CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

The history of ancient Indian political thought is the story of great minds. Manu and Kautilya, the ancient Indian thinkers have given us their rich political and administrative ideas and policies. Manusmriti holds a position of pre-eminence in the Hindu literature. It is the oldest and well-known smriti. Manusmriti or Manava dharmasastra is a “work of encyclopaedic scope.”\(^1\) Manu was one of the most original thinkers of ancient Indian political thought. Most of the commentators on ancient Indian thought are of the view that Manu belongs to fourth century B.C. Manusmriti is a storehouse of information on the social, judicial and political life of that period. It contains social obligations and duties of various castes of individuals in different stages of life. The Manusmriti is the most authoritative work on Hindu Law and presents the normal form of Hindu society and civilisation. So, it is Manu who gave the stamp of sanctity and permanence to the socio-political institutions of the land and provided the first code of civil and criminal law.

Kautilya’s Arthashastra is another great work on ancient political thought which was probably composed between 3rd-2nd Century B.C. Kautilya was the great Prime Minister of Chandragupta Maurya. Kautilya’s Arthashastra is primarily a work on the art of government. In his political and administrative ideas, the focus of attention was the king. According to his philosophy, for the smooth running of administration and for the welfare of the people, the king had to be

---

conversant in the four Vedas and four sciences of government (Anvikashaki, Trai, Varta and Dandniti). Kautilya’s administrative and judicial structure was hierarchical in nature. As for justice, he emphasised on the principal of equity and immediacy. As for law and order, he believed that law was a royal command enforced by sanctions.

Although political speculations in ancient India are older than Manusmriti and Arthashastra yet in the absence of written records it is difficult to trace the political and administrative ideas of the thinkers of pre Manu and pre Kautilya period. So, Manu and Kautilya are responsible for tracing the history of ancient thought prior to them.

A comparative study of Manu and Kautilya’s works revealed that the former was a bold departure from the latter. Kautilya’s Arthashastra itself cleared that Manu was his predecessor and he followed the concept of the state given by Manu. Manusmriti referred to the sacred character of the laws in the four castes and four orders to the ancient customs and duties of the king while Kautilya did not condemn the moorings of the ancient Dharmasastra but he added new political institutions and also interpreted some existing ones. He also mentioned the relative importance of the sacred law and the state law but he put greater stress on the state law while Manu adopted the sacred character of the law.

Manu made it clear that it was trayi (Three Vedas) that kept the mind steady and firm while Kautilya laid more emphasis on Anvikashaki (Philosophy). Although Kautilya followed the idea of the state of Manu but the nature of the state was not the same. Manu was concentrating

2. Bhaskar Anand Saletore; Ancient Political Thought and Institutions, Asia Publishing House Bombay, p. 185.
more on problems like the duties of Varnas, the purity of family life, sanctity of social institutions and social life as laid down in the dharmasastra while Kautilya discussed more realistically and as a matter of fact problems like battles, war, conduct of government departments, internal and external dangers to the state and espionage.

However, both Manu and Kautilya recognised the importance of Vedas and Dharma, but they had different views on them. They also differed on their views on other concepts like sovereignty, dandniti, wealth, size of state etc.

During that period people found themselves in trouble and fled in all directions. For their protection the lord created a king. The kingship is thus divine in origin. It is also believed that in ancient time people themselves selected Manu as their king for their protection and agreed to pay him the necessary taxes. The theoretical concept of the state, as we now understand it, was non-existent in the past, at that time there was no difference between state and government as has been done in the modern times. Although there are lots of changes in the political and administrative set up according to the changed environment but still the reflection of Manu and Kautilya’s philosophy in modern set up is visible. In the times of Manu and Kautilya, state was intelligible in the context of the nature of the modern state. During those times the theory of danda really converted the state into crystallised force. They opined that if the danda was properly inflicted after consideration it made all people happy. In modern times, state is sanctioned by the judgement of society while in ancient times, it was permitted by the judgement of the ruler himself. The modern state also maintains huge armies, raises colossal funds, have a large array of executive officials and exercises vast powers like in ancient time.
Arthashastra, which gave it a new turn but did not entirely discard the legacy which it had inherited. In the pre-period of Manu and Kautilya the civilization had also a well organised Political system, but in the absence of written records it is not possible to trace the political and administrative ideas of the thinkers during that period.

Thus Manu and Kautilya were responsible for preparing the ground for the latter is unfortunately a point that cannot now be determined, since the work of those scholars have been lost, the only reference to most of them being found in Mahabharata, and particularly in the Arthasastra itself. Kautilya’s Arthashastra has been made as a compendium of all Arthashastras before his period, which as a guidance to Kings in acquiring and maintaining the earth, have been written by ancient teachers.

Manusmriti refers to the sacred character of the laws in the four castes and four orders to the ancient customs and duties of the king. Kautilya did not condemn the moorings of the ancient dharamasastras, but he added some new political ideas for the political institutions and also reinterpreted some existing ones. He also mentioned the relative importance of the sacred law and the state law.

Manu and Kautilya has given us comprehensive political and administrative ideas. They both believed in Vedas and goodness of human nature. But they also believed that the common man could be kept under control, and on the path of truth by the fear of punishment. To maintain peace and order in the state both believed in Dandniti. But their approach to the subject is different. Manu believed that it is danda, which rules over all the subjects. But Kautilya’s philosophy was that punishment was not to be viewed only in its aspect. It
established law and order in society and proper progress in religious and economic aspects.

Kautilya’s Arthashastra is the most important work on policy and administration. The main objectives of Kautilya’s life was the attainment of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha.

Manu and Kautilya are the most significant thinkers which depicted the highly developed political ideas. Although there are certain changes in the political and administration set up according to the changed environment but still the reflection of Manu and Kautilya’s Philosophy in modern set up is visible.

Thus Manu and Kautilya are still relevant for political and administrative purposes as well as for academic research. According to their philosophy without proper political and administrative policies the protection of people is not possible.

The present study purposes to make a humble attempt in understanding analysing and comparing the views of Manu and Kautilya on major political and administrative issues.

**Review of Literature**

There is abundance of literature on Manu and Kautilya’s views on social, political and administrative structure of the society during those periods. Most of their works are translated by eminent Indian and foreign authors. But no specific literature on their comparative study is available. Here some of the existing literature is reviewed.

Shamasasstry’s book Kautilya’s *Arthasastra* presents a detailed study of Kautilya’s life and work. The work itself remained to a great

---

extent unknown until it was found in the translated texts. The work accordingly claims to date from the period 321-296 B.C.; and its archaic style is well in agreement with the exceptional interest and value. Firstly, it ascribes itself to the famous Brahmaṇa Kautiya, also named Vishnu Gṛtpa, Chanakya, the last king of Nanda dynasty. This work also emphasises on all the issues related to all branches of government, internal and foreign affairs, civil, military, commercial, fiscal, judicial even so, include even tables of weights, measures of length and divisions of time. Arthashastra is in a way a summary of almost all the Arthasastras.

Bhasker Anand Saletore’s book Ancient Indian Political Thought and Institutions⁴ deals with the study of Ancient Indian political thought and Institutions. He has ventured to assess the relative work of four political thinkers of the ancient times, Manu, Hammurabi, Aristotle and Kautiya. In this study, more weightage has been put on the side of Kautiya. The author emphasized on the main schools of political thought and analyzed especially the State, comparatively. This study deals with the technical terms and relationship between dharmasastras and the dandniti or nitisāstra.

Usha Mehta and Usha Thakkar in Kautilya and His Arthashastra⁵ have discussed in general the picture of the time and life of Kautiya and other important topics like the nature and functions of the State, internal administration and inter-state relations and its relevance in modern times. It is an important composition on the study

---

⁴ Saletore B.A., Ancient Indian Political Thought and Institutions, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1968.
⁵ Usha Mehta, Usha Thakkar; Kautilya and his Arthashastra, S. Chand and Company Ltd., Ram Nagar, New Delhi-110055
of some facets of ancient Indian thought which comprised both
spiritual and mundane matters in many fields. A brief commentary
on the non-monarchical forms of government in the Arthasastra has
also found place in this book.

R.S. Betai’s book *A Reconstruction of the Original Interpretation
of the Manusmriti* \(^6\) is a deep study of *Dharmasastra* in general and the
*Manusmriti* in particular of which Mahamahapadhyay Dr. P.V. Kane’s
monumental volume “Ministry of *Dharmasastra*”. The writer has
emphasised on the significance of Dharma, the stage of *Brahmacharya*,
Manu’s theory of education, caste system, *vivaha* part and king and
state in Manu’s time and his ideas on socialism, religion and ethics.
His work is based on the modern critical and analytical method in
which he has given due importance to the famous commentaries.

Bhagwan Dass in his book, *The Laws of Manu* \(^7\) has given a
commentary on Manu exhaustively. He has tried to related Manu with
reference to the new thought of the west, which is revolutionizing human
life there in all departments: educational, domestic, sexual, moral,
social, economic, political, religious and scientific. His first and second
dition deals with the foundational sub-division, the educational and
religious organisation.

Robert Lingat’s book, *The Classical Law of India*, \(^8\) to clarify the
Hindus before understanding of law. He has concerned essentially with
aspects of private law. The opening part of the book is devoted to
*Dharma*, the second part is more systematic than the first. The author

---

Gujarat University, Ahmedabad-9 (India), 1970.
Vishnu Bhagwan in his book *Indian Political Thinkers* describes about ancient and modern Indian political thinkers. The analytical appraisal of thought of Manu and Kautilya the doyennes of Indian political thinking is important to us in the field of political science, history and public administration. The author has given a brief note on Manu and Kautilya’s lifetime, State, kingship and their responsibilities toward territory and administration, inter-state relations, and their social system and most part of this book is concerned with modern political thinkers.

Dr. Ravindra Prasad’s (eds) *Administrative Thinkers*, 1991 deals briefly on the administration of Kautilya in ancient times. This article is not concerned with the historical veracity of Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*. It briefly sets out the pattern of public administration contained in that renewed work. An article in this book about *Arthashastra* merely puts forth certain salient features of the pattern of public administration. The study of *Arthashastra* in three parts: science

---

9. Vishnu Bhagwan; *Indian Political Thinkers*, Atma Ram and Sons, Delhi, Lacknow, 2002.
of public administration, the principles of public administration and
the machinery of government and the personnel.

Ram Rattan and Ruchi Tyagi’s book *Indian Political Thought*\(^{11}\)
gives only a brief sketch of Arthashastra, its major portion is related
with modern thinkers of India. They have discussed about the
philosophy of state and the art of governance given by Kautilya in his
Arthasastra. They have given a systematical division to Arthasastra in
three parts. Though it is a short note on Kautilya’s philosophy, but it
has a much great importance for researchers.

Beni Prasad in his book *Theory of Government in Ancient India*\(^{12}\)
to says that India made notable contributions to the theory of politics
and that constitutional monarchy was early recognized. Beni Prasad’s
study of political science has enabled him more effectively than his
predecessors. The author presents a wealth of interesting matter,
illuminating the whole course of Indian History. He has given the
essential data from the epics, the Dharma *Sutras* and *Sastras*, the
commentators, the *puranas* and the *Nitisasstras*. He presents a just
and trustworthy account of Indian political thought.

Kautilya, *The Arthasastra*\(^{13}\) is an extra-ordinary detailed manual
on statecraft and the science of living by one of classical India’s
greatest minds. Kautilya also known as Chanakaya and Vishnugupta,
wrote the Arthasastre not later than 150 A.D. His genius is reflected
in this volume, which is the most comprehensive treatise of statecraft

---

11. Ram Rattan, Ruchi Tyagi; *Indian Political Thought*, Mayoor, Paperbacks, A-95,
Sec.-5, Noida-201301
12. Beni Prasaed; *Theory of Government in Ancient India*, Central Book Depot,
Allahabad, 1968.
of classical time. It is written mainly in prose but also incorporates 380 shlokas.

*Kautilya’s Arthashastra*\(^{14}\) authored by B. K. Chaturvedi is a work of exceptional interest and value which is believed to have been written by Chanakya under the pseudonymn ‘Kautilya’, during the period 321-296 B.C. As far as Indian way of life is concerned, this ‘Arthashastra’ is a major work comparable only with the great Mahabharat, and in certain details of the ancient Indian life, this excels even the great epic by Vedvyasa. If one has to get rid of one’s enemy, no holds are barred. This present work is an abridged translation of this treatise. The effort has been to choose only those particular passages which have their relevance to a modern mind.

R. Shamasastry (tr.); *The Arthashastra*\(^{15}\) is based on the celebrated works of Kautilya, an ancient philosopher popularly called the Aristotle and Machiavelli of India. This book sets forth strategies for success on issues of planning, personnel, productivity, problem-solving, conflict management, security, stability, and social relations that are still applied today. His commentary is rich with insightful parallels from eastern and western philosophical traditions no other living western author or translator could draw with such clarity.

**Justification of Study**

The review of available literature shows a lot of scholarly work is available on both the thinkers but to the best of the knowledge of the researcher none of the works makes a comprehensive comparative study of the two to know the minutest differences in their approach.

---

and thinking. Therefore to fill this gap in the existing knowledge the present study has been undertaken.

**Objectives**

The major objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To analyse comparatively views of Manu and Kautilya on the state, king and kingship.
2. To have a comparative study of the views of Manu and Kautilya regarding inter-state relations and diplomacy.
3. To examine comparatively the views of Manu and Kautilya on dandniti.
4. To examine the comparative relevance of ideas of Manu and Kautilya in the present times.

**Methodology**

The present study is an attempt to have a comparative analysis of the major political and administrative ideas of Manu and Kautilya. Therefore, its method of study is comparative and analytical. The study was conducted mainly using the already existing literature about the ideas of both the thinkers. An attempt has been made to use all the important works including books, articles, commentaries and original translated works of both the thinkers. Whereas necessary online data has also been utilised. The study is based on the both primary and secondary sources. More emphasis has been laid on Historical method.

**Chapterization**

The study has been divided into six chapters.

1. The First Chapter is of introductory nature, which introduces the entire project of the study including objectives, importance and justification of study, methodology, and scheme of chapterisation.
2. The Second Chapter delves into a comparative study of views of Manu and Kautilya on State, King and Kingship.

3. The Third chapter examines comparatively the views of Manu and Kautilya on administration of justice (Dandniti).

4. The Fourth Chapter analyses comparatively Manu and Kautilya’s ideas regarding inter-state relations and diplomacy.

5. The Fifth Chapter deals with the comparative relevance of ideas of Manu and Kautilya in modern times.

6. The Sixth Chapter concludes the study.

7. Bibliography