to maintain the social order, people assembled and agreed to choose a chief to maintain the social order and judicially inflict punishment. In return, they committed to spare a part of their paddy. Thus, arose the institution of kingship where the king was chosen by the whole people.

9.3.2 Implications

Buddhist account of the origin of the universe and social organization reflects *significant Indian contribution to political thought*. Origin of State is shown as a quasi-contractual arrangement under which the king agrees to perform specific functions on behalf of the people in return for certain rights conferred on him,

including taxation. This initial view of kingship is not that of a ‘universal emperor’, the *Cakkavatti*, but is of the ‘Great Appointee’

9.3.3 Psychological Foundations for Political Speculation

Basis of kingship involved psychological factors rather than divine will. Buddha made a revolutionary change in the worldview of his contemporary society by initiating a new era in the realm of social investigations. The cosmology formulated by Buddha totally rejected any theological godhead of philosophical absolute.

The Buddhist narrative shows that initially, social stratification was absent, the state of existence was of great happiness and beings were ‘made of mind’. It reflects the influence of the traditional Hindu psychology about *Linga* or *Sukshma Sharira* or the subtle body. The subtle body was considered an individual’s real personality which accompanied the soul even during transmigrations. The corporal body was destroyed after death. Because of being transient and perishable, it was only an instrument for the action of the soul and the subtle body. The Buddhist supposition of existence of ‘being made of mind’ (with no solid corporeal bodies) seems strongly influenced by the Upanishadic and *Samkhya* psychology of the subtle body. (Keith, 535-551) However, V.P. Varma identifies a *profound difference* in the Upanishadic-Samkhya view and the Buddhist view. The former was concerned with a transcendent state of emancipation from the world, whereas Buddha secularized the whole thing when he applied the predications of the emancipated self to beings “coming to life as human”.

It is perceived that the beings in the original state were caught by greed. It was followed by the appearance of the sense of social and individual superiority on the basis of difference in physical beauty. Later appearance of sex differences paved the way for evils of lust, which in turn led to the institution of dwelling houses.

In addition to lust, the institution of private property disintegrated the state of resplendence. Beings divided off the rice fields and made boundaries around it. This division of property led to stealing. With the appearance of theft emerged the evils of censure, lying and punishment. Thus, the passion of lust and acquisitiveness destroyed the resplendent state and for suppressing the socially subversive elements, the necessity of the institution of the “Great Elect” was felt.

9.3.4 Nature of the *Great Elect*

- The *Dialogues of Buddha* does not specify in detail the nature of the *Mahāsammata*, the “Great Elect”. It could reflect either a king or a republican head. Buddha himself came from the *Shākya* clan, which had a republican polity. His father was at one time the head or one of the heads of this state. Hence, the political traditions of Buddha may denote a republican chief (V.P. Varma, 194)
- The “Great Elect” was also corroborated by the title *Rājā*. According to *Rhys Davids*, the term *Rājā* was also used for republican chiefs and leaders. Here,

Rājā did not mean king, but rather something like the Roman consul or the Greek archon. Even Kautilya's *Arthashastra* refers to republics like Lichchavī, Vrajjī, Mallak, Madrak, Kukur, Kuru and Pāṇchāl which had *Rājā* only for name sake.

- According to the *Dialogues*, the "Great Elect" was instituted by the people to settle social conflicts, which had been generated by the psychological factors of greed, theft and desire.
- Since the "Great Elect" receives his authority from the people, there is an assumption that political authority originally lies in the people, who spare a portion of their produce for him.
- V.P. Varma *refuses* to accept "Great Elect" to mean that the Buddhist political authority was based on consent. However, some element of consensus cannot be ruled out in the Buddhist theory. Beginning of such a theory was indeed contained in it as it projected the election of the "Great Elect" by collective consensus.
- This tradition could be later seen in some idea of election or selection in spite of the acceptance of the divinity of the king. U.N. Ghoshal (209) has referred to a later Buddhist philosopher Āryadeva, "What superciliousness is *thine*, (O King!) *Thou* who are a (mere) servant of the multitude and who receives the sixth part (of the produce) as *thine* wages."
- Difference between King and subjects depicts divergence of physical beauty, attractiveness, capability, etc.
- The notion of *Mahāsammata* denotes the existence of common social ends and interests. It implies that society requires a common superior and eliminates the individual coercive power of punishing thieves and robbers.
- By making the "Great Elect" the repository of the power of censure and punishment, it paved the way for emergence of the concept of 'common good'.
- The "Great Elect" was expected to rule in accordance with *Dharma*. This reference to *Dharma* is significant. *Dharma* had a strong moral content in early Buddhism. By stating that the "Great Elect" would charm others by *Dharma*, it seems that Buddhism accepted that the existence of a political superior is associated with the emergence of the significance of *Dharma*. This aspect was later reflected from the concept of *Cakkavatti* and the political philosophy of Aśoka.
- V.P. Varma has asserted that the *Dialogues of Buddha* (p. I. 88-91) has articulated a *naturalistic* origin, not only of the "Great Elect", but also of the social order. He feels that the "Great Elect" was chosen from the social circle of nobles, called *Khattiya* or the lord of field. Buddha *denounced* a *theological* Godhead and offered an explanation of the origin of the four castes in terms of functional occupation, and thereby neutralized mythical and divine elements to any particular social caste and explained social stratification in terms of functions. Thus, the *Mahāsammata* had considerable *sociological* significance, though it did not initiate any large amount of further sociological and political investigation by later thinkers.

- The contract is a basic condition of organized human society for in the absence of such a contract before the birth of the state, anarchy prevailed. It is, therefore, existential and neither the subjects nor the state have any choice outside it.
- The state arises as a punitive institution charged with the responsibility of imposing law and order without which human beings cannot survive as an orderly society. The state becomes an agreement between the government and the ruled, wherein the ruled transfer a part of their sovereignty to state for a specific purpose.
- The relationship between the state and the subject is a contractual obligation in which one commands and the other obeys. The obligation is mutual and if one party violates it unilaterally, the other is no longer obligated by the terms of that contract. The contract is symbolized by the institution of *taxation*, which is a payment for specific work.
- Hence, the Buddhist view of kingship, particularly the duties and responsibilities of a chosen ruler governed by the notion of the *social contract*, was projected long *before* Hobbes and other western expositions. The Buddhist idea of ‘social contract’ supported an evolutionary view of society, opposed to the Brahminical view of quasi-divine narrative of monarchy and society.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Analyze the origin of kingship as a quasi-contractual arrangement.

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9.4 SECOND PHASE: ALL POWERFUL MONARCHICAL STATE

9.4.1 Theories of Kingship

Necessity of the existence of the state was realized for orderly human society. Accordingly, the rights of private property and family can prevail only under the state’s regulatory and punitive authority. Buddha describes origin of 4 social classes; landed ruling class, priestly class, trading class and hunters.

9.4.2 Traces of Republican States

For the early Buddhists, the state generally meant the monarch, though the Buddha and many of his disciples came from oligarchic republics. (Gokhale) The terms commonly used for the state included *rattha* (country), *rajja* (kingdom) or *vijita* (subjugated territory).

- Republics were known for their regular assemblies within tribal groups, where government by discussion was the main feature. They collapsed after Buddha, middle of the 5th century.
- *Samghas* are an intermediate stage between the collectivism of popular tribal assembly and individualism of Monarchical state
- Monarchy flourished in 3 contexts – Individualism, urbanisation & density of population

The trend was to increase the size and power of monarchy at the cost of republics.

9.4.3 Notion and Symbols of Sovereignty

The state is projected as a sovereign entity and its sovereignty is expressed by a variety of terms such as *ānā*, *ādhipacca*, *issariya*, *vasa* and *siri*. *Ānā* means order or command and implies ability to give orders to all. *Ādhipacca* (*Adhipatya*) signifies overlordship, the quality of imposing superiority over others. *Issariya* (*Ishwariya*), which is also called *vasa* (*Vasha*), is the quality of exercising overwhelming influence or control, the capacity to impose sovereignty. *Siri* (*Shri*) is splendour, beauty, glory, majesty and prosperity and is based on material possessions. Sovereignty connotes total authority, an ability to reward and punish, capacity to give orders to all and receive orders from none.

9.4.4 Seven Symbols of Sovereignty

Buddhist political philosophy of kingship is associated with seven symbols of sovereignty called *sattaratana* or seven constituent elements of kingship namely: (i) *Cakkaratana* – wheel treasure (Dominion); (ii) *Hathiratna* – Elephant treasure (Control over Dominion); (iii) *Assaratna* – Horse treasure (Control over dominion); (iv) *Parināyakarātana* – Councillor treasure (Control over dominion); (v) *Itthiratna* – Woman treasure (Basis of control); (vi) *Maniratna* – Precious gems (Basis of control); and (vii) *Gahapatiratna* – people, taxation (Basis of control). The seven constituent units of king's sovereignty can be summed up in three basic ideas viz. (a) Territory of Dominion represented by the wheel; (b) Control over the dominion – elephants, horses and *parināyaka*; and (c) Bases of control - *itthiratana*, *maniratana* and *gahapatiratana*.

Cakkaratana or the wheel is the *most important* symbol of sovereignty. *Rhys Davids* states that wheel represents the solar disc of the sun and it is symbolic of heavenly treasure. It is mystical in nature as compared to other six treasures. Sun illumines and nurtures the earth. In *Mahasudassana Sutta*, there are anecdotes which explain the significance of the wheel. For instance, there is reference to

the sprinkling water on the wheel so that it can go forth in all four directions followed by the four-fold army. It, thus, represents king's authority over his dominion and territory.

The *Mahasudassana Sutta* mentions the elephant and the horse treasure as means of king's physical control over the state. Various adjectives describe the two treasures as powerful, wonderful, and prized possessions of the king. They are trained and controlled by the king and they are always standing in service to the king. Magical values are attributed to precious gems because they are considered to possess the power to safeguard against disease, hunger, demon etc. In *Mahasudassana Sutta*, there is a story about how the soldiers were asked to raise aloft a precious gem and with its light the villagers got up the middle of the night and started working assuming the day had dawned. *Maniratanas* are supposed to be splendid in their brightness and they symbolize full treasury of the king. *Itthiratana* or the women treasure refers to ideal queen and it also symbolizes householder king and family which ensures succession. The other opinion is that *Itthiratana* is a symbol of earth and its fertile productive aspects. There is yet another opinion that this treasure is perhaps influenced by *Rajasūya* ceremony in the *Brahmanic* tradition. *Gahapatiratana* represents people who inhabit the domain or the territory and it includes administration, system of taxation and production. *Parināyaka* in Pali language means guide, leader or advisor. In the later text, it also stands for General or a chief in charge of 84,000 *Khattiyas*. *Parināyaka* was expected to be wise, and learned who could execute military and civil power on behalf of the king. He, thus, symbolizes king's military strength.

9.4.5 Ten Royal Virtues (*dasa-rājadhamma*)

The compassionate ruler, the *Cakkavatti Sihananda* or the universal monarch was expected to possess ten royal virtues including (i) *Dāna* (liberality, generosity, charity, welfare, giving knowledge and serving public interest), (ii) *Śīla* (refrainment from exploitation, cheating, stealing, adultery, intoxicating drinks, having senses under control, high moral character, being good example for others), (iii) *Pariccāga* (sacrifice in the interest of people), (iv) *Ājjava* (straight forward in dealings, honesty, integrity, performing duties with loyalty, freedom from fear), (v) *Maddava* (gentleness, kindness, avoiding arrogance, amiable temperament), (vi) *Tapa* (austere life, able to suffer for the people's sake, self-control over passion), (vii) *Akkodha* (free from anger, hatred, ill-will, enmity and resentment, remaining calm), (viii) *Avihimsā* (abstention from violence, and destruction of life and peace, compassionate to all, not being vengeful, avoidance of war), (ix) *Khanti* (tolerant, forbearance, patience to serve public interest, understanding) and (x) *Avirodhana* (very approachable, avoidance of opposition to the will of the people and measures of public welfare, respecting opinion of others without prejudice).

That ruler was to conduct as an 'enlightened altruist', expected to act with moral righteousness and was considered as an ideal man of *Dhamma*, who would control falsehood, anger and scorn, is full of patience and forbearance, keeps

benevolent company and makes people happy with the display of the qualities of uniting the subjects.

9.4.6 Elements of Regalia

He was to be well-born, handsome in appearance, possess great wealth, a powerful army, a man of faith and charity, learned and wise. He was to present himself as a man of *Dhamma*. It was believed that *Dhamma* constitutes kings with charisma, which is mandatory to rule over subjects. It was believed that the charisma is conferred on king by his coronation and symbolized by several elements of his regalia in his possession such as the ‘umbrella’, ‘slippers’, ‘sword’, ‘crown’, ‘throne’, ‘sceptres (ornamental wand)’ and ‘the flywhisk’. The quasi-divine qualities, along with regalia, create the charisma as the basis of loyalty of subjects towards the state.

9.4.7 Buddhist Ideas on the Constituents of the State

Though the Buddhist scriptures do *not* offer a systematized list of constituents of the State yet one finds mention of following seven constituents:

- (i) The King (*Mahāsammata, Rājā, khattiya*);
- (ii) The Territory (*rattha/Rashtra*), with sub-divisions of the territorial organizations such as villages (*gaama*), market towns (*nigama*), countryside (*janaopada*), city (*nagara*), the frontier (*paccanta*, existed only sometimes and its security was always a cause of concern),
- (iii) Ministers and bureaucracy (*Amacca/Amātya* and *pārisajja/Parishada*);
- (iv) The Armed Forces (*balam*): The early Buddhist recommended delicate balance of forces to deal with dangers from outside its frontiers and from within, through rebellion and banditry. War was considered within the jurisdiction of state (*attha* and *ānā*). All injunctions against violence were in general related to the level of individual and inter-group relations and the Buddhists reconciled their inability to influence the conduct of state beyond giving it ethical advice. Hence, while keeping the horrors of war within reasonable limits, wars were duly recognized and were *not* outlawed. There is no evidence to assume that the Buddha ever advised his contemporary kings to disband their armies or to dismantle their swords. Even the Buddhist emperor *Ashoka* is *not* known to have disbanded his army after Kalinga.

The most frequent challenge came from within: Conspiracy against the throne and life of the king, robbers, thieves and bandits threatening the life and property of people. For all practical purposes, *Samgha* withdrew itself from consideration of war; admission of soldiers was forbidden; talks and stories of war were denounced; witnessing army parades was treated as a waste of time.

- (v) The Treasury (*kosakotthagara*);
- (vi) Allies (*Anuyuttā, khattiya* and *kuddarājāno*; and
- (vii) The People (*Manussa/Manushya*); presumably had four different assemblies (*parisas/parishada*),- one each for *Khattiyas*, Brahmins, Householders (*Gahapati*) and Ascetics (*Samana/Śramaṇa*).

9.4.8 Objectives of the State

The ideal kingdom was described as the territory without thorns (*Akantaka*) and untroubled (*Annuppīla*). The state was to ensure that “the people should be happy and contented, living in homes with open doors and playing peacefully with children in their laps”. The description of such a state is depiction of a perfect state of law and order. Where, wicked are punished; punishment is to be used to deter the potential offenders; king to have absolute powers to banish culprits from his kingdom and also to execute the convicted criminals. However, the king was expected to act with justice in giving punishments.

Gail Omvedt writes about the celestial wheel slipping a little indicating to the king that his time is up and now he should renounce his throne. The king's eldest son inherits the throne and then the wheel disappears. Son seeks advice of a wise hermit who recommends to the king to set moral example, to perform his duties in earnestness and to protect his subjects. In other words, the sage advises the king to perform good actions like, giving alms to the poor weak and destitute and abstaining from bad actions. The wheel returns and the king continues to rule but he fails to control poverty. Poverty becomes widespread and theft takes place. King attributes theft to poverty and he gives wealth to the thief hoping that he would stop the evil practice. The message spreads that theft is profitable and theft thrives. The king then decides to punish the thieves who take up arms and the result is violence, murder, disorder, adultery incest, evil speaking and immorality. Finer human relations vanish and wickedness spreads. Moral of the story is that the Buddhist state should ideally be a welfare state committed to protect the weak and the destitute. The wheel is not a paternal legacy, but it has to be won by every king through his good actions and deeds. A *parallel* can be drawn here between the *Brahmanical* notion of kingship which justifies *danda* or punishment to maintain *Vedic* social order and Buddhism which justifies punishment for establishing a just social order.

9.4.9 Possibility of Abuse of Power by the State

While aspiring for righteous Chakkavati king, Buddhists altogether realized the possibility of royal tyranny and the abuse of its power by the state. Buddhist literature has described kings as intolerant, arbitrary, autocratic, greedy and as an expropriator. The wrath of a king has been compared with that of thieves, fire, flood, evil spirits or wild animals.

In *Aggana Sutta*, there is acceptance by a society of a need to exercise legitimate power to maintain law and order. The king's main responsibility was to protect these two areas and in return, he enjoyed the support from his subjects. In Buddhist text, the ruler and the robber are placed opposite to each other as the protector and the violator of family and the property. If the king was weak, the robbers prospered and vice-versa. The legitimate ruler also performed other functions like protecting the borders recruit strong army, perform judicial functions and provide patronage to diverse religious groups. He was expected to be vigilant and control his kingdom pragmatically. Pragmatic control of a

legitimate ruler and arbitrary exercise of power have borderline differences. Tribal kingship in a republican form of government was associated with popular control and participation which could not be easily replaced by alternative forms of control, institutional or otherwise. The Buddhist text refers to king's arbitrary exercise of power by citing examples of a king in alliance with robbers, depriving people of their wealth and becoming a violator of social norms. In the second instance, king does not apply law in any uniform manner and pursues his own interest. These two examples illustrate how a king when intoxicated with power exercises power in an arbitrary manner. The king accepts no limitations on his power and establishes complete control over people and the material resources of the kingdom. Kingship is now marked as *despotic* in nature because the king starts imposing his will on the people and exercises power in an arbitrary manner.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Analyze the features and evolution of the monarchical state in *Dīgha Nikāya*.

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9.5 THIRD PHASE: THE IDEA OF CAKKAVATTI AND THE STATE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF DHAMMA

In their doctrine of *Dhamma* as the basis of the state, the early Buddhists found a recourse to escape from the powerful state and the danger of its abuse of powers. Initially they speculated about the large scale migration of the people as a remedy against an evil or despotic monarch. However, considering its impracticality under massive territorial empires, *Dhamma* was postulated as an all-powerful force to control an unrighteous king.

9.5.1 Dhamma and State

In the last or the final stage, the Buddhist notions of Ideal kingship emerges when the state becomes an instrument of *Dhamma*, which implies that *Dhamma* not only controls the challenges of state power, but it also regulates individual's conduct and behaviour. Ultimately, the state aims to establish a just social order based on *Dhamma* and that alone will impart ethical status to the state.

Buddhism correlated politics with *Dharma* (Dhamma), considered the former devoid of the latter as *Rativijja* (the science of pleasure/lust, which was considered the antithesis of all that is ethical), regarded *Śīla* (modesty) and *Sadāchāra* (good conduct) as the basis of politics and desired that the king, as the *Mahāsammata* (elected by the consent of all), should protect his subjects according to *Dhamma*. Buddhism emphasised the moral nature of *Dharma* and its concrete influence can be seen in the political philosophy of Aśoka.

9.5.2 The *Ānā* and Dhamma

Relationship between Buddhism and a well-entrenched and all powerful monarchical despotism; and the solution is proposed in the theory of two equal spheres of life.

The kings (including Bimbisāra, Ajātasattu of Magadha; Pasendi of Kośala and the Maurya emperor Aśoka) built monasteries for the *Samgha* and amended many of their laws, which otherwise made the *Samgha*'s activities very difficult. The extraordinary impact of Buddha's personality on the kings cannot be denied. The relationship between the state and Buddhism could be realized through the fact that even though early Buddhism began in forests, outside the confines of organized society, yet the Buddha and his disciples were subjects of the state in the area they lived and worked. Hence, they could not for long remain outside its society and could ignore or defy the power of the state. Their supporters and followers could be found in the *state service*. They could not ignore felicitous relationship with the state and accordingly accommodated the demands of the state by modifying the *Vinaya* rules. For example, elephant being royal animal, monks were prohibited from eating elephant flesh. They were to refrain from eating meat on the days animal slaughter was prohibited. They used to postpone observing rain-retreat. Royal servants could not be admitted without proper permission. They could not contact in-service soldiers or thieves wanted by law. Absconders from justice or lawful royal service may not be given asylum in Buddhist order. In general, early Buddhism avoided confrontation with the state. The monks were prohibited to get involved in politics. Unhappy with any particular king either could leave the territory and reside elsewhere waiting for a change in his disposition or downfall. The other recourse was to make the state subordinate to *Dhamma*.

9.5.3 The *Ānā* and *Attha*

Early Buddhists considered temporal and spiritual as two distinct spheres of Human life. If *Dhamma* was the source of spiritual, *ānā*, the source of temporal, was responsible for the maintenance and conservation of *Attha* (*Artha*). Both the *attha* and *ānā* were intimately linked as neither could exist without the other. The term *Attha* encompassed interest, advantage, good, blessing, welfare, profit, prosperity, well-being, riches and wealth. It came closer to *Artha*, as was used by Kautilya, to describe *Vārtā* (economy) and *Dandaniti* (polity). Initially, *Attha* was used to mean something that is vital and desirable both in this world and the next. Later, it was used to denote affairs of this world, especially in an organized

society. As a worldly good, it involves the right to enjoy private property and the prerogative to create a family without the fear of molestation and disruption. However, the worldly possessions including property and family could exist only under a set of laws, imposed by the *ānā*. In the absence of any such authority, *kāma* (passion or desire) and greed could create anarchy. To rule out such anarchy, the state aroused as a punitive institution and imposed law and order. Both Buddhist rulers, Bimbisāra and Ajātasattu recognized the two spheres of human life, temporal and spiritual.

As the basis of Buddhist political theory, according to *Gokhale*, Ajātasattu coined the theory of **Two Wheels** including the 'Wheel of Law' (*Dhammacakka*) and the 'Wheel of Command' (*ānācakka*). It was asserted that the affairs of this world and those of next are like two wheels. Each has its own distinctive identity, but they are also like the wheels of the chariot, the axle on which they revolve. Here, they reflect the human society, its desires, aspirations and destiny.

This altogether indicates that *dhamma* cannot operate in this world by itself, as it needs the assent of the state, if not the support of *ānā* or the state.

9.5.4 State as an Ethical Instrument of the Dhamma

To avoid monarchical despotism, *ānā* was separated from *Dhamma* and autonomy of the *Samgha* was ensured. When the contractual obligation of the state creating state as a human organization and as a political institution was found inadequate and the state became powerful to control the whole range of human life; the supremacy of *Dhamma* over *ānā* was asserted. *Dhamma* was projected as a cosmic force capable of containing the power of the state and regulating its behaviour. Here, *Dhamma* was never projected as a metaphysical system or sectarian creed, instead it was depicted as a mystic force obeying its own laws equated with righteousness, propriety, norm, impartiality and justice. Accordingly, it was asserted that any neglect of *Dhamma* by the king could result in untimely rain or dangers of drought, famine, pestilence or war; while specific ceremonies suggested by *Dhamma*, including fasting, charity, vows of righteousness, meditation etc. could entail control over nature in the form of adequate rains. Kingship was also declared as a result of good deeds in a former life. (*Gokhale*)

9.5.5 The Idea of Cakkavatti

The culmination of this process resulted in the *Cakkavatti* or *Chakravarty* (universal monarch), who was declared the *Dhammiko Dhammarājā* (the righteous ruler), who was considered as a counterpart of *Bodhisattva* in the temporal world. The Buddhist *Dhammarājā* was the response to the despotic ruler who lived at the time of Buddha. It was an attempt to contain absolute power of the king by applying *dhamma* as the guiding principle to his power. *U.N. Ghoshal* has pointed out that the most important contribution of early Buddhism to ancient Indian political thought is the application of principles of righteousness to king's internal and foreign administration.

The normative *Cakkavatti* king is the protector of his people, he possess as seven gems, conquers by righteousness and dhamma and above all, he is not only interested in territorial expansion or controlling the material and physical resources, but in establishing a just and moral social order as well. He also teaches moral precepts to laymen and newly subordinated kings. He ensures that people live in comfort and destitution is wiped out. Not only does he uphold the property and family rights of the people, but also provides for the basic needs of the people as a precondition to establish moral order.

Cakkavatti is a charismatic leader and he is popular amongst his subjects. He consults people and acts on the basis of consent. Hence, the people are loyal to him and confirm to his wishes. He patronizes the *brahmanas* and the *śramanas*. Under his leadership and guidance, the moral and just social order is established and the king is intrinsic in establishing the new moral order. Ultimately, the rule of *Dhammiko dhammarājā* is established, which is guided by the principle of Dhamma.

Such a ruler is presented as a *Mahāpurisa* (Great Man), gifted with all the signs of great men, who was believed to be in possession of *Iddhis* (*Siddhis* or super natural powers) and was unique in nature, as there could be no more than one *Cakkavatti* at a time in the world. Therefore, the Buddhist theory of kingship implied that state power would not only be used for punishing, taming or controlling society, but also more positively to create a new just moral social order. The powers of *Cakkavatti* may not be regarded as human or rational, much less contractual (Gokhale). As was, case of Bodhisattva, the places where the *Cakkavatti* was born, crowned, won most significant victory, where he passed away were declared to be memorable. *Stūpa* was to be raised over the relics of his body.

Dhamma was projected as the basis of loyalty to the state and also as an instrument for legitimization of political power and landing the control of the state in an agency higher than itself. Under such a state, the functions of the *Samgha* was consent and advise to the state, adopting the role of conscience-keeper of the state, imposing subtle as well powerful sanctions depending upon circumstances. In the process, as Gokhale has asserted, the state emerged as a mystic entity, obeying norms of continuance and dissolution beyond the reach of subjects. As most of the times, the *Samgha* became far more extensive and pervasive, its organization reached the smallest village through the monastery.

Kingship, according to *Jayasuria*, was limited by one's capacity to act within the guidelines of the teaching, the *Dhamma* or the principles of righteousness. Accordingly, the maintenance of the normative order – *Vinaya* or the code of righteousness – seen as a prime requirement of a good ruler.

On one hand, the welfare of the community of monks was dependent on the goodwill and patronage of the kings or the self-governing republics; and on the other, kings relied on monasteries for mass loyalty and following, there emerged a skilfully engineered reciprocity in the relationship between Buddhism and the

State. In principle, the *Samgha* did not formally relate to the state or the ruler, the monastic order could not survive without a minimum political support.

Dīgha Nikāya
The Idea of
Chakravartin
(Cakkavatti)

9.5.6 Normative Kingship and the Creation of Just Social Order

One finds a Buddhist testifying the ‘middle way’ as an approach to social well-being and spiritual progress. They provide guidelines for public policy of the ‘Universal Benevolent Monarch’, who is concerned “not only with the material welfare of his subject, but also their moral well-being”. (Jayasuria p. 61) The Aśokan welfare state was built on Buddhist humanism, where the human relationship were based on compassion, love, sympathy and care for other’s feelings. The king was advised to promote the collective interests or the ‘common weal’ ahead of himself with the motif of ‘people first’. The king of righteousness, called the *Cakkavattirājā*, exemplified in the Emperor Aśoka. Omvedt has argued that Aśoka’s welfare state policies and statecraft were *not* utopian or idealistic, as entrepreneurship and money making were endorsed as long as these were done by righteous means.

The normative code of the Aśokan ‘welfare state’ included the Buddhist ideals of a ‘just society’ based on equality, economic prosperity and the practice of good life. For ordinary persons, underlying the *raison d’être* of Buddhist social ethics, the Buddhist notion of welfare involved **seven virtues or skilful actions** expecting to refrain from taking life, stealing, confusing speech and uttering falsehoods, malicious speech, frivolous talk, harsh speech and vulgar sensibility. Buddhism was never limited to a private form of salvation or self-contained individual; instead it acknowledged the **interdependent relationship between the individual and society**.

9.5.7 Absence of State Religion

The secularization of religion or the separation between church and state and guarantee of religious freedom by the state was seen as a *post-Enlightenment* phenomenon in western society. The rationale of secularism was implicit in the Buddhist ideals of governance as revealed in Aśokan polity. The principles and values of the European Enlightenment, such as equality, tolerance of dissent, freedom and justice were consistent with the political philosophy of Emperor Aśoka. Buddhism was *never* declared a state religion. Acceptance of dissent, toleration of other faiths, provision for religious freedom, negotiating differences through participation and consensus building, commitment to freedom, equality and tolerance, were some of the noteworthy features of Aśokan statecraft. At the same time, the *Samgha* was readily available as the moral conscience of the community ensuring the accountability of the rulers.

From the time of the Buddha to Emperor Aśoka, the emphasis on public morality and social welfare draws attention to the historical continuity of the **triangular relationship** between the king or ruler, the monastic order or the *Samgha* and the people.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Analyze idea of *Chakravartin* (*Cakkavatti*) and the relationship of the state with *Dhamma*.

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9.6 LIMITATIONS OF ŚRAMANIC IDEA OF KINGSHIP

Metaphysics being the central concept of the *Brāhmanic* tradition, identification and acknowledgment of political thought pose some *serious* weaknesses.

By mid-fifth century within few years after Buddha's death, republics collapsed partly due to aggression of the monarchies, but largely due to internal disagreements amongst republican nobles and elders. Undisciplined individualism, moral indolence, individual pride and lack of discipline were the defining features of changing times.

- Equation of Buddha with unique powers and virtues may be compared with the Brahmanic belief in quasi-divine kingship.
- Projection of control of *Dhamma* over nature and emphasis on performance of fasting, charity, meditation etc. had similarity with Brahmanic ritualism.
- The places where Buddha was born, crowned, where he won his most significant victory / enlightenment and where he passed away, all were declared to be memorable.
- Origin of Monarchy in *Agganna Sutta*, refers to the myth when man deteriorates from the original state of nature of Rousseau to Hobbes, where a greedy, dishonest, quarrelsome and violent man emerges. People select the king to ensure common good and they agree to give a proportion of their rights and an anarchist and greedy man turns to be a disciplined citizen.
- In the absence of constitutional checks and safeguards against the arbitrary exercise of power, public opinion alone was the only safeguard against a wicked ruler or tyrant. To escape such kings, people have fled to a territory outside their control.

The Buddhist Contribution to Political Theory

The Buddhist contribution to the totality of Indian political thought may be studied from two points of view: firstly, what was their contribution to the

theoretical aspect of the government; and secondly, whether and to what extent the greatest Buddhist Emperor followed the Buddhist principles as enunciated in the Buddhist texts

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Highlight the major limitations of of *śramanic* idea of kingship.

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9.7 LET US SUM UP

Dīgha Nikayas are a collection of the dialogues, mostly of Buddha himself, as they appear to his earliest disciples. The Aggana Sutta of *Dīgha Nikāya* refers to the myth regarding the origin of the world and the evolution of mankind. In stages, it describes the gradual deterioration of man from a perfect stage or the original state to a stage where greed and passion erode the moral and physical qualities and man is transformed into an ordinary human existence. In the second stage, there is further progressive fall of mankind, social differences emerge. The new social order is based on the rise of family and private property.

The origin of the state is described as a social contract, which is an agreement between the king and the people. The king agrees to perform specific functions on behalf of the people and people are obliged to obey his commands. The focus is on two major areas and the state negotiates between *ānā*, that is, authority and *Dhamma*. In other words, there is an implicit acceptance in people's mind that they have to respect each other's family and property and they accept the authority of the king who would now regulate their relationships on this matter. In other words, there is an implicit acceptance in people's mind that they have to respect each other's family and property and they accept the authority of the king, who would now regulate their relationships on this matter.

Agganna Sutta challenges the *Vedic* ideas on divine creation of the social order. In *Agganna Sutta*, the division of people in society is based upon need and convenience rather than any hierarchical division. In other words, the division in the social order is based upon functional performance of activities by the groups and not determined by *varna* model. It follows that Brahmanical king ideally maintains the *varna* division in the social order; while in the Buddhist literature, king's primary task was to maintain a social order in which the property and family of individuals are protected in accordance with *Dhamma*.

In Buddha's contemporary times, two forms of government existed in the Gangetic plains in Northern India, *Republican* and *monarchical* in competition with each other. The trend was to increase the size and power of monarchy at the cost of republics. Government by discussion was the keystone of a republican form of government. In tribal groups, the common life was regulated by discussion amongst the elders and noblemen of the tribe and these assemblies were called *Sanghas*. During this period, republics were known by the name of the *sanghas*. Members of the sangha were *not* elected, but they were the leading men of the tribe and most of them belonged to the Kshatriya clan. The form of government was *aristocratic* rather than democratic. However, the final authority in all matters lay with the sangha.

In the last or the final stage, the Buddhist notions of Ideal kingship emerges when the state becomes an instrument of *Dhamma*, which implies that *Dhamma* not only controls the challenges of state power, but also regulates individual's conduct and behaviour. Ultimately, the state aims to establish a just social order based on *Dhamma* and that alone will impart ethical status to the state.

The Buddhist believe that Buddha was *Cakkavatti* king in his earlier life. The normative *Chakkavati* king is the protector of his people, he possess seven gems, conquers by righteousness and *dhamma* and above all, he is not only interested in territorial expansion or controlling the material and physical resources, but in establishing a just and moral social order. He also teaches moral precepts to laymen and newly subordinated kings.

Cakkavati is a charismatic leader and he is popular amongst his subjects. He consults people and acts on the basis of consent. Hence, the people are loyal to him and confirm to his wishes. He patronizes the *brahmanas* and the *shrammanas*. Under his leadership and guidance, the moral and just social order is established and the king is intrinsic in establishing the new moral order. Ultimately, the rule of *Dhammiko dhammaraja* is established which is guided by the principle of *Dhamma*. *Dhamma* is *above* the king and the king revere and esteems *dhamma*. Therefore, the Buddhist theory of kingship implied that state power would not only be used for punishing, taming or controlling society, but also more positively to create a new just moral social order.

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9.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Theory of 'Great Elect' (Mahasammat)
 - Implications
 - Psychological Foundations for Political Speculation
 - Nature of the *Great Elect*

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Theories of Kingship
 - Traces of Republican States
 - Notion and Symbols of Sovereignty
 - Seven Symbols of Sovereignty
 - Ten Royal Virtues (*dasa-rājadhamma*)
 - Elements of Regalia
 - Buddhist Ideas on the Constituents of the State
 - Objectives of State
 - Possibility of Abuse of Power by the State

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - *Dhamma* and State
 - The *ānā* and Dhamma
 - The *Ānā* and *Attha*
 - State as Ethical Instrument of the Dhamma
 - The Idea of *Cakkavatti*
 - Normative Kingship and creation of just social order
 - Absence of State Religion

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Equation of Buddha with unique powers
 - Traces of ritualism in Buddhist thought
 - Human greed and dishonesty in the roots of origin of kingship
 - Absence of constitutional checks and safeguards against the arbitrary exercise of power
 - Control of *Dhamma* over state

UNIT 10 ZIA-UL-BARANI: ROYAL AUTHORITY AND JUST RULE*

Structure

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Early life and Influence
- 10.3 Major Works
- 10.4 Core Political Ideas
 - 10.4.1 The Advocacy and Defence of Historiography as a Field of Knowledge
 - 10.4.2 The idea of Political Expediency and Realism
 - 10.4.3 Zawabit/State Laws: The Ideal Polity
- 10.5 Theory of Kingship
 - 10.5.1 The Ideal Ruler
 - 10.5.1.1 Five Qualities of the Sultan
 - 10.5.2 Idea of Justice and Just Rule
 - 10.5.2.1 Appointment of Judges
 - 10.5.2.2 Justice for Hindus and Muslims
 - 10.5.2.3 Remission of Taxes
 - 10.5.2.4 Favouring the Elites
- 10.6 Nobility
- 10.7 Bureaucracy
- 10.8 Army
- 10.9 Criticism
- 10.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.11 References
- 10.12 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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10.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is to familiarise you with the political ideas of Zia-Ul-Barani, a medieval Indian historian and philosopher who was the most important political thinker of the Delhi Sultanate. After studying this unit, you should be able to understand:

- Context of Zia-Ul-Barani's life and times
- Early influences on his philosophical thought
- Important characteristics of his political thought like political expediency,
- His historiography
- His ideas on theory of Kingship, Laws and Just rule
- His ideas on Bureaucracy and Army

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Zia-Ul-Barani (1283–1359) was the most important political thinker of the Delhi Sultanate, particularly, during the reigns of Alauddin Khalji, Muhammad bin Tughlaq and Firoz Shah Tughlaq. The attention given to Baranī is, in part, also due to the fact that he chronicled the reigns of eight sultans of Delhi, beginning with *Ghiyās al-Dīn Balban* (1266–87) and ending with *Fīrūz Shāh* (1351–88). In addition, he was an influential courtier under Muhammad bin Tughluq (1324–51), the ruler he served as an emissary and as a court advisor for 17 years.

His ideas have been considered significant in understanding medieval polity and other strands of thinking that existed in that period of history. He represented and championed the idea of *political expediency* in Islamic history which he conveyed to the ruler by way of his *nasihats* (advices). He has often been criticized as a fundamentalist and a bigot for his emphasis on following the *Shariat* (laws of the Quran and the Prophet's tradition) (Advice II) and his views on the Hindus (Advice XI.2), as compared to relatively liberal thinkers like Abul Fazl. This itself is an irony because in the earlier days he was mocked upon by the Ulemas and others for not following the Quranic principles and for calling himself an Indian rather than a Turk. However, later in life, when he adopted a politically hard line for governance, he was dismissed from the court at the age of 68 (1351 AD) and lived in penury on the outskirts of Delhi. For all these things together, Barani remains to be an enigmatic and an important political thinker of Medieval India.

10.2 EARLY LIFE AND INFLUENCE

Early Life: Barani was extensively educated. He was conversant with both Arabic & Persian and was trained in Muslim theology. He had studied history comprehensively. He was close to the mystic saint *Nizamuddin Auliya* and to *Amir Khusrau*. Later, he spent 17 years with Muhammad Bin Tughlaq with whom he learnt the art of governance and statecraft, particularly how monarchy functions. Hence, his political theory is basically a reflection of what he saw

firsthand from his proximity to the political power and that is why he was in such good know of how the internal contradictions exist in issues of governance.

Zia ul Barani
Royal Authority
and Just Rule

10.3 MAJOR WORKS

1. *Fatawa-i-Jahandari (Edicts of World Rule)*, written in 1357, written as *nasihat* (advices) for the Muslim kings, is a classic work on statecraft which can be compared with Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and Machiavelli's *Prince*. In *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*, he advised the Sultans and the Kings, through the mouth of *Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna*, his ideal ruler, as to how an effective system of government could be established by implementing the Islamic Shari'ah. This work acts as a mirror for the ruler. Through fictitious character and their discussions, it is explained to a ruler how to best resolve problems. Another interesting feature of Barani's writing style is that he is speaking through a number of characters, but the ideas conveyed by these characters are very much the ideas of Barani himself.

This work is mainly an opinion on government. It has neither a preface nor an epilogue and no name of any sultan is mentioned. Some historians like *Md Habib* have opined that it was composed after *Tareekh –e Firozshahi*.

2. *Tarikh-i-Feroze Shahi* -is a dependable source of history from the later times of *Ghiasuddin Balban* to the early years of *Feroze Shah Tughluq* to whom the book is dedicated. It was meant to please *Firoz Shah Tughlaq* and regain his lost royal patronage. But it wasn't simply meant to that end but also contained other important ideas regarding his political thinking. This way, it contains some sources of his political thought. Along with the historical accounts of the period, Barani discusses the Muslim political problems including implementation of Islamic laws in the newly established Muslim State in India.

Nasihat(Advice) – This concept is very significant to understanding Barani's thought . His political ideas are mentioned in the form of advices that the ruler has to follow in order to maintain a more just and a more fair administration. Most of his writings are in the genre of advices.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Who was Zia-Ul-Barani and what was his ideology? Explain the dichotomy of his life.

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2. Who were the teachers and mentors of Zia-Ul-Barani in his early life and what did he learn from them?

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3. What were the major works of Zia-Ul-Barani? Explain.

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10.4 CORE POLITICAL IDEAS

10.4.1 The Advocacy and Defense of Historiography as a Field of Knowledge

Zia-Ul-Barani and his views on the knowledge of history are very important. Predating their contributions, Baranī's writings represent the only discussion on the subject in Islamic literature of South Asia from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. As with many historians of his time and earlier, Baranī shared a high view of history. In the introduction to the *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī*, Baranī writes, "I have not profited from the benefits of any system of knowledge or study, besides Qur'ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*), *ḥadīth*, law (*fiqh*), and the way of the shaykhs (*tarīqat-i mushā'ikh*), as I have in the knowledge of history (*'ilm-i tārīkh*)."

Baranī noted **seven** qualities of history that make it worthy of dedication. On the basis of these qualities, he builds his foundation for the knowledge of history. At that time it was popular amongst historians to list the qualities of history in a prefatory matter. What did Baranī consider the proper place for history among various fields of knowledge? In the introduction to the *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī*, Baranī expresses his views on **four** related historiographical topics that reveal his opinion on this question:

- (a) The relationship of the Qur'ān to Islamic historiography;
- (b) The role of Muḥammad as an historical exemplar of religious and worldly rule;
- (c) The knowledge of history (*'ilm-i tārīkh*) as a discipline of scholarship

(d) The history of Islamic historiography.

Barani attempted to answer the basic questions, that why should Muslims study history and for what purpose?

According to Baranī, these are the **seven** major qualities of studying history which are as following:

1. History was first and foremost beneficial because it is the means of profiting from what he refers to as the possessors of insight, principally the prophets and sultans whose deeds are recorded in the heavenly books (*kutub-i samāwī*). He argues that the ultimate example of the usefulness of history is found in the Qur'ān. He defines the Qur'ān as a historical text, which played a central role in the development of Islamic historiography.
2. Along with the knowledge of the Qur'ān, Baranī also sees the knowledge of history as sharing certain traits with the knowledge of *ḥadīth*. It has long been noted that the knowledge of *ḥadīth* played a major role in the development of historiography. Baranī argues that this relationship exists primarily on the level of method. He refers to the process by which *ḥadīth* scholars criticise or praise the narrators of the circumstances of transmission of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet, thus establishing their validity.
3. The third quality that Baranī lists is that the knowledge of history contributes to the abundance of reason, discernment, personal opinion and putting things in order. According to Baranī, through the knowledge of history one gains personal experience through the experience of others. By understanding the misfortunes of others, one develops vigilance.
4. For Baranī, history also plays an important advisory role for Muslim rulers. Baranī asserts that the fourth quality of history is that it provides hope to sultans and kings so that they are fortified against the accidents of time. He insists that the path of today's generation of leaders is lit by those who have gone before and who applied a remedy to the maladies of the government.
5. Related with the Fourth Quality is the next one. Fifth quality is that for those who know history and the record of the prophets and their encountering misfortune, and their escaping calamity, history becomes a source of acceptance (*riḏā*) and patience (*ṣabr*). He concludes this section saying that the believers in Islam do not lose heart in the face of misfortune
6. For the sixth benefit Baranī focuses more specifically on the instruction history provides for rulers and governance. In this way, history assumes an essential function as advice literature and is not merely a record of past

events. Historians were frequently employed within courts to supply advice to the ruling powers, as was the case with Baranī.

7. The final quality of history is that the knowledge of history is based on truth (*ṣidq*), a discussion that leads into religious polemics. Baranī conceives of history writing as a trust for which there are divine rewards and punishments. He claims that ‘whatever the historian writes falsely will, on the Day of Judgment, be the cause of his most severe punishment (*sakhtarīn ‘azāb*)’

10.4.2 The idea of Political Expediency and Realism

In order to do justice to Baranī’s thought it will be appropriate to contextualize his political thinking. As with anywhere else in the world, political thinking develops in response to the challenges that a particular society is grappling with, which as much applies to Barani. Delhi Sultanate symbolized a rule which was governed by a faith which was new to India. It was essentially an *urban centric* rule with hardly any reach in the country side. Although Islam had come to India in the 8th century in the coastal areas in South, but Islam becoming the *faith* of the *ruling* class, i.e. the hallmark of the Sultanate period, was a *new* development. It was the first time that the ruling nobility had a different faith from the ruled majority. The class composition of the ruling class was also in transition. Nobility was *not* hereditary. It was transferable, particularly, until the time of Firoz Shah Tughlaq. Therefore, it was a period of transition and turmoil. So, the political expediency and realism that Barani demonstrates in his work were the need of the hour of that time.

Historian *Muzaffar Alam* has opined that the peasant revolt of 1330 in the Doab led by the Hindu elites also symbolizes a turbulent moment in the Sultanate period. All these experiences must have gone into the mind of Barani when he was writing his political ideas. Therefore, how to secure the future of the state and how to make the foundation of the Sultanate regime more sturdy became the desideratum when he was talking about the ideal polity and a good sultan and hence, made political expediency the main aim of all his statecraft.

Hence, despite the reputation for being conservative and a bigot, Barani remains an enigmatic and a unique thinker. The *two* major thoughts that stand out in his thought are the idea of *justice* and the idea of *moderation*. But these ideas find their justification from the core idea of Political Expediency. Although he was against reason and science, unlike Abul Fazal, but it was political expediency which emerged as the hallmark of his political thinking. So much so that he shows a lot of flexibility in the religious teaching and related precepts. He advises the ruler to make adjustment and allows moderation for dealing with the challenges of those times. Because of this kind of realism that he demonstrates in his writings on statecraft they are compared with the *Arthshastra* of Kautilya because of his focus on realism and on political expediency.

10.4.3 Zawabit/ State Laws (Advice XIV): The Ideal Polity

Barani categorized laws into two kinds, the *Shariat* and the *Zawabit*. While the *Shariat* meant the teachings and practices of the Prophet and of the Caliphs, the *Zawabit* were the *state* laws formulated by the monarch in consultation with the nobility in the changed circumstances to cater to the new requirements which the *Shariat* was unable to fulfill. It was ideal for the king, nobility and the personnel of administration to follow the *Shariat*, both in personal domain and in public policies. The state laws, however, were also to be formulated in case of the inability to follow/apply the *Shariat*. But, he cautioned simultaneously that the lawmakers must take into account the practices of the past and contemporary socio-political conditions while formulating the laws. The *Zawabit*, he said, must be in the spirit of the *Shariat* and numerated four conditions (Advice XIV) for its formulation as guidelines, which are as follows:

- First, the *Zawabit* should not negate the *Shariat*;
- Secondly, it must increase the loyalty and hope among the nobles and common people towards the Sultan;
- Thirdly, its source and inspiration should be the *Shariat* and the pious Caliphs;
- Fourthly, if at all it had to negate the *Shariat* out of exigencies, it must follow charities and compensation in lieu of that negation.

Thus, what he envisaged in the *Zawabit* was an ideal law which could cater to the needs of the state without offending any section of the nobility in particular and the masses in general. The combination of both religious and state laws are another important dimension of Barani's thought. Unlike an orthodox fundamentalist, Barani goes for moderation. Therefore, his only test for adopting a particular law is the interest, security and stability of the state. Even if the ruler has to deviate from the Quranic laws, he must do 'if' it is done in protecting the interest of the state. In other words, we can say that for Barani- *Ends justifies Means*. If the end of strengthening the state is being ensured there is no harm in deviating from the religious laws. Interest of the state is paramount. Hence, it was stated in the preceding section that the hallmark of Barani's thought is in political expediency. In the section under the *Zawabit*, he advised the formulation of new laws where, in the changed circumstances, the *Shariat* was unable to serve the purpose of the state.

Laxity in not following the *Shariat*, both in personal and political domains was tolerable till it began to affect the stability of the state. Suppressing the rebellious elite, both Hindus and Muslims, banning education to the under-privileged and nondescript people including Muslims (Advice XI) 'welfare' of the subjects, etc. were all intended for consolidating the powers of the Muslim rulers. He knew that, philosophically, monarchy is anti-*Shariat* (Advice IX.2), yet he accepted it on the grounds of reality. This reveals his intentions of treating the *Shariat* as a means for political ends.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. According to Barani why should Muslims study history and for what purpose?

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2. How did Barani justify and usher in the idea of Political Expediency?

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3. What are Zawabit and Shariat? What were the conditions that Barani put to formulate Zawabit in the light of Shariat and how should they be implemented?

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10.5 THEORY OF KINGSHIP

10.5.1 The Ideal Ruler

The advices related with this subject are Advice II , Advice XXIV, Advice X, Advice XXIV , all of which spring up from this fundamental understanding - Since the Islamic following was still restricted to a very narrow section of the

population, Barani felt it necessary to widen the Islamic base for political obligation towards the monarchy.

Barani made a distinction between the personal life of the Sultan and his political role (Advice II). In both aspects, however, he envisaged in him an ideal person—noble born, preferably belonging to the family of the monarch, having an innate sense of justice, wise enough to understand the deception and conspiracies of the wicked (Advice XXIV), understanding the importance of his time and dividing it judiciously between his personal needs and political requirement (Advice X) and following the path of the Shariat, which laid down that he was an agent of god on earth to do the ‘welfare’ of the people. The Sultan was expected to reflect supplication, helplessness, poverty and humility (Advice XXIV) to compensate for the existence of monarchy which was contradictory to the principles of Islam. As far as following the Shariat was concerned, Barani conceded that in the personal realm, the Sultan may choose to be lax but he opposed the idea of laxity in the political sphere as it might lead to disease in the administration, for the ideal polity and the political avatar of the Sultan were intertwined.

10.5.1.1 Five qualities to desist for the Sultan

The Sultan must desist from five mean qualities such as falsehood, changeability, deception, wrathfulness and injustice (Advice XXIII). Similarly, differentiation between the determination in the enterprises of the government and tyranny/despotism (Advice IV) was necessary to command faith, fear and prestige among his friends and foes. High resolve, lofty ideals, fair administration, distinctiveness from other monarchs, obligation over people, etc (Advice XV) were the other required characteristics to influence people.

As people were influenced by the character and actions of the monarch, it was necessary for him to maintain all the regalities associated with kingship. Counsellors, army and intelligence officers were indispensable parts of these royal functions. Their selection, gradation, etc. were obviously the duty of the Sultan and required careful attention.

It was the king’s responsibility to protect the old political families, to check their possible usurpation of power and to ensure they are not left to live in material deprivation (Advice XXII).

10.5.2 Idea of Justice, Royal Authority and Just Rule

Barani considers justice as the foundation of social organization and political order. For the same, he apprehended the ruler as the curator of **justice** and described **power and authority** as the two major components of efficient kingship. The justification for the royal authority of kings lies in their power and dignity, which enabled them to apply justice. The supremacy of the Sultan and the safety of his Sultanate, then, couldn’t have been secured without delivering justice to the subjects. ‘The real justification for the supremacy of the kings and of their power and dignity’, Barani had remarked, ‘is the need for enforcing justice’ (Advice V).

10.5.2.1 Appointment of Judges

Accordingly, what came next was the appointment and gradation of judges, with the king himself being at the apex. The functions delineated for them were ‘protection of money, property, women and children of the weak, the obedient, the helpless, the young, the submissive and the friendless’ (Advice V). Further, it was to ‘prevent the strong from having recourse to oppression in their dealings with people’ (Advice V) without which ‘there would be a complete community of women and property’ (Advice V), leading to anarchy in the ruling class. While delivering justice, however, the king should know the appropriate occasions for both forgiveness and punishment (Advice XII). Punishment to the rebellious, cruel, mischievous, etc. had to be combined with mercy and forgiveness for those who accepted their sins and were repentant (Advice XIII).

To dispense justice, the courts were divided into **civil** and **criminal** categories and they operated at central and provincial levels. The judges were to be appointed by the king, with himself at the apex of the judicial structure, and the fountain-head of justice and highest court of appeal.

10.5.2.2 Justice for Hindus (Zimmis) and Muslims

In all these deliberations on justice, one aspect was conspicuous by its absence, i.e., the deliverance of justice was to be according to the religious practices of the subjects, though Barani nowhere mentioned separate kinds of justice for Hindus and Muslims. Yet, it may be argued that when justice based on the Shariat was favoured by Barani, then justice based on religion was already implicit in it. Moreover, his proclamation for all-out war against *zimmis* made his intention clear. But, as observed earlier, the growing redundancy of the Shariat in the changed circumstances and the corresponding importance of *Zawabit*, emphasized by Barani himself (Advice XIV), explicitly nullified the existence of any Islamic religious justice as state policy of the Sultanate. Moreover, Barani’s recognition that Sultans in India behaved moderately towards the *zimmis* (Advice XI.3) recognizes the existence of customary justice during the Sultanate period.

Although Barani emphasized following the Shariat wherever possible, the very possibility of its operation was, **first**, marginalized by the changing composition of the rulers and military-bureaucratic, quasi-judicial personnel of the administration and greater incorporation of Hindus and Indianized Turks into it. The economic basis of the Sultanate necessitating revenue collection and leading to compromises with the local aristocracy was the **second** factor that annulled the operation of the Shariat. The **third** factor was the vast population of Hindus inhabiting the rural areas surrounding the miniscule population of the Muslims living within the restricted urban-administrative centres who could not have been antagonized at the cost of jeopardizing the security of the state.

Therefore, it is found that adoption of a liberal attitude on the part of the Sultanate ruling class towards the Hindus for which Barani complained, but also simultaneously emphasized the formulation of the *Zawabit*. Barani’s theory of

justice, thus, essentially emanated from the perspective of the security of the state.

10.5.2.3 Remission of Taxes

Another aspect related with justice and consequently with the security of the state was remission of taxes. At least during calamities, Barani suggested, the king should remit or reduce taxes and extend monetary help from the treasury till the time it was possible and necessary. All these suggested measures did not emanate from any philanthropic reasoning-rather these were the articles of advice of a realist concerned with the security of the state.

10.5.2.4 Favouring the Elite

Barani's conception of justice was strongly tilted in favour of the rich and powerful. His hatred against the *rustic* and underprivileged and bias in favour of the noble-born clarifies the basis of his justice. Infact, the very paradigm of the *Fatawa* was based on the consolidation and expansion of the elite in the Sultanate; and like any other element of feudal society to be used as an instrument for the perpetuation of monarchy, justice was meant to be a facade for maintaining the serenity of the Sultanate.

Concluding: Three main points may be summarized from the above discussion on Barani's ideas and purpose of Justice. Firstly, using religion he attempted to consolidate the Muslim population and various factions of the ruling class and tried to link the two; secondly, through the *Zawabit* he tried to solve the grievances of the *Zimmis*, and other social problems which remained unsolved by the Shariat; and finally, he used 'justice' as an instrument to expand the basis of political obligation of the subjects towards the state.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Who is the ideal ruler according to Barani?

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2. Explain the five qualities that the Sultan needs to avoid and those that he needs to have.

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3. What is the idea of Justice and Just rule that Barani advocated?

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10.6 NOBILITY

The nobility was the second component of the monarchy. The nobles were the chosen individuals whom the Sultan assigned ‘the right to levy the revenue in particular territories’ which was known as *iqta*. It was the basic unit of landed property whose holders formed the main class of landed proprietors. The *iqtas* were frequently transferred from one person to another, which made them non-hereditary.

Since the basic function of the Sultanate was revenue collection, for which the entire paraphernalia of administration existed, and which could not have been performed by the king alone, a set of people existed to collect the revenue and advice or formulate administrative policies for it. The selection of such people by the Sultan, therefore, was of a crucial nature for which Barani set certain guidelines, and advised the king to be careful. The criteria were two (Advice XIX). :

1. the people to be selected should be noble-born with loyalty, both personal and political, towards the Sultan;
2. they must possess the quality of sound political judgement and render advice to the monarch while taking into account the prospects and contradictions of the impact of the policies to be undertaken

While the first was explicit, he prescribed **nine** conditions (Advice III) for the second to test the political quality of the counselors. From fear of god, knowledge of history, lack of greed to practical knowledge of state affairs, all must be present in the advisers. Further, he prescribed eleven criteria (Advice III) to judge a policy, which the monarchy planned to undertake, in order to formulate the right one. Finally, he suggested the grading of nobility as per their birth and merit.

These advices, however, must be seen in the social context of the time in order to understand their import. In AD 1351, just six years before Barani penned down his advices, there was a severe political crisis created by the rebellion of a large section of the ruling class, and the sweeping changes in their composition. Then,

there was 'large-scale recruitment of foreigners, still greater recruitment from the lower strata of the Indian population and from the Hindus.

Thus, it was in such a social milieu that Barani expressed himself in favour of noble birth and personal loyalty, about the security of life and tenure of nobility, of their gradation, etc., to keep the 'upstarts' at the lower echelons of bureaucracy, to check them from the intricacies of the administration. The fear of takeover by the Hindus, who were recruited in considerably large numbers by Muhammad Tughlaq, might have been the other but equally important factor that led him to express his opinions strongly against the Hindus. As the nobility occupied one of the crucial positions in the state structure, Barani prescribed tough conditions for their selection.

10.7 BUREAUCRACY

The bureaucracy was another necessary component of the Sultanate whose basic function was to measure the land, fix and collect the taxes for its disbursement among its beneficiaries; and in its absence, the very existence of the ruling class would have become redundant and neither would have the army sustained itself. It operated at three levels, viz., centre, province and village. The *Diwan-i Wazarat* headed by a *wazir* (the head of revenue and finance, also known as the prime minister) and assisted by a *naib*, *Musharif-i-Mamalik*, *Mustawfi-i-Mamalik* and *dabirs*, was at the apex of the revenue department.

The three-tier structure of the revenue bureaucracy, which was highly centralized in spite of its vast spread in terms of territorial extent, played the same important role, along with the army, throughout the Sultanate period without much changes either in the percentage of revenue collection per cultivator or in checking the tax burden being passed on to the weaker elements by their superiors. To Barani all these were means of dispensing justice which has been already discussed.

10.8 ARMY

After the Mauryas, the Sultanate was the largest (in terms of territorial extent) and most powerful state (in terms of centralization of power) in India. Obviously, the administration played varied roles, from revenue collection to maintaining law and order, and from public works to dispensing justice. Out of the main pillars of the administration, the army was the preeminent one which was based on the Turkish-Mongol model. It was divided into four parts, viz., infantry (foot soldiers or *payaks*), cavalry (horsemen), war elephants and auxiliary, viz., boats, engineers, transporters, scouts, spies, etc. The cavalry was further divided into three wings. The rank and file such as *khan*, *malik*, *amir*, *sipahsalar* etc. (Advice VII) which were composed of Turks, Tartars, Rajputs and others were paid either in cash or were assigned the revenues of different villages as per their grades.

As the Sultanate ultimately rested on the power of the army, whose basic functions were the security and expansion of the state, Barani advised the king to take greater care in its efficiency, checking corruption and conspiracies within it and so on

The monarch also maintained personal troops called *qalb* for his safety and ultimate reliability in case of rebellion occurring from within the nobility. The army, apart from performing its above mentioned roles, acquired importance for another reason as well. It acted as a facilitator in the expansion of Islam since the ruling class of the Sultanate came as invaders and immigrants and it needed a large support base.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Who were the Nobles and what were their duties?

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2. What is the role and functions of Bureaucracy?

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3. How did Barani describe the composition and function of Army?

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10.9 CRITICISM

The major points of criticisms leveled against Barani are as follows:

He was misunderstood and some scholars labeled him a fundamentalist, an orthodox and a bigot for promoting Islam and discriminating against Hindus. Although not true, but this was a result of his often conflicting writings on the surface. Secondly, the charge of being fundamentalist also heightens in comparison to Abul Fazal who was definitely much more secular and reasonable in his arguments and world view. It is an irony that while Barani spent so many years at the service of the Sultan, he was left on the streets of Delhi and spent his life in penury during the old days

10.10 LET US SUM UP

Barani's eminence lies in his theory of history and its constant application in different aspects of society of his time resulting in his theory of statecraft which made him unique and enigmatic. In fact, it won't be wrong to say that he marshalled all his knowledge and experiences from the past and the events of his time to serve the interests of the Sultanate. The prominent elements of his theory were his belief in the hereditary status of the nobility, espousal of political expediency on the part of monarchy and nobility, and contempt for the downtrodden.

The second element was intended to serve the purpose of consolidation and expansion of the Sultanate and consequently of the ruling class. To this end all means, such as religion, despotism, benevolence, annihilation of the Hindus etc. were to be employed. He was not against the Hindus *per se* as it has been alleged, but against the Hindu elite from whom he feared a potential threat to the Sultanate.

Zawabit rather than the Shariat therefore finds more prominence in his theory. Moreover, Shariat was only the tool to be used for the benefit of the Sultanate; and for the same purpose he suggested judicious mixing of benevolence and despotism in order to enhance the power prestige and wealth of the Sultanate.

Justice likewise was intended to serve the interests of the state rather than to fulfill the politico-economic needs of the masses. It was meant to expand the social base of political obligation towards the monarchy. He consistently upheld the interests and values of the traditional Muslim (Turk) aristocracy who he thought were intrinsically superior to any other section of society. His contempt for lowborn was so strong that even those who moved into the realm of nobility were looked down upon. All the changes that he suggested, for formulating the *Zawabit*, which emanated from new necessities, was essentially geared to serve the overall interests of the Sultanate.

Thus, the entire theory of Barani had a definite interest. On the surface, his *Fatawa* or *Tarikh* may look like a bundle of contradictions, but beneath it lies the consistency of his interest—the protection, consolidation and expansion of the Sultanate, the methods applied to achieve these aims notwithstanding. Essentially a conservative aristocrat in his outlook, he yearned for stability.

However, as luck would have it, he was surpassed by the changing circumstances of his time, and sidelined by the class whom he desired to represent.

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10.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Medieval political thinker
 - Conservative and orthodox on the one hand and undermining Shariah on the other hand.
 - Misunderstood by the Sultan in latter part of his life
2. Your answer should highlight following points
 - The learning from his mentors and from the king he served
3. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Fatwa e jahandari
 - Tarikh e firozshahi
 - Nasihat

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - The major seven qualities of studying history as discussed by barani
 - Four related historiographical topics

2. Your answer should highlight following points
 - The idea of political expediency and realism
 - Context of Delhi Sultanate rule
3. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Shariat pertains to religion and Zawabit pertains to state
 - Their limitations in implementation
 - The larger need for such concepts

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- Distinction between personal and political life
- Role of shariat and its limitations
- Qualities to be avoided and qualities to be nurtured by the Ideal ruler
- Duties of the ideal ruler in maintaining Justice

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Hereditary nobility vs acquired nobility
 - Their duties
 - Criteria to become noble
2. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Role
 - Function
 - Composition
3. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Ranks
 - Order
 - Functions of army
 - King's army

UNIT 11 ABUL FAZAL: MONARCHICAL AUTHORITY AND POPULAR WELL BEING*

Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
 - 11.1.1 Early Influence
 - 11.1.2 Impact of his Father's struggles on his Intellectual Tradition
 - 11.1.3 Influence of Ibn Arabi
 - 11.1.4 Important works and Style
- 11.2 Association of Akbar and Abul Fazal
 - 11.2.1 Context of Mughal Inheritance and a Search for Unity
 - 11.2.2 Major Approaches to Governance
- 11.3 Abu Fazal's Methodology
- 11.4 Sovereignty and Social Contract
- 11.5 Secularism of *Din e- Ilahi*
 - 11.5.1 Decree of Mazhar
 - 11.5.2 Din-e-Ilahi
 - 11.5.3 Critique of Traditionalists
- 11.6 The Divine Origin of the Badshah/King: Divine Theory of Monarchical Authority
 - 11.6.1 Sovereignty in Badshahat
 - 11.6.2 Just and Unjust Ruler
 - 11.6.3 Supreme Authority of the Just Ruler
- 11.7 Divine Tolerance and Sulh-e-Kul
- 11.8 Akbar as an Ideal King and Spirit of Age
- 11.9 Division of Society: Comparison with Plato
- 11.10 Theory of Justice

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11.11 Abul Fazal's Views on Administration and popular well being: Reforms

11.11.1 Departure from Delhi Sultanate

11.11.2 Importance to Talent

11.11.3 Changes in Tax system

11.12 Criticism

11.13 Let us sum up

11.14 References

11.15 Answers to check your progress Exercises

11.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is to familiarise you with the political and administrative ideas of Abul Fazal, a medieval Indian historian and philosopher who served at the Court of Akbar. After studying this unit, you should be able to understand:

- Context of Abul Fazal's life and times
- Early influences on his philosophical thought
- Important characteristics of his political thought
- His methodology
- His ideas of peace, Secularism, Sovereignty, division of society, divine origin of king, rationality
- Administrative and political reforms in the times of Akbar
- Analyze some of his limitations and criticisms

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Sheikh Abu'L-Fa'ẓl (1551-1602) was a historian, officer, chief secretary, and confidant of the Mughal emperor Akbar. He was born on 14 January 1551 and was the second son of Shaikh Mobārak, a teacher and scholar who had migrated to Agra in 1543 from Nagaur, Rajasthan. Fazal was an eminent historian of Medieval India along with Barani.

Fazal occupies a place of distinction. This is mainly because of the predominance of intellectual elements in his writings, his unfailing appeal to reason against religious and cultural traditions, broader view of history and a new methodology which he sought to apply to his task. His interpretation of history was integrally linked to the political, social, economic and religious realities of that period and strove to address the plurality and diversity of Indian society at large that Akbar wished to rule in the best possible manner.

11.1.1 Early Influence

It is very important to understand the early influence on Fazal as those were the ideas that shaped his entire political discourse. While his elder brother Fayzi was already at poet at the Royal Mughal Court, Fazal didn't show that inclination in the beginning. He applied himself to a rigorous life of study, and by the age of fifteen he had read widely in Arabic, Greek philosophy, and Sufism. His

precociousness seems to have made him something of a social misfit, however, and by the time he was twenty, he had already embarked on a life of ascetic withdrawal. Then, how come he landed at the courts of Akbar? We turn to this question now.

11.1.2 Impact of his Father's struggles on his Intellectual

Tradition

Fazl was known to be against hardline Islam. This can be traced back to his personal experience as he saw his father being humiliated by the Mughal religious scholars or the *Olama*. The leading members of the Mughal '*olamā*' were mounting an intense campaign against Shaikh Mobārak (Fazal's father), because the latter had publicly defended a member of the Mahdawī sect whom the hardliners did not approve of. Abu'l-Fazl had exacerbated matters by publicly challenging the opinions of one of the leading '*olamā*' which made the atmosphere at court tense. Shaikh Mobārak, accused of being a Mahdawī and a Shi'a himself, was driven with his family from home to home seeking refuge. For a while, he lived in Delhi.

The events surrounding his father's persecution made a profound impression on Abul Fazal; he devoted a major part of his autobiography to describing them, and he dedicated his subsequent career to exposing what he considered the narrow-minded bigotry of the '*olamā*'. In 1574 Abul-Fazal made his first appearance in Akbar's court. He favorably impressed the emperor and soon thereafter entered court service where he remained for the next two and a half decades.

11.1.3 Influence of Ibn Arabi

It should be observed that the dominant influences which led to the formulation of the new views by Akbar and Abu'l Fazal came most significantly from Ibn Arabi.

As modern critics point out, Ibn Arabi's theory does not amount to simple monism, or pantheism. It focuses on a "transcendental" Unity. Once its reality is recognized, the differences seen in the sensory world are bound to lose their significance and become illusory. From this a worldview followed, which Abu'l Fazl describes while introducing Akbar's spiritual views in his *Ain-i Akbari*:

When world-ornamenting wisdom-giving God desires that the essence (gauhar) of humankind should come into existence, and from the diversity in the degree of (spiritual) capacity, the cloud of Duality (do-rangi) rises and fashions Religion (din) and World (dunya), every creature begins to have a distinct leader (kar-giya), and these become engaged in mutual denunciation. As lack of vision and unwisdom become the touchstone, the knowledge of (true) worth and acquisition of love become scarce. Otherwise, what is Religion, what is World? There is one heart-ensnaring Beauty which casts splendour through many thousands of veils. They have spread an expansive carpet, and it sheds forth many different colours.

This passage may be treated as the starting point of Abu'l Fazl's political thought. Both religion and the secular sphere ("world") are placed at *par*, and as equally *illusory*, being products of a false *Duality*. This immediately liberates temporal sovereignty from any dictates of theological doctrine. In plain words, it means that such a position erases the condition that religious leaders are superior to the king, because they interpret religion while the king is the master of worldly affairs. This idea is developed in the subsequent sections.

11.1.4 Important works and Style

His most famous and definitive work, the *Akbar Nama* and *Ain-i-Akbari*, were composed in the latter part of the sixteenth century. It marks a decisive and schematic *departure* from the predominant historiographic format of the time, as it does in several other aspects of the construction of an alternative world view. *Akbar Nama* and *Ain-i-Akbari* together constitute a single book. *Ain-e-Akbari* is the *third* part of *Akbar Nama*. The work was undertaken in 1595 and, after five revisions, completed in 1602.

The *Akbar Nama* opens with the praise of Allah, and then moves to Adam and traces Akbar's lineage back to fifty-three generations of his ancestors. What is important to note is that it ***dislocates the historiographic axis from the pivot of Islam and seeks to construct an alternative teleology of universal history*** in which Akbar is the *heir*, not of Muhammad and the caliphs, but of Adam himself, the first human being, and thus, the ruler of all.

Akbar Nama is divided into three parts as follows:

1. The *first* part of the *Akbar Nama*- contains an account of Akbar's ancestors, including that of his father Humayun.
2. The *second* part - gives the most complete account of Akbar's reign up to the 46th year, in a chronological order.
3. The Third part of *Akbar Nama* is *Ain-i-Akbari*- which is a unique compilation of the system of administration and control over the various departments of government in a great empire. It faithfully and minutely records, to the minutest detail, a wide array of facts illustrating its extent, resources, condition, population, industry and wealth as the abundant material supplied from official sources could furnish. It also contains an account of the religious and philosophical systems of the Hindus, as described in their ancient books, and of their social customs and practices.

Thus, Abul Fazl widened the *range* and *scope* of history as *no* medieval historian before him had done and his work is considered the most comprehensive account of the Mughal administration and state structure.

11.2 ASSOCIATION OF AKBAR AND ABUL FAZL

Akbar was looking for a philosophical and theoretical justification to consolidate power against the other power centers of society. He needed ideological support against the powerful vested interests he had inherited, in particular, the *Tūrānī*

nobility, the swollen class of *madad-e ma'āsh* grantees (those holding land in perpetuity) and the *Sunni 'olamā'*. Abu'l-Faḡal, with his background as a forceful debater, independent thinker, and opponent of the conservative '*olamā'*', was perfectly suited for this role. So the coming together of Akbar and Abul Faḡal was a mutually win-win situation for both.

11.2.1 Context of Mughal Inheritance and a Search for Unity

At the beginning of the Mughal period, India was divided into many smaller kingdoms, and this frequently led to a great deal of political instability. This ended with the victory of the Mongol ruler Babar over *Ibrahim Lodi*, the last ruler of the Delhi Sultanate. The Mughals eventually conquered much of India resulting in an integrated and vast Mughal Empire which had many new characteristics. These new structures gave rise to a novel integrated culture that had elements from both Hindu and Muslim thought, an idea that found a clear expression in the tradition of *Bhakti* and *Sufi* movements. It is noteworthy that Abul Faḡal was exposed to the Hindu and Sufi traditions too. The primary message was that *all* humans are *equal* and that, there is a basic *unity* and *equality* in *all* religions. However, some problems remained. The main problem was that there was still *no* recognized *law of succession* and in such matters, the survival of the fittest ruled. The strongest would emerge as the ruler. The other problem was that a *difference* existed between *theory* and *practice*. In theory, the Sultan was subject to the *Khalif* and the *Shariah*, but in practice the ruler tended to be more sovereign in his own person. At the same time the, Delhi Sultanate was marked by the intolerant approach towards the *non-Muslims* on whom Islamic *Shariah* laws were applied at the time of criminal proceedings and also symbolized in taxes like the *Jaziya*, which later was abolished by Akbar.

11.2.2 Major Approaches to Governance

Abu'l-Faḡal's major importance was as a theorist who developed an ideology *not* only for the Indian empire ruled by Akbar, but for Mughal *civilization* in the *broadest* sense. He boldly addressed the *difficulty* of *reconciling* the theory of Islam as a universal religion in which state and community are ideally *coterminous*, with the historical fact that Islam in India was the religion of a minority community ruling over a Hindu majority. To this end, *three* main approaches can be seen as prevalent during those times:

1. Barani- One approach to this dilemma had been presented by *Ẓīā'-al-dīn Baranī*. Ignoring the theory of the coterminous state and community, Baranī had *de-universalized* Islam into a *tribal* religion, viz., a religion of the *Turks* in India.
2. Firuz Toghlaq- Another approach, advanced by *Fīrūz Toḡloq* among others, was to shape the Indian reality to *fit* the Islamic theory by *converting* the subcontinent's indigenous population to Islam.
3. Abul-Faḡal's approach to the same issue was *twofold* and *revolutionary*.

- a. In the first place, he regarded all creeds as inherently possessing the same universal truth. Hence, propagating an *equality* among *all* religions.
- b. Separation of politics from religion: This he endeavored to do by elevating allegiance to Akbar above the constraints of any single religious community; in effect, creating a cult of loyalty around the personality of the emperor. These ideas have been looked upon in detail in the subsequent sections.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. What are the early influences on the thought of Abul Fazal that shaped his ideas later in Akbar-Nama?

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2. What were the problems before Mughal Empire and why were they searching for a model of unity to rule a country like India?

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11.3 ABUL FAZAL'S METHODOLOGY

Abul Fazal had a *rational* and *secular* approach to history which is the hallmark of his writings. He also applied a new methodology to collect facts and marshal them on the basis of critical investigation. He widened the scope of history by recording a mass of facts pertaining to political, social, economic and cultural life, and by incorporating chapters on administrative regulations, procedures and topographical accounts of various provinces. He worked hard for the collection of material, selected important facts after careful enquiry and investigation, and then presented them in a clear and systematic manner. He questioned the validity

of a source and accepted it only when it satisfied the principles of historical investigation formulated by him.

Creating an epistemology for the interpretation and study of history -He created a new idiom for understanding and interpreting history, widened its range and scope and laid down the principles of historical investigation. It may, therefore, be suggested that in Abul Fazl's writings we can discover a *philosophy of history*, i.e., a definite concept about the nature and purpose of history, principles for its interpretation, and the critical apparatus for the collection and selection of facts of history.

Originality and cross checking of sources through critical examination - Abul Fazl realized and recognized the importance of original sources and gave his utmost attention and care to their study. He did *not* depend on a *single* source or account in order to ascertain a fact, but obtained as many versions as he could. They were put to a critical examination before they were accepted. He states that he has formulated a set of questions which were put to the reporter of an event or fact. This procedure, he points out, is of great help to the historian in ascertaining the truth. His source material consisted of accounts of events written by eyewitnesses. Reports, memoranda, minutes prepared by the offices, imperial *Farmans*, and other records were carefully consulted.

11.4 SOVEREIGNTY AND SOCIAL CONTRACT

In the political field, Abul Fazl can be compared with *Barani* of Delhi Sultanate. While both of them were concerned with social stability, Abul Fazl's method of handling this concept was different. *Ain-i-Akbari* creates a theory of sovereignty promised on social contract and *not* based on Shariah. He drew a picture of society that existed before and then explained how sovereignty emerged. He emphasized that without a strong ruler there would be lawlessness and rebellion in the society and that will be harmful. In this, a clear parallel can be seen with *Thomas Hobbes* who gives a negative picture of the state of nature (pre –contact) and then, the emergence of a state after the social contract.

Social Contract: Abu'l Fazl appeals to a theory of social contract to justify the necessity of political authority. In a chapter entitled 'The Provision of Livelihood (Rawai-i Rozi)' he says:

Whereas abundant differences are embedded in the nature of humankind, and disturbance, internal and external, is of daily growth, and huge desires speed fast and anger is quick to break out, in this demon- land of unmanliness, [therefore] friendship is scarce and justice absolutely non-existent. In all circumstances, in such a place of tumult, relief is not possible except through the punitive power of a single man (qahri-i wahadat). That life-saving medicine cannot be provided except through the terror (shikuh) of just rulers. When a house or inhabited quarter cannot be administered without the fear or hope from a perspicuous head (peshwa), how is it possible for the disturbance of the world's nest to die down without that recipient of Divine Light (paziranda-i farr-i Jzidi) [the

righteous ruler] and how would the property, life, honour and religion of the world's people be protected?

**Abul Fazal:
Monarchical
Authority and
Popular Well
Being**

Abul Fazal, free from any sectarian, religious roots, located the basis of sovereignty in the needs of the social order. Here his reasoning first follows the pure dictates of reason (*`aql*), appealing to the tradition of the philosophers (*filasafa*) and the scientists (*hukama*)

According to Abul Fazal, sovereignty was in nature, a divine light (*farr-i-izadi*) and with this statement he, seems to dismiss as inadequate the traditional reference to the king as the shadow of God (*zill-I Ilahi*).

11.5 SECULARISM OF DIN-E-ILAHİ

In a pure modernist tradition that can be clearly seen in the West, Abul-Fazl also wanted to divorce religion from politics altogether. This is the basis of his secular ethos which was epitomized in the philosophy of Din-e-Ilahi.

11.5.1 Decree of Mazhar

Akbar was interested in establishing the authority of the *ruler* over all other elements of the state. In 1579, through a decree named *mazhar*, Akbar gained a great deal of authority to interpret law.

11.5.2 Din e-Ilahi

However, Akbar was not satisfied with this limited power. He wanted a wider concept of religion. He sought for a new justification of religious thoughts and Abul Fazal provided this to him. Abul Fazal told him the new meaning of sovereignty as a divine light. Later on, Akbar portrayed himself as an agent of god who worked on his behalf.

In the new approach, Fazal elevated allegiance to Akbar above the constraints of any single religious community, and in effect creating a cult of loyalty around the personality of the emperor. The cult of *tawhīd-e elāhī* or *dīn-e elāhī* seems to have been modeled primarily on the Sufi *pīr-morīd* relationship in which the disciple pledges absolute obedience and devotion to his master. It was Abu'l-Fazl's intention to endow the office of emperor with an ideology that would replace the Sunni *ṣarī'a* as the sole principle by which the state was run.

11.5.3 Critique of Traditionalists

Abul Fazal criticizes that the good effort of some "recluses" (*tajarrud - gazinan*) to appear as "breakers of old customs" (*khariq-i 'adat*), and remedy the troubled state of affairs was unsuccessful because of lack of support from "exalted Sultans." This is obviously a dig on prophets trying to be sovereigns on the basis of their creeds, especially keeping in mind the Islamic experience. He was very critical of such traditionalists and found them an impediment to progress and stability of the state.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Elaborate the methodology of Abul Fazal.

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2. Elaborate the notion of Sovereignty and Social Contract in Abul Fazal's thought.

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3. Why is Din e Ilahi a secular Philosophy?

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11.6 THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE BADSHAH/ KING: DIVINE THEORY OF MONARCHICAL AUTHORITY

According to Abul Fazl, the term *Padshahat* (*Badshahat*) meant 'an established owner' where *Pad* stands for stability and *shah* stands for owner. *Padshah* therefore, means powerful, established owner who cannot be eliminated by anyone. The *Badshah* had a superior place in the Mughal Empire. He was the

ultimate authority on all social, economic, political and judicial powers. This theory of *Badshahat* was a combination of Mongol, Turkish, Iranian, Islamic and Indian political traditions. According to Abul Fazl, '*Badshahat* is the light derived from God which has been sent by God himself. God throws his kindness on *Badshah*; who works as the agent of god'..

11.6.1 Sovereignty in Badshahat

The king established his sovereignty by considering himself an agent of god and used his absolute powers according to the rule of controller, guide and state. Abul Fazl considered *Badshah* as the father of his people so it was the duty of people to respect him and obey his orders. But if the *Badshah* discriminated on the basis of caste, religion and class, then he could not be considered a good king. He differentiated between the Just and the Unjust Ruler

11.6.2 Just and Unjust Ruler

While the rule of the king is legitimate in the divine light, but it does not mean that it absolves the ruler from his duties. He goes on to make an important distinction between the ***just and the unjust ruler***. It is only "**a just ruler (kar-giya)**" who is able "to convert, like a salt- bed, the impure into pure, the bad into good. The just ruler was characterized by ***tolerance , respect for reason and a fatherly love*** to all the subjects regardless of their religion or creed.

11.6.3 Supreme Authority of the Just Ruler

During the Delhi Sultanate, the king was the final authority in governance, administration, agriculture, education and in other fields, but he had *no* say if they were related to *religious* matters. But when Akbar acquired kingship, he made himself the final authority even in religious disputes vis-à-vis the *Imam-e-Adil* because he followed the order of God and he could not be wrong. Therefore people must follow his order. It is clear that Akbar was the ideal king for Abul Fazl and that's why he looked at Akbar as a 'complete man who could never be wrong'.

11.7 DIVINE TOLERANCE AND SULH-E-KUL

Sulh-e-kul - known as universal peace pervades all of Abu'l-Fazl's political and religious theory. It was in the spirit of universal peace, for example, that Akbar's government integrated diverse cultural groups into a stable administrative and military system. Insofar as the *same* principle has provided an *antecedent* for the *secular* ideology of *independent* India, it remains Abu'l-Fazl's most far-reaching legacy.

Divine Tolerance: The agent of God could not practice discrimination among the various faiths present in society. A doctrine for justifying the tolerant religious policy was now the need of the hour. Sovereignty was not restricted to any particular faith. It became overarching. They believed all religions were, in essence, the same but only the paths varied. Abul Fazl believed that in a poly-religious country like India, the theory of monarchical sovereignty was more

relevant. Here, sovereignty was not to be related with any particular religion as the monarch was above all the religions. He promoted the good values of different religions and thus, assembled different faiths for maintaining peace everywhere. He had to sustain those qualities by adopting an appropriate religious status.

After evaluating Abul Fazl, we can conclude that a sovereign must have the quality of tolerance for the existing beliefs and he should not reject the traditional ways of his people which were necessary and complementary. Abul Fazl justified the views of Akbar by promoting him as having a rationalist approach to social reforms. Fazl argued that he did so, as he wanted to construct a 'Hindustan' that could stand out in the world with greater confidence

11.8 AKBAR AS AN IDEAL KING AND SPIRIT OF AGE

Abul Fazl mentioned in *Akbar Nama* that Akbar always worked wisely for the welfare of his people. He had tolerance, broad mindedness and a strong sense of justice. He provided stability to the state and gave good governance to ensure economic prosperity, peace and safety of his people. He provided religious freedom to all. His political views were clear and were intended for the expansion of the state boundaries.

According to some scholars, Abul Fazl envisions the sovereign essentially as *paterfamilias* (father figure) , and bestows absolute power to them. Everything that the ruler does, all gifts Mansabs or rewards bestowed by him upon his nobles, princes or subjects are favours; nothing is gained by anyone as a matter of right. On the other hand, Abul Fazl's binds the ruler with bestowing paternal care to his subjects. The running thread in Abul Fazl's several discussions of kingship is the composition of a paternal love towards his subjects, the priceless jewel of justice and fair play, and observance of absolute peace, *Sulh-i-Kul*, without discrimination.

Spirit of Age and use of Reason: Other conditions may vary with the context, but an Ideal King is required to understand and look through the need of the hour. The true King must understand the 'spirit of the age' and exercise reason and favor talent instead of *primordial* identities like religion. To understand the Spirit of the age (need of the hour) and shape his conduct accordingly was the positive aim of the Ideal King.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. What is the Divine origin of Badshahat? Differentiate between Just and Unjust ruler.

2. What do you understand by Sulh-e-kul?

3. What are the characteristics of an Ideal king?

11.9 DIVISION OF SOCIETY: COMPARISON WITH PLATO

Just as Plato conceived of a society based upon the principle of division of functions, Abul Fazal too arrived at a similar order. Plato mentions three classes of (i) Guardian or warriors, (ii) The rulers or the official class, (iii) The agriculturists, traders and industrial workers. Fazal divides his society in 4 classes – (i) The warriors, (ii) The learned men, (iii) Husbandmen and laborers, (iv) Artificers and merchants. The last two are subdivisions of Plato's third class. And the first two are identical. Further, Abul Fazal further compares his four classes to the *four elements* of Fire, Air, Water and Earth, and remarks : "As the grand political body maintains its equilibrium by the above four ranks of men, of men, so does royalty receive its final tint from a similar fourfold division" : viz . (a) the Nobles of the State; (b) Assistants of Victory; (c) Companions of the King; and (d) Servants. Just as the welfare of the whole world depends upon the successful working of the above mentioned four classes, as settled by kings, so does the body politic depend upon the proper formation of the latter four divisions. It is, therefore, obligatory for a King to put each of these in its proper place, and, by

uniting personal ability with a due respect for others, to cause the world to flourish.

11.10 THEORY OF JUSTICE

It was also the duty of the king to provide justice to his people and always punish the wrongdoers and ensure that justice helped the innocent people. According to him, a king should be kind and harmonious while dispensing justice and treat his people as his children and himself as their father. He should keep it in his mind that he was sent by God on earth to ensure peace and justice for all. He is a medium for their welfare. He should always remain indifferent and take care that nobody was hurt by him. Abul Fazl's basic premise was that the ruler should not depend on any religious person. His moral level should be high and should know the moral and spiritual qualities. His ideal conception of justice cannot be reached without the use of reason

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. How has Abul Fazal divided society? How do you compare this division with Plato's division of society?

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2. What do you understand by Abul Fazal's theory of Justice?

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11.11 ABUL FAZL'S VIEWS ON ADMINISTRATION AND POPULAR WELL BEING: REFORMS

Humayun did not have the time to revise the old administration. It was Akbar who revised it and gave it a structure of government and administration based on

his knowledge of the Delhi Sultanate. He did not make any changes in administration at the district and sub-district levels. His land revenue system was almost the same.

An important question arises here as to what was different or new that made the Mughal Empire stronger than the Delhi Sultanate? What were those new policies by which Akbar could govern such a large, stable, long-lasting political and administrative structure? As we know a strong and well planned administrative structure is a sound link of great governance. It is also necessary for welfare and peace of the state that people should not fear an enemy's attack.

11.11.1 Departure from Delhi Sultanate

In reality, Mughal polity was not a complete continuation of the Delhi Sultanate. He changed the designation of the officials. His important contribution was the development of a provincial administration, patterned on the central system of government. Detailed rules and regulations were made for better control. In his administrative views Abul Fazl gave supreme place to advocates among all the officers. According to him, advocates should have those qualities which could solve both private and social problems of the king.

As we see in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, we can find the same concept of state being divided into many levels with many officers at each level in the *Ain-i-Akbari*. Akbar divided his empire into *Subas*, *Sarkars* and *Mahalls*. He appointed a chain of officers at various levels who were controlled by ministers at the centre. In this system, the religion of the officers could not interfere in their administrative work, so this system was also followed by his successors. Akbar wanted a sovereign rule so he gave importance to it. He systematized and centralized his administration.

The Mughal state had a vast centralized patrimonial system. In this system, they bestowed various kinds of ranks and hierarchies borrowed from the *Mansabdari* system of Persia (In Persian (*Mansab* means rank)

This system gave rise to a community with various grades between the people and the ruler and a hierarchical system came into existence. Summing up, in medieval times, Indian society had a complicated system of rank and status on the basis of military power. The military power became a status symbol and the whole framework was designed around it. The Mughals also followed this pattern for peace in their kingdom and they did not try to change it.

11.11.2 Importance to Talent

Abul Fazl had a strong belief in hierarchy, but he was more concerned about the need of talent for the kingdom. He did not bother about the social background of a talented person. It is for this reason that he stated that Akbar was moved by the spirit of the age, for he knew the values of talent, honoured people of various classes with appointments in the rank of army and raised them from the position of a common soldier to the dignity of a grandee.

11.11.3 Changes in Tax system

Abul Fazl narrates that Akbar during his reign started a system of collecting tax on an individual basis. This system allowed the farmer to pay his tax based on his individual harvest. He only had to pay the tax on whatever produce he got. This system was different from the previous one found in the Mughal Empire, where a whole village had to pay the tax collectively. In this system, every farmer had to pay the tax whether he had a good produce or not because everyone had to share the tax equally. So, when Akbar became the ruler, he changed this system, taking a step to reform the condition of farmers.

Major Political Reforms: Akbar Abolished the Jaziya (paid by non –muslims) and stopped collecting the pilgrimage tax from non –muslims. Major political reforms included regulation of Prices and wages, control of Liquor, fixing of minimum wages , prohibition of forced conversion, prohibition of slaughter of cows, prohibition of enforced Sati,

11.12 CRITICISM

Abul Fazal is usually criticized for the following:

Criticized for not being a true Muslim and for being a kafir. Fazl did *not* think that Islam was superior to all religions while Barani and other thinkers regarded it as supreme. This was the reason that many people called Abul Fazl a rebel, a Kafir, Hindu or Agnipujak etc. He was too skeptical of tradition and those hostile to him record that he had brusquely brushed aside Ghazali's criticisms of the scientists with the short remark that Ghazali "had spoken nonsense. His cosmopolitan philosophy and Din e ilahi could only be partially successful in India. Policies like *Sulh-kul* and *Din-i-Ilahi* gave strength to his governance and administration, but these new experiments were not as successful as Akbar hoped.

Inconsistency in the theory of social contract and in his theory of divine origin of sovereignty since the two theories are not logically compatible with each other. Indeed, he may be said to have tried to combine the two, but certain logical inconsistencies remained.

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Discuss the administrative and political reforms done by Akbar according to Abul Fazal's philosophy.

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2. What are the major points of criticism for Abul Fazal?

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11.13 LET US SUM UP

Abul Fazl was Akbar's trusted courtier however; he had a genuine adulation and reverence for Akbar. His firm belief in religious tolerance owed its origin to his formative years, when he and his family experienced the worst type of persecution at the hands of the orthodox Ulama. This proved to be the basis of a lasting friendship with Akbar. His religious thoughts were based on secularism which considered all religions equal and believed in religious fraternity and *Sulh-i-Kul* (peace everywhere). He was considered an intellectual, a thinker who believed in the goodness of all religions. He liked rationality and innovations in every field. He did not like orthodox, traditional and customary values. He said if traditions were sufficient for all the times, then why the Prophet brought new thoughts. He argued that change in law and religion must be initiated with the passage of time. His modernity and religious rationality were reflected in the thoughts of Akbar who also declined to be a traditionalist himself and started innovative policies and customs in his reign.

Moreover, few could doubt that Akbar possessed the highest and noblest qualities of head and heart. No wonder that Abul Fazl found in Akbar the qualities of a king, philosopher and hero. Abul Fazl's official position, as well as his personal views on religion and politics, required that he should defend, justify and extol Akbar and his activities.

Yet, he was undoubtedly one of the greatest thinkers and scholars that India has produced. The essential bedrock of rationality and secularism in Abul Fazl's thought commands respect, even admiration. Certainly no one after him in India debated the issues of sovereignty at the same high level of reason and abstraction

11.14 REFERENCES

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11.15 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Influence of father’s struggles
 - Influence of Ibn Arabi
 - Influence of Sufism
2. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Akbar’s need to consolidate the power of the king
 - Fazal fitting the requirement of Akbar as he was a critic of traditionalists
 - Problem with other approaches to governance during those times
 - Fazal’s approach of secularism and unity amidst diversity

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Creation of a philosophy of studying history
 - Use of sources
 - Cross checking of sources
 - Importance of primary sources
 - Role of observation
 - Originality of Sources
 - Validity of sources
2. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Social contract of Fazal
 - Basis of Sovereignty being a social need
3. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Decree of Mazhar
 - Need for expansion of that thought leading to Din e Ilahi
 - Critique of Traditionalists

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Divine Origin of Badshahat
 - Sovereignty in Badshahat
 - Just and Unjust Ruler
 - Supreme authority of Just Rule
2. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Sulh e kul
 - Importance of Tolerance

3. Your answer should highlight following points

- Akbar as an Ideal King
- Characteristics of an Ideal King
- Spirit of Age

**Abul Fazal:
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Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1. Your answer should highlight following points

- Division of society and its need
- Comparison with Plato

2. Your answer should highlight following points

- Theory of Justice, impartiality, use of reason

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

1. Your answer should highlight following points

- Administrative reforms
- Importance to talent
- Tax system changes

2. Your answer should highlight following points

- Limitations
- Critique by Islamists
- Theoretical inconsistency
- Limited impact

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UNIT 12 AKKA MAHADEVI: CRITIQUE OF SOCIAL ORDER*

Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
 - 12.1.1 Birth and Early Age
 - 12.1.2 Guru in the life of Akka
- 12.2 Spiritual Life: Mahadevi as a Saint
 - 12.2.1 Marriage and Renunciation
 - 12.2.2 Mahadevi the Saint and entry in Anubhava Mantapa
 - 12.2.3 Arguments at Anubhava Mantapa
 - 12.2.4 Journey to Sri Sailam
- 12.3 Major Writings: Vachans
- 12.4 Intellectual Inspiration from the Lingayat tradition and Critique of the Social Order-1
 - 12.4.1 Impact of the Lingayat Tradition
 - 12.4.2 Social Value of the Vachana tradition
 - 12.4.3 Resistance to Caste and Religious Oppression
 - 12.4.4 Sharana Movement and Anubhava Mantapa as an argumentative space
 - 12.4.5 Symbol of Ishtalinga as a resistance to Brahmanical oppression
 - 12.4.5 1Pillars of Lingayatism:
- 12.5 Intellectual Inspiration from Lingayat tradition and Critique of Social Order –2 Impact on Mahadevi’s Vachanas.
 - 12.5.1 Vachanas of the women saints as a form of social resistance
 - 12.5.2 Breakdown of Caste Hierarchies
 - 12.5.3 Smashing of Patriarchy
 - 12.5.4 Critique of Monarchy

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- 12.5.5 Nudity and defiance of social order
- 12.6 Feminist Epistemology
- 12.7 Criticism
- 12.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.9 References
- 12.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

12.0 OBJECTIVES

The unit will tell you about the life and ideas of Akka Mahadevi, who was an early female poet of the Kannada Literature and an eminent personality in the *Lingayat* religion of 12th century India. This unit will describe and understand how and why she ostracized the social constraints on women. After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the life of Akka Mahadevi and why she denounced the oppressive social constructs
- Characteristics of the Lingayat tradition
- Critique of social order and resistance to patriarchy
- Akka as a Feminist icon
- Feminist Epistemology of Akka
- Some Criticism of hers and of the Lingayat Tradition

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Akka Mahadevi was born in Udutadi, near Shivamoga in the Indian state of Karnataka around 1130. According to some scholars, she was born to a couple named Nirmalshetti and Sumati, who were both the devotees of Para Shiva.

She was a woman saint from Medieval India who claimed like many other 'enlightened' people of her time and age (in India) that differences like those of sex/gender, good fortune, wealth or caste (jaati) didn't matter in the quest for the 'Knowledge of ultimate reality'. She 'wrote' vachanas (sayings), free verses or prose-poems that talk of her quest for the 'Knowledge of ultimate reality' and the path to it. Her vachanas have been interpreted as important contributions to the Indian feminist and social epistemological tradition.

12.1.1 Early Age

Akkamahadevi was born as Mahadevi in Uduthadi to parents who seem to have already been ardent devotees of Shiva. Akka or sister was later added to depict the respect and sense of endearment with which the sharanas held her. Accounts suggest that a Guru, who blessed her with the Istalinga, introduced her to the worship of Shiva at a very young age. Thus, shunning the material world and its worldly men, she adopted her chosen god, *Chennamallikarjuna*, as her husband.

12.1.2 “Guru” in the life of Akka

At the age of seven or eight, Akka Mahadevi was initiated by her guru, Sri Gurulingadeva, and given the Ishtalinga. Some scholars are of the opinion that the name Gurulingadeva is symbolic and the Lord Himself was her Guru. However, in many of her vachanas Akka Mahadevi pays high tribute to her Guru, emphasizing his role in her spiritual progress.

Akka Mahadevi’s inherent spiritual temperament was nurtured with the blessings of her Guru. Although *Deeksha* is considered to be the spiritual birth of an individual, in the case of an evolved spiritual aspirant like Akka Mahadevi, it can be said that it was merely an initiation of the completion of her spiritual journey. The spiritual maturity of an ordinary devotee and a devotee of Akka Mahadevi’s stature can be likened to the lighting of a lamp. While a lamp lit with ordinary wicks takes time to catch fire, a lamp lit with camphor catches fire immediately.

For a disciple, the spirit of surrender to the Guru is of utmost significance in one’s spiritual progress. This noble spirit of surrender is expressed externally by worshipping the Guru’s feet in Lingayatism and Sanatan Dharma. This was visible in Akka’s adulation for her guru as well.

12.2 SPIRITUAL LIFE: MAHADEVI AS A SAINT

12.2.1 Marriage and Renunciation

Regarding marriage, there are disagreements among her numerous hagiographers. Some scholars, including *Harihara*, hold the opinion that she caught the attention of the local King Kaushika and was forced into a marriage with him, but on the condition that he would not disrupt her religious practice. Other scholars insist that she never married anyone except her divine lord Chennamallikarjuna. As per popular legend, the marriage did take place but as A.K. Ramanujan put it, the rivalry between the divine lover and the human love seems to have come in the way.

Akkamahadevi was unable to reciprocate Kaushika’s worldly desire for her as she considered herself betrothed to Lord Chennamallikarjuna. Kaushika’s advances towards her seem to have come in the way of her worship and hence, she is said to have walked out of the marriage. Many oral retellings and legends suggest that she walked out naked, renouncing all worldly desires, including her clothes, while others suggest that her hair grew out suddenly to protect her from the advances of Kaushika. Thus, began her journey as an ascetic-wanderer in pursuit of her divine lover Chennamallikarjuna.

On analysis of this incident in Akka Mahadevi’s life one gets an insight into the shackles of societal norms that bind individuals. Although her parents were Lingayats and were aware of the Linga pati, sarana sati (the Lord as the husband and the devotee as the wife concept), they found it difficult to accept that their daughter was going to practise it literally.

12.2.2 Mahadevi the Saint and entry in *Anubhava Mantapa*

Upon walking out from her marriage, she reached Kalyana and spent an important period at the *Anubhava Mantapa*, a stage for open discussion on different issues including reasoning and social change. There Mahadevi expressed her views boldly. The interactions that took place there are compiled in the 15th century anthology of vachanas called *Sunya Sampadane*. She was very open in her criticism of society and patriarchy and was extremely bold in stating her views through her vachanas. Her conviction earned her the honorific title, 'Akka', signifying 'elder sister'. The other notable saints of those times are Basavanna, Chenna Basavanna, Prabhudeva and Madivalayya, in whose company and argumentation, she accomplished development.

12.2.3 Arguments at *Anubhava Mantapa*

In the text of *Sunya Sumpadane* which gives a poetic account of the spiritual deliberations held in the *Anubhava Mantapa* by the Sharanas (saints of the Lingayat Tradition), provides a moving description of how Akka Mahadevi was put to an acid test by the Sharanas (poets of the Lingayat tradition) before accepting her into their fold.

Her exchange with *Allama Prabhu* is deeply insightful, not merely regarding her spiritual status, but also regarding her absolute surrender to her beloved, Chennamallikarjuna. Her entry into the *anubhava mantapa* is preceded by a series of questions by Allama Prabhu.

Akkamahadevi's response to these questions establishes her detachment from the world of desire. When Allama tries to ascertain why a woman who claims to have reached a state of union with the Lord would be conscious of covering her body, Akkamahadevi's response is one of absolute rejection and defiance to social conventions.

It is impossible to escape the power of her realisation:

*What if the body is dark and withered, O Lord
What if the body is glowing and glittering, my Lord
After the inside is pure,
O Lord Chennamallikarjuna
What matters if
O Lord
How the body you love is?*

Hearing the humbling response of Akkamahadevi must have brought about a change of heart in the sharanas who then allowed her entry into the *Anubhava Mantapa*. Basavanna, Allama Prabhu and Chennabasavanna also go on to honour the heights of her spiritual attainment and the brilliance of her words in their own vachanas.

12.2.4 Journey to Sri Sailam

Even with this acceptance and respect that she eventually received amongst the sharanas, Akkamahadevi pushed forth in her journey. Her search for the divine knew no limitations and it is well known that at an age of 25, emerging out of Kalyana, Akkamahadevi continued her journey in search of the divine and is finally said to have found union with her Lord Chennamallikarjuna in the dense forests of Kadali in the Srisaila mountains of Andhra Pradesh.

Mystical developments of the period gave a vent to bhaktins like Akka to protest against the existing systems in the society and come out of the relationships they were unwillingly pushed into. Akka sought to consummate her love with the divine. As she kept on pondering, Akka's idea of Chenna Mallikarjuna transformed from that of the *Puranic Shiva* to the nebulous Divine — the person who plagued her spirit. She saw the Absolute in all things. Each tree was the *kalpavriksha* (the heavenly tree), each shrub was the *Sanjeevani* (life giving medicine) each spot was a *teertha* (pilgrimage) each water body contained *Amritha* (elixir) and each rock was the *chintamani* pearl (pearl). Her very breath turned into the divine scent. His structure turned into hers. Having known the divine, there was nothing else to know. She turned into the honey bee that drank the nectar of Chenna Mallikarjuna, and broke down into it. What remained was – “Nothing, none at all”! This paragraph symbolizes her as a complete spiritual, mental and emotional unification with the Divine after which no other desire remained.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. What was the early life of Akka and what was the role of her first Guru?

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2. Describe Mahadevi's renunciation of marriage and journey up till Srisailam. What is the role of Anubhava Mantapa in this regard?

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12.3 MAJOR WRITINGS

Akka Mahadevi's encounters, both otherworldly and residential, spilled out as basic verses (vachanas) in Kannada. Set in casual language and loaded up with consistent with life comparisons, her vachanas infiltrate the inner voice of the peruser with their profundity of significance and melodious excellence. not only an emotional distillate, but also as a critique of the existing social order.

The total number of vachanas is more than 300 which are highlighted in *Yoganga Trividhi*. Her Vachanas are from where her ideas against patriarchy and social order can be seen.

Her brilliance came from the fact that she surrendered her social position and residential security for the company of Shiva. She battled to demonstrate that each spirit, regardless of sexual orientation, has a privilege to investigate and arrive at the Divine. She was a progressive, a social reformer, a vigorous aficionado and an extraordinary writer. Her vachanas are full of revolutionary ideas that we will look at coming sections.

12.4 INTELLECTUAL INSPIRATION FROM THE LINGAYAT TRADITION AND CRITIQUE OF SOCIAL ORDER -1

12.4.1 Impact of the Lingayat Tradition

Mahadevi's parents were both Lingayats. Hence, while studying Akka Mahadevi's life and her vachanas, it is imperative to understand the tenets of Lingayatism since she was born in a Lingayat family. Her vachanas suggest that her formative years were deeply rooted in its ideologies

The two important currents of Bhakti that impacted the lives of a very large section of society in the medieval Karnataka have been the 12th century **Virasaiva** (also known as Lingayats) and the 16th century **Haridasa** movement. Bhakti marga based on an intense and passionate love for the God was characteristic of the movement. Love and devotion are the most important means of spiritual perfection. A proliferation of poetic literature in the vernacular marked the movements. The path of devotion was expounded by the saints. These saints, some of whom were women, spoke and wrote in the regional language and their experiences were expressed through their mother tongue. By communicating in simple language, they tried to instill into the hearts of the people Bhakti which did not involve scouring the scriptures, instead it preached pure love and devotion to the God.

12.4.2 Social Value of the Vachans

The Bhakti movement that flourished across various literary cultures, gave rise to a distinct genre of expression in Kannada. This was the *vachana*, loosely understood as free verse poems or sayings, which arose within the Kannada literary tradition during the 12th century *sharana* (Lingayat) movement. Although

it did not develop with the exclusive intention of turning into a literary form, the language used by the sharanas, the content of their vachanas and the people they addressed through these vachanas, broke with the existing literary canon in Kannada and consequently, brought about a defining turn in Kannada language and literature.

Unity of Speech and Action: While the vachanas reflect various aspects of Bhakti, the vachana poets lay great emphasis on the unity of speech and action. This unity, they stressed, is central to the worship of Shiva. Thus, vachanas—these passionate dialogues in pursuit of union with the *ishtadevta* (sharana's chosen form of Shiva for worship)—not only break with the existing literary tradition, but also reject social divisions, hierarchies, formal structures of learning and worship, and pursuit of worldly pleasures.

What is important is that in a simple way, the movements exposed the degraded social institutions and values. It was through their writings that an expression of revolt against the existing social system was made. The Sharana (Lingayat or the Virasaiva) movement was vociferous expressing its views against the strongly entrenched equality, of sexes, caste system, superstitions and blind beliefs, meaningless rituals, animal sacrifices, pilgrimages and such other beliefs by which they provoked the people to assess and think of the socio-religious conditions. As such, the traditional beliefs and social systems came to be challenged. In a way, these movements tried to bring about an intellectual awakening in society.

12.4.3 Resistance to Caste and Religious Oppression

Scholars have different opinions on the way Lingayatism should be defined. Some consider it as an offshoot of *Saivism*, while others regard it as an independent religion. However, the focus here will be to understand the socio-religious ideals of Lingayatism. It can be said that the great philosopher and statesman *Basavanna* in Karnataka resurrected Lingayatism in the 12th c A.D. It was a time when Hinduism was at its ebb. Ritualism and caste rigidities were at its peak. The emphasis on the ritualistic aspect of the Vedas naturally empowered the Brahmin caste. Without the priestly caste, it was not possible for people to worship the Lord. It led to the practice of untouchability and the inhuman exploitation of the Sudras. After touching a Sudra, one was not just expected to take bath but also fast in order to atone for the sin! Under such apathetic circumstances, Basavanna issued a clarion call for reformist Lingayatism. It is noted that Basavanna's aim was the *“establishment of universal faith and brotherhood and the abolition of caste system. His object was not only to reform secular religion, but also to uplift man as a whole – socially, morally and in the matter of piety and devotion.”*

12.4.4 Sharana Movement and Anubhava Mantapa as an Argumentative Space

It is under the Lingayat saint-poet Basavanna that the sharana movement grew expansively, turning the city of Kalyana into an important center of interaction

and dialogue for the sharanas. At Kalyana, Basavanna set up the *anubhava mantapa* (hall of experience) with the intention of attracting the sharanas to hold important discussions around social, spiritual and political issues. Thus, it is no surprise that this period witnessed the flourishing of vachanakaras (vachana poets).

Even though there existed a broad similarity amongst the sharanas, each had their own spiritual experience and way of communicating their devotion, love, angst, struggle and journey to be one with the *ishtadevta*. One is struck by the vast differences in their pathways and the absence of a rigid religious doctrine in many instances. Each had their own language of intimation while reflecting on the social and spiritual realities.

For instance, Basavanna's vachanas are strong commentaries on the socio-political realities, while Allama Prabhu is mostly mystical in his vachanas and employs an esoteric language. Akkamahadevi's vachanas are astounding in their lyrical expanse and the force of devotion in them.

It is not surprising then that a significant number of women, with Mahadevi leading them, were a part of this 12th century movement, creating a fertile ground for the emergence of many women vachana poets. They criticized personal and social hypocrisy, corrected even their own husbands and in a sharane like Akka Mahadevi, we come across an intellectual and spiritual peak of the movement. The *anubhava mantapa* was a space where women came forward in discussion and debate and in the process gave birth to vachanas that present an account of their own spiritual struggle.

12.4.5 Symbol of Ishtalinga as a resistance to Brahmanical Oppression

Lingayatism or Virasaivism was an attempt to bridge the gap between the secular and the spiritual by the realization of spiritual ideals and their implementation in society. The Lingayats accepted and upheld the message of *jnana kanda* (imparting knowledge of the Self) from the Vedas but rejected the *karma kanda* (ritualistic aspect). To ascertain this and castigate the Brahminical superiority, Basavanna used the concept of *Ishtalinga*. The Ishtalinga is similar to the *Sivalinga*, but its worship does *not* require any mediator priest. The Guru gives it at the age of eight to a Lingayat child during the diksha (initiation) ceremony. Every Lingayat, irrespective of gender, wears it on the body and worships it. This worship is completely personalized; the person needs only devotion and faith in the Lord to be able to perform it. The same was championed by Mahadevi.

12.4.5.1 Pillars of Lingayatism

Lingayatism stands on three pillars: *Guru*, *Linga* and *Jangama*. They command equal reverence, as it is understood that, in essence (tattva), they are the same. They represent the same Supreme consciousness. A brief description of the three terms is as follows:

- **Guru** is the spiritual guide who initiates the aspirant into the Lingayat faith with diksha. This is of paramount importance as during diksha, the Guru, with his grace, gives the aspirant the Ishtalinga to be worn on the body. The Ishtalinga, being a symbol of Divine Consciousness, is a reminder to the aspirant of the spiritual goal of life. Also, the Guru imparts the principles of Lingayatism on this occasion. So it is like a *second* birth – a spiritual birth. The Guru’s guidance becomes imperative for the spiritual maturity of the aspirant.
- **Linga** represents the Supreme Lord or Divine Consciousness. The aspirant is expected to treat it as Siva Himself. Just as Siva resides in the heart of a person in the form of Chaitanya (Consciousness), Siva is present in the Ishtalinga.(and not sivalinga). The Guru gives this Ishtalinga to the aspirant, who is expected to worship it regularly, keeping it on the palm of the hand.
- **Jangama** can be best defined as one who has overcome janana (birth), gamana (life), and marana (death). The specialty of the Jangama is that he does not stay in a particular place. Rather, he moves from place to place, preaching the ideals of Lingayatism and guiding spiritual aspirants..

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. What are the main writings of Akka knows as?

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2. What is the role of the Lingayat Tradition and how is it related with Akka mahadevi’s social and political ideas?

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3. Why is Lingayat tradition considered a resistance to Brahmanical oppression?

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12.5 INTELLECTUAL INSPIRATION FROM THE LINGAYAT TRADITION AND THE CRITIQUE OF SOCIAL ORDER-2: IMPACT ON MAHADEVI'S VACHANAS

Impact of the Lingayat Tradition on Mahadevi's Vachanas

Akkamahadevi's vachanas share all the characteristics of the Lingayat tradition and explicitly express the resistance to patriarchy as well as monarchy /kingship in the 12th century vehemently. She resisted the custom-ridden society which would suffocate the lives of women in the name of Vedas and Brahmanical priesthood, in general and men in the name of kingship in particular. She is deemed to be the first woman who has the traces of feminism or rather she is the archetype of feminism, as early as 12th century.

She not only resisted the patriarchal society but found a parallel society to establish woman's identity: by deeming the Almighty as the eternal husband contrary to the earthly husband. She knew it very well that it was an arduous task to face the patriarchal society once a woman comes out of the wedlock.

12.5.1 Vachanas of the Women Saints as a Form of Social Resistance

The Vachanas composed in the twelfth century by men and women saints from across the society finds no parallel in literary movement or the impact and imprint it left on the society. The fact that this explosion took place in a caste-ridden twelfth century Karnataka society, in which all the shudra and untouchable castes were denied right to literacy, makes the vachana revolution even more amazing. They rejected the stereotypes and traits traditionally attributed to and assigned to women. Their very emergence in the movement was a social revolt. The spiritual path helped women to break out of all traditional stereotypes and as saints; they made the unacceptable, acceptable. They tried to break away from the shackles of tradition, orthodoxy and convention which sought to control women's sexuality

A galaxy of saints numbering over 300, including women saints, enriched the Lingayat movement thereby revolutionizing the religio-social fabric of their times

12.5.2 Breakdown of Caste Hierarchies

The Virasaiva/Lingayat movement produced a community of saints drawn from diverse socio-economic back grounds from the upper castes to the lowest in the caste hierarchy. A large number of the Vachanakaras were from the lower strata and the artisan classes. The movement opened itself to all castes and trades. There were many who came from occupations such as tanners, farmers, wood cutters, rope makers, ferry men, cobblers, toddy tappers, basket makers and so on. It was such a collapsing of classes and occupations in the new community of saints.

All the Virasaiva Vachanas make it clear that there is no gender or caste differentiation and hence, the idea of pollution whether in the case of the female or of the untouchable is illogical or redundant

12.5.3 Smashing of patriarchy

True to the above presented tradition, Akka made a radical departure from established social norms, in her own fashion. Use of mystical vocabulary turned God into a husband. Hence, patriarchy and social constructs were smashed by women who sought the spiritual path, because they defied the very existence of their husbands by regarding only God as the husband.

*Take these husbands who die,
decay, and feed them
to your kitchen fires!*

12.5.4 Critique of Monarchy

The Sharanas like Akka defied the belief that the king is the master of the state. Instead, they upheld the view that the Almighty is the only master of the universe. Hitherto, the womenfolk of the time did believe that the husband is the master of one's homestead. Now, they realized that the Almighty is the only master and they need to sacrifice themselves heartily.

12.5.5 Nudity and defiance of social order

From the sublimation of worldly love, Akka Mahadevi passes on to transcendence. Reaching the heights of sexual transcendence, where gender differences have become meaningless, the saint, male or female, begins to go naked. While male nudity despite being unusual, may not have evoked the kind of reaction female nudity did. Akka went naked with her body covered only by her lengthy hair. Akka going nude and shedding all inhibitions was an act of defiance against the patriarchal notions concerning a woman's sexuality and attempts to control it. Besides it was a blatant refusal to submit to male demands. Nakedness is a way of protesting against the injustice, atrocities, oppressions

meted out. She resorted to the same means to protest against the institution of marriage.

She writes

**Akka Mahadevi:
Critique of Social
Order**

To the shameless girl
Where is the need
for cover and jewel?

12.6 FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY

Feminist epistemology: Akka's vachanas, have been considered an instance of an important contribution to the Indian feminist epistemological tradition because they helped create and understand new categories of Feminist inquiry. Akka Mahadevi defies the traditional feminine images by giving expression to her desire. Besides being a mystic, seer, poet, she is also seen as a social reformer. In a time when women were not even allowed to attend school, she became part of a learned group.

Dissolving of gender lines: In an important departure from her times, she sees men as posing a hindrance to the path of enlightenment and a challenge that she must overcome. This is important as many sharanas see only women as *maya*, an illusion to be distanced from in the path to spiritual transcendence. Akka presents a different picture without singling out either of them:

*Maya haunts the ego of a man
In the form of a woman.
Maya haunts the ego of a woman
In the form of a man.
To this world of Maya*

A Sharana's madness seems like Maya.

For a Sharana who has the love of Chennamallikarjuna,

There is no Maya, no madness, no ego.

This dissolving of gender lines is definitely creating a new category of Feminist epistemology and enquiry. Akka was ahead of her times in every way .

12.7 CRITICISM

The Major criticisms are as follows:

1. Women within Virasaivism had almost all the rights to a spiritual life with one notable exception. They were not conceded the status of a Jangama by which women were denied the conduct of priestly ceremonies nor become head of a Virasaiva mutt or religious organization. Despite the equalitarian character of the movement it is evident that it was not totally free from gender bias

2. Akka getting criticized by fellow women : Other Virasaivite women saints , were not very welcoming to the whole question of discarding of clothes in the spiritual path was. It was more or less negative. Akka Mahadevi seems to have faced criticism from her own sex in this respect.

3. *Shunya Sampadane*, i.e. a compilation of Akka's writings were done by the royal kings much later after Akka's death as Virasaivism became the *royal* religion. Some critics have pointed out that they may have only picked up vachanas with a suitable political agenda. Hence, no genuine pattern or real order to Akka's works can be found now.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Explain Mahadevi's ideas on patriarchy, nudity, monarchy and other resistances to Social order like caste hierarchies.

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2. Describe Akka's Feminist Epistemology.

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3. What are the major criticisms or limitations of Akka's thoughts as stemming from the Lingayat Tradition?

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12.8 LET US SUM UP

The society in which Akka lived neither approved of her behavior nor her resistance very easily. However, she did not give up her attempts to change the

society. She faced very many challenges all through her life even for her basic necessities like food and shelter. She bore all hardships and achieved what she was passionate about: the mystic height in which she excelled even her male counterparts, namely Basaveshwara and Allamaprabhu. She expresses her arduous task thus:

*When hungry, alms are available in town.
When thirsty, ponds, streams and wells are there,
When the body catches cold,
There are cast off clothes to cover it with
And for bed to sleep in, deserted temples.
For my soul's companion
You are there, O Cennamallikarjuna!*

Thus the woman saint Akka Mahadevi documented her resistance to patriarchy and monarchy simultaneously: by practicing bridal mysticism after she came out of the palace of her earthly husband, King Kousika.

The Bhakti Movement emerged in different parts of southern India, and produced a number of women poets. History has many instances where women have broken stereotypical bondage of womanhood and taken to writing. Some of them wrote about the problems faced by women.. Akkamahadevi wrote nearly 350 vachanas in Kannada. She described how she broke the restriction imposed on her through her writings which became a formidable tool of critiquing the social order.

Having said this, the entire tradition of Lingayats and Akka are *not* free from some criticism which spring up mainly as women were not allowed to become heads of religious organizations even within the Lingayats. The second main criticism stems from the fact that Akka's choice of *discarding* clothes was seen as too radical and unnecessary by women themselves. Lastly, it is pointed out that Sunya Sampadane , the compilation of Akka's works might have their own *political* bias.

How do we re-conceptualize the role of feminism in India today? Can we envisage a dialogue between feminism and the Indian traditions without imposing the categories of one upon the other? This is a worthy pursuit as Feminist icons with revolutionary ideas like Akka Mahadevi must not be forgotten for their contribution to our intellectual tradition and history of resistance against all forms of oppression.

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12.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Born in Karnataka to shaivite parents
 - Guru giving her ishtalinga
 - Profound impact on Akka's later spiritual life

2. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Marriage with Kaushika
 - Renunciation
 - Journey to Kalyana
 - Anubhava Mantpa as an space for discussion
 - Journey to Srisailam
 - Unity with the divine

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - 300 Vachanas
 - Full of revolutionary ideas
2. Your answer should highlight following points
 - A critical response to ebbing Hinduism in 12th century
 - Vachans as having deep social value
 - Sharana movement
3. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Resistance to caste oppression
 - Symbol of Ishtalinga
 - Pillars of Lingayatism

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Breaking down of Caste Hierarchies
 - Vachans on Patriarchy
 - Vachanas on Nudity
 - Ideas on Monarchy
2. Your answer should highlight following points
 - New feminine images
 - New categories
 - Dissolving differences between men and women
3. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Women not given the status of Jangama
 - Women could not become head of a religious organization
 - Mahadevi was criticized by fellow women on discarding clothes
 - Compilation of writings – agenda being questionable.

UNIT 13 KABIR: RELIGIOUS BOUNDARIES AND THE QUEST FOR SOCIAL HARMONY*

Structure

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Religious and Social Harmony in Kabir
- 13.3 Kabir's Political and Social Ideas
 - 13.3.1 Kabir's Thoughts on Women
- 13.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.5 References
- 13.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

13.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is to familiarise you with the nature and key aspects of 15th century Indian mystic, saint and philosopher, Kabir's ideas on religion and social harmony. After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Describe Kabir's ideas on politics and society
- Explain Kabir's views on religious harmony
- Examine Kabir's thoughts on women; and
- Evaluate the legacy of Kabir

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Kabir was one of the shining lights of the *Bhakti* movement which started around eighth century in India. Bhakti movement was syncretic with a strong focus on love and devotion to God. It did not confine itself to the religious domain and had a much larger influence on society. Followers of the Bhakti movement questioned several regressive social practices of the time. Bhakti movement has been seen by scholars as a means of protest and rebellion against the divisions and unfairness of the existing social order through the path of devotion and love. It transcended religions, castes and had universal appeal with followers from diverse faiths and regions. As a matter of fact, *Sufism*, an Islamic syncretic sect,

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is seen by many as being part of the larger Bhakti movement. Sufism also focused on love and devotion to God with a universal message and appeal. Some of the key figures of the Bhakti movement include the famous 12th century saint, *Ramanuja* (1016 CE to 1137 CE).

The influence of Bhakti movement was spread across the country. It was a mass movement that drew followers from people from different strata of society. This was partly because of the fact that many of the key figures of the Bhakti movement used largely local languages spoken by the common people to convey their ideas, instead of limiting themselves to Sanskrit. Kabir himself is believed to have used an *older* version of *Hindi*. This meant that more people could understand the precepts of the Bhakti movement without language acting as a barrier. Many leaders of the Bhakti movement including Kabir also made a conscious attempt to simplify theological concepts and make them practically relevant and comprehensible for the common people. The themes they chose were relatable to common people and they used appealing songs, poems, parables from everyday life and incorporated folk practices to make their ideas reach a wider section of the population.

One of the key features of the Bhakti movement was its focus on progressive social reform. The leaders of the Bhakti movement which included saints, poets, musicians, social reformers and radical thinkers, questioned many regressive social practices of their times, including the hierarchical caste system, class divisions that were widely prevalent and religious antagonisms. Through their promotion of a syncretic God of love, they sought to unite Indian society which was then divided by religious, caste, regional and class fault lines. It is, thus, undeniable that the Bhakti movement left a lasting impact on the social, cultural, political and religious life of Indian society. It influenced many modern leaders of India like Mahatma Gandhi and continues to inspire spiritual awakening among people from diverse religions backgrounds.

It is in the context of such an influential and popular movement with a rich tapestry, one has to locate Kabir, his works and their enduring legacy. Despite his great popularity, the life of Kabir still remains shrouded in *mystery*. There is scant evidence with respect to the finer details of the life of Kabir. Myths and parables intermingle freely with historical facts, making it really difficult to separate reality from fiction. It is known with certainty that Kabir lived in the 15th century, but beyond that it is difficult to specify particular years for his birth and death. Some of his followers claim without much hard historical evidence that he was born in 1398 CE and died in 1518 CE. This would make him a contemporary of *Ramananda*, who was a central figure of the Bhakti movement in North India. However, many modern scholars place his birth in the middle of the 15th century, around 1440 CE and death in 1518 CE. Kabir was also a contemporary of *Saint Ravidas*, another influential leader of the Bhakti movement.

Kabir is believed to have been born near the city of Banaras, present day Varanasi, to a family of Muslim weavers. Kabir also became a weaver like his father and lived most of his life in Banaras. However, it is worth noting that there are *several other* versions of his birth in circulation among people. By one account, Kabir is believed to have been born miraculously to a *Brahmin* woman and was brought up in Banaras by his *foster* parents, a Muslim weaver and his

wife. Banaras, a culturally vibrant and historically significant city, quite certainly played a key role in the life of Kabir. The social, political, cultural, religious and economic ethos of 15th century Banaras was a great influence on Kabir and his ideas.

Kabir's poems, songs and sayings, popularly dubbed as 'Kabirvanis', began to be collected only several decades after his death. Kabir himself did *not likely* write down his ideas. Kabirvanis include couplets called as 'dohas' and short songs called as 'sabdas' or 'padas'. Moreover, Kabirvanis have been co-opted over the centuries by people belonging to diverse cultures, religious and regions. This has resulted in significant variations in linguistic aspects as well as other sensibilities in Kabir's works. Questions have also been raised about the authenticity of many of the writings attributed to him as Kabir inspired many copycat poets in subsequent centuries. Scholars have been making progress in authenticating Kabirvanis through critical textual analysis and other methods. Today, some of the key sources to explore the ideas of Kabir include *Adi Granth*, *Bijak*, *Panchvani*, *Sarvangi* and *Granthavali*. There are significant variations between these sources and it is through a comparative analysis of these different sources, one can get close to understanding the historical Kabir and his thoughts.

The universal and transcendental nature of Kabir's influence is highlighted by the fact that his legacy is equally claimed by people of different faiths. Kabir has been viewed as a *Sufi Muslim* as many of his ideas are somewhat comparable to those expressed by Sufi saints. On the other hand, Kabir has been viewed as a *Vaishnavite* by some, while Sikh holy books also have references of Kabir. In reality, Kabir was critical of traditional religions of any kind, be it Islam or Hinduism. During his lifetime, Kabir was disliked by orthodox forces of both Islam and Hinduism. He advocated a direct relationship to God through love and devotion. His ideas cannot be bracketed that easily within one religion or sect. Kabir's influence has also been applauded by many, especially by modern scholars, for encouraging unity among Muslims and Hindus. As noted earlier, many myths and legends have emerged about Kabir's life. A popular one about his death is revealing. It is said that Hindus and Muslims fought for the right over his dead body. Eventually, the body is believed to have turned into flower petals which were equally shared by Hindus and Muslims who laid them to rest according to their respective customs. This myth highlights how Kabir came to be perceived, as a figure who belonged equally to both Islam and Hinduism. Further, as noted earlier, Sikhism has also embraced Kabir with great enthusiasm with their holy book *Adi Granth* comprising more than five hundred sayings of Kabir. These show the truly inclusive and transcendental nature of Kabir's ideas.

13.2 RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL HARMONY IN KABIR

Kabir was pained and repelled by the violence that took place in the name of religion which resulted in people killing each other. He saw all human beings as equal with no hierarchies between them based on religion or caste or any other factor. As a matter of fact, Kabir even rejected the idea that human beings are superior to animals. He saw all creations of God as equal. This is because, in his view, all souls were inhabited by the same Supreme Being and therefore, it is

pointless to fight over differences over religious beliefs. Kabir, thus, had a *monotheistic* conception of God. Kabir advocated belief in a formless Supreme Being, a spirit. This conception is referred to as the *nirguna* path as opposed to the *Saguna* path. The former (*nirguna*) philosophy saw God as formless and without attributes. While the latter (*saguna*) philosophy saw God as having form and attributes. Being an advocate of the *nirguna* path, Kabir was opposed to idol worship and ritualistic practices in all religions, be it Islam or Hinduism. However, it has to be noted that some depictions of Kabir do portray him as having elements of the *saguna* tradition *as well* (Omvedt, 2008). This is another testimony to the transcendental nature of Kabir's philosophy and the efforts of diverse groups to appropriate his legacy.

The argument that all creations are endowed with the same supreme spirit was a deeply spiritual one, something which would inspire Mahatma Gandhi later, who also spoke about a cosmic spirit inhabiting all creatures. For Kabir, the individual soul in all human beings, the *Jivatma* and the divine soul, *Paramatma* have to become one for a human being to attain salvation. Though not identical, there are indeed other Indian philosophical traditions like the *Advaita Vedanta* philosophy which express similar spiritual ideas, inspired by the Upanishads. Kabir argued that Hindus and Muslims were the children of the same God, and therefore, blessed with the same supreme divine spirit, the *Paramatma*. They, then, share the same goal for salvation, i.e. becoming one with the divine spirit.

"Who can be called a Hindu and who a Turk (Muslim) when the same God is the Father of both, and they are brothers embodying the same spirit?" (Kabir, Bijak)

Kabir believed strongly that even though different people and different religions have their own names for God, ultimately God is one, the eternal supreme spirit that inhabits the soul of all human beings and all creations. People might worship God in diverse ways, but ultimately because God is one, it did not make a difference how one worshipped. This was a *radical* conception of spiritual unity. However, what is interesting to note is that to advocate his ideas of the unity of God and equality of all human beings, Kabir *not* only put forward spiritual arguments, but also practical ones based on *reason* and *common sense*.

"No Hindu came out of the womb with knowledge of the Vedas, and no Muslim came out of the womb being circumcised. All people are born from the womb of the mother, and after birth they accepted many pretended forms and actions. Then we are both of the same blood, and the same breath sustains us. Then with what kind of knowledge you became different from one another as Hindus and Muslims?" (Kabir, Ramaini).

The above saying of Kabir is an example of how he used common sense and practical arguments which appealed to people from all strata of the society. Through his spiritual doctrine of cosmic unity, aided further by his practical arguments, Kabir questions the madness of religious partisanship and hostility between people of different religious faiths. To give another example of the same, consider the following words of Kabir -

"Brother, where did your two gods come from? Tell me, who made you mad? Ram, Allah, Keshav, Karim, Hari, Hazrat – so many names. So

many ornaments, all one gold, it has no double nature. For conversation we make two – this namaz, that puja, this Mahadev, that Muhammed, this Brahma, that Adam, This a Hindu, that a Turk, but all belong to earth. Vedas, Korans, all these books, those Mullas and those Brahmins – so many names, so many names, but the pots are all one clay” (Kabir, Bijak)

In the above example, Kabir uses simple, easily relatable arguments, like giving the analogy of how different ornaments are made from the same gold or the analogy of different pots being made from the same clay, to point out that despite outwardly appearance of differences, God is one, and all human beings are equal. Such sayings, due to their simplicity despite their spiritual depth, endeared Kabir to the common people.

Kabir's advocacy of human equality extended beyond just religion and also included caste hierarchies which was a prevalent reality in 15th century Banaras. It has to be noted that the Muslim weaver family Kabir grew up in belonged to a lower caste, known as *Julaha*. Hence, he must have faced caste oppression and discrimination while growing up in Banaras. Again, Kabir's critique of caste system is *both* spiritual and rational. The spiritual critique flows from his belief about the supreme spirit and its universal prevalence. The fact that all human beings are endowed with the spirit of the same God, makes everyone spiritually equal for Kabir, regardless of their caste. There can be, thus, no spiritual argument in favour of the caste system. Rationally, Kabir argues that there is no evidence to indicate that people of some castes are superior to others. Everybody has the same flesh and do everything in similar manner. There is no biological difference between an upper caste person and a lower caste person. Kabir then asks, how then can it be that people of some castes can claim to be superior to others?

“It is all one skin and bone, one piss and shit, One blood, one meat... Who is a brahman, who is a shudra?... Kabir says plunge into Ram, There no Hindu, no Turk” (Kabir, Bijak)

As a matter of fact, Kabir was very aggressive in his attack on the caste system and its proponents as shown by the following verses -

“Pandit, look in your heart to know. Tell me how untouchability was born – untouchability is what you made so... We eat by touching, we wash by touching, from a touch the world was born. Says Kabir, only he's untouched who has no link with Maya” (Kabir, quoted in Omvedt 2008)

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“All are born as human beings, this is known by all, Sudras are made by lying rogues: this is Kabir's call” (Kabir, quoted in Omvedt 2008)

Kabir was quite consistent in his belief that *not* just human beings, but *all* creations of God are equal because of his conviction that they are all endowed with the same supreme spirit. He is therefore, critical of *slaughtering* of animals, even for religious rituals in the name of God and preached humane treatment of animals. This was a *very radical* idea for that time and to a great extent is a progressive idea even in the present times. Kabir was unequivocal in expressing his belief about the equality of animals and humans.

*“Beast meat and man meat are the same, Both have blood that is red...
For gods and goddesses of clay, You slaughter living beast! If your God
is real, why can't he go to the field and have his feast!” (Kabir, Bijak)*

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Kabir's devotion and love towards God extended as a love of all God's creations. He, thus, preaches compassion and love for all species. It is this fraternity of all creation which lies at the core of Kabir's philosophy that forms the basis of the religious and social harmony advocated by him. After all, if people realized that they share the same supreme spirit with not just each other but even with animals, how will they think of people from different religions and castes with enmity? Spiritual arguments aside, as noted earlier, Kabir's impact was also due to the practical and accessible arguments he offered. His couplets and songs with illuminating examples and parables made people think and even question their long held beliefs about critical social issues like religion and caste.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. According to Kabir, how does one attain Salvation?

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2. What is the basis for social and religious harmony in Kabir's philosophy?

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13.3 KABIR'S POLITICAL AND SOCIAL IDEAS

Kabir's political and social ideals were encapsulated in his utopian ideas which were proposed by him as a worthy alternative to the society of his time. The term *Begumpura* i.e. a place without sorrow, is often attributed to *Saint Ravidas* who was a contemporary of Kabir (Omvedt, 2008). Ravidas' idea of Begumpura, an utopian village society, has long captured the imagination of people. It is akin to *Plato's Republic* in imagining an ideal city. Kabir's thoughts on ideal state of affairs have also greatly contributed to the general conception of Begumpura (Roy 2017). Kabir had his own terms for the utopian society as he sang of *Amarpur* i.e. Immortal Place and *Premnagar*, i.e. Land of Love (Kumar, 2019).

Kabir was in fact seen as more aggressive in the tone of his criticism of society and its evils in comparison to Ravidas. Before one discusses the nature and key elements of Kabir's political and social ideas, one has to locate the socio-political milieu which inspired Kabir towards proposing alternate political and social ideals. Kabir's political imagination emerged in the context of 15th century Banaras. Hence, a little understanding of the social, economic and cultural forces of that period is needed to fully understand the driving factors behind Kabir's ideas.

Banaras of 15th century was a key centre of trade, religion, culture and politics. Kabir, as noted earlier, was himself a weaver in Banaras, likely trading his produce of textiles in the bustling markets of Banaras. This was a period when trade was increasing in Banaras, thereby enabling people from lower sections of the society to have slightly increased social mobility. Increased trade and rise of a strong, new merchant class often leads to questioning and dismantling of old feudal structures and privileges like the caste system. It is thus likely that Kabir's critique of caste system can be partly attributed to him being part of a period in which merchant classes were on the rise, questioning some of the privileges of the dominant old feudal classes. However, it has to be kept in mind that the *big* traders still belonged to the traditional trading castes. Hence, Kabir was also critical of the trading classes and he even compares them to rogues. While 15th century Banaras offered social mobility for small traders like him, they continued to be looked down upon by the traditional feudal castes. Much of the economy was still dominated by agriculture or related activities with feudal landlords being very powerful. It was a period when big traders and big landlords (Zamindars) comprised of both Hindus and Muslims and they exploited the poor who also belonged to both the religions (Roy, 2017). This domination was made possible by the presence of a strong administrative state as well as a priestly class which provided a religious justification of the exploitation. The former imposed taxes while the latter constructed a cultural hegemony through religious myths which served the purpose of keeping people in their allotted social positions (Roy, 2017). The exploitation of the poor was the result of a collusion between the urban as well as the rural rich, the administrative state and the priestly classes of all religions. Hence, it is no wonder that Kabir rages against all of these structures in his couplets and songs without any regard for religion, caste or sect. He advocates for a complete reconceptualization of society, wherein such differences disappear and people live together peacefully, without any discrimination.

It is thus clear that Kabir's political and social ideas were based on his experiences and observations of the society of his time. Kabir wishes to remove all societal evils, hierarchies and exploitation from society. In his view, this can only be achieved through 'Bhakti', the devotion and love of people towards God. His ideal society will not have the exploitation of the poor by the rich. This is achieved partly because there will *not* be any *private property* in his conception of ideal society. All resources will be shared. Kabir is also not in favour of having a hierarchical government which ends up oppressing people and reinforcing feudal structures of power. In his view, people should take part in collective decision making without any need for a king or a hierarchical

government. Therefore, there will not be any taxation, nor will there be any need for it because of the nature of his society. Moreover, discriminatory social structures like the caste system will also not exist in his ideal society. Similarly, religious animosity will not be present in Kabir's vision of ideal society (Roy, 2017).

Such an ideal society is only possible through devotion and love of its residents to God, or to be precise, Kabir's idea of God.

"Kabir calls out, write two things down, worship God and feed the hungry. The world died of reading tomes, no one turned out wise; from the single word of 'love' wisdom will arise" (Kabir, quoted in Omvedt 2008)

Residents of Kabir's ideal society will be followers of the monotheistic, syncretic God of Kabir such that they are not judgmental of different religions. This would, of course, enable them to not discriminate against each other based on caste or religion or class as they would recognise that the same supreme spirit exists within all human beings. They would also show respect for all God's creations and will not be motivated by greed or money or jealousy. Kabir's quest for an ideal society is a genuine expression of his devotion to God based on a firm belief that bhakti can make people transcend social evils and live in harmony with each other. He truly believed that people can tear down the old social order and create a new one through bhakti as expressed in his call in the following verse –

"Kabir stands in the market, flaming torch in hand. Burn down your home, then come and walk with me" (Kabir, quoted in Santhanam 2018).

Kabir was a revolutionary whose quest for harmony involved rejection of old social norms.

13.3.1 Kabir's Thoughts on Women

Despite his progressive views on many social issues, Kabir's views on women have been criticized as being *regressive* and influenced by *prevalent prejudices* of his time. He has been criticized for idolizing the patriarchal construct of a faithful wife (Roy, 2017). As a matter of fact, it has been pointed out by many that Kabir even looks favourably at the practice of Sati, whereby widowed women were expected to die on the funeral pyre of their husbands (Upadhayay, 2018). Kabir portrays this regressive practice at times as an example of pure love (Upadhayay, 2018). Moreover, in some places, Kabir indicates strongly that women could distract men from true devotion and he warns men about the temptation of women. The following verses are examples of such a depiction by Kabir –

"Kabir says many have been ruined due to the love for women. Many more will go to the hell laughing all the way through" & "A snake has two hoods, a woman has twenty hoods If she stings one, there is no chance to survive" (Kabir, quoted in Upadhayay 2018)

Such biased views about women which portrayed them as temptresses and poisonous were common during his period and they find expression in Kabir's

sayings as well. Kabir's *lack of support for gender equality is somewhat surprising* because if the same supreme spirit was present in all creations of God as Kabir believed, then there should have been no reason for Kabir to think of women as any different from men. The same arguments he had put forward against discrimination based on religion and caste should have been logically extended by him to advocate gender equality as well which was unfortunately *not* the case. Even though Kabir talks in praising terms about women as mothers and ideal wives in some places, those favourable descriptions were in line with the prevalent patriarchal notions of that period. As a matter of fact, as noted earlier, some of those glorious depictions did more harm than good as they reinforced problematic social practices like Sati. Kabir's regressive views on women are an *exception* in his otherwise progressive outlook on society.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. According to Kabir, what is the key for people to be able to build an ideal society?

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2. Briefly describe Kabir's thought on women.

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13.4 LET US SUM UP

Kabir's ideas were revolutionary for not only his time, but many of them continue to be progressive even in our period. Kabir's poems and songs captured the frustrations of the marginalized sections of society. His belief in a single supreme spirit that permeated through all creations enabled him to conceive a radical conception of equality and advocate for societal unity. He dismissed outwardly differences between religions as immaterial and questioned the ritualistic nature of different faiths. His views greatly influenced calls of unity between Hindus and Muslims even though during his lifetime, he was disliked by the orthodox forces in both Hinduism and Islam.

Further, Kabir firmly opposed caste discrimination in all forms including untouchability and vehemently questioned the supporters of caste system. His sense of compassion extended even to animals as he saw them as having the same supreme spirit. Thereby, he criticized animal sacrifices and argued for humane treatment of them. Kabir lived in 15th century Banaras and its socio-political context greatly influenced his ideas. He wished for a society free of the exploitation of an oppressive state that was controlled by rich landlords and greedy traders. He was also critical of the priestly class of all religions who in his view provided religious justification for the exploitation of the poor by the state and the rich. In his ideal society, people would have a direct relationship with God through 'Bhakti' and this did not depend on any ritual or sacrifice. The monotheistic and syncretic God advocated by Kabir provides the foundation for fostering the kind of social unity Kabir desired. However, as noted earlier, Kabir's views on women and gender equality leave much to be desired to say the least.

Kabir has left behind a rich and enduring legacy. As noted earlier, Kabir conveyed his ideas to the common people through not only spiritual arguments, but also through practical and relatable couplets, parables and songs. This endeared him to the people not only during his lifetime but even till today. The fact that different religious traditions, including Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism have co-opted Kabir is a testimony to his universal appeal and unifying effect. Kabir ultimately was a humanist whose ideas on social reform and ideal society still reverberates strongly.

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13.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Each person has a personal soul which is called as Jivatma
 - There is one supreme spirit which permeates everything, which is called as Paramatma
 - Salvation is when a person's Jivatma becomes one with the supreme spirit, Paramatma
2. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Kabir believes that one supreme spirit permeates all of creation
 - This means that people of all castes, religions and sects are all endowed with the same supreme spirit
 - This is the basis for social and religious harmony in Kabir's philosophy.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

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1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - In Kabir's view, Bhakti is the key for building an ideal society
 - Bhakti is love and devotion towards God.
 - It is that love and devotion which extends towards all creations of God.
2. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Kabir idolizes prevalent patriarchal notions of women like ideal wife or mother, even to the extent of glorifying regressive practices like Sati.
 - Kabir also portrays women as temptresses who could distract people in their devotion to God.
 - Kabir's views on women are regressive.



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