CHAPTER V
DIGVIJAYA AND ANCIENT INDIAN SOCIETY

It is a well known fact that every society develop in an evolutionary way. Consisting of various institutions it incorporates various changes occurred from time to time. In this regard, several decisive factors such as economic, political, religious, new innovations in technology etc. while playing their role tend to bring such changes. Among such factors invasions or activities of warfare acts prominently that the effected society comes out with a pregnancy to deliver several far reaching consequences. Ancient Indian society also passed through such process which conceived series of war. Thus it declared various social changes. It is noteworthy that the political thinkers not only justified wars as a mean to establish a strong nation but also glorified them. In this whole complexive system the doctrine of digvijaya and mandala theory were exclusively brought forward to serve the purpose.

In fact, wars provide tensions, insecurity, destructions, migration, etc. to the society. As a result, effected people either have to adopt the winner's socio-cultural traditions or prefer to adopt alternates so that they may overcome the degeneration or degradation of their socio-moral values. The similar remedials seemed to be adopted by our forefathers. In this context, we find beginning of sati custom, introduction of child marriage,
emergence of professional warrior class, rising number of war slaves, etc. They were outcomes of war fought under the doctrine of *digvijaya*

A. Movements and Migrations – Wanton Slaughter of Men, Women and Children:

Under the policy of *digvijaya* the prominent Greeds viz. *lobhavijaya* and *asuravijaya* revolved in mind of emperor. The humane rules of warfare were not followed since war only became the order of the day and thus the feudal yoke became more and more oppressive. All means began to be regarded as fair, which were likely to ensure self-preservation or victory. In this regard, Kautilya provides the common sense advice; if a state has immense superiority over its opponent, it should follow the chivalrous code (*dharmayudha*); otherwise it should have recourse to all methods of warfare, whether fair or foul.\(^1\) Similarly, Bhīṣma\(^2\) also opined the same view. The war taking place between Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas also testifies such views when they violated the rules of righteous warfare.

In order to ensure the victory or *digvijaya* the invader pursued the practice of *kūṭayudah* in which he had to devastate the enemy's country as suggested by ancient thinkers. During the course of war not only the houses and

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2. *Mbh.*, XII. 140.
palaces but villages and stores were also burnt down.\(^3\) Moreover, the situation seemed to become more tense at the slaughtering of the poor men, women and children. The suffering people usually migrated to some other areas for shelter. The crops and stores were also burnt down by the invaders. It further compelled people to migrate some other safe places and perhaps it was towards madhayama or udāsina kings' state of Kautilya's mandal theory. Such migrations were also justified by thinkers who clearly opined that if a king was tyrannical, the sufferer masses should migrate from their country and go to another place which was better governed.\(^4\)

Massive destruction and deforestation of crops and trees caused for artificial famine.\(^5\) Such an artificial famine severely affected the country which had very slow means of communication and transportation. Carvans and boats were the only means by which surplus agricultural and industrial products could be transported from one place to another. As a result relief measures for such an afflicted areas were neither immediate nor easy to be provided.\(^6\) Under such a compulsion, the affected people had to move and migrate towards safe places. Unfortunately, during such

\(^3\) A.S. Altekar, *op.cit.*, pp. 298-299.
\(^4\) Sukranitisara, IV 13.
\(^6\) Ibid.
migration, the sufferers had to go on through wanton slaughter of men, women and children. Consequently, the war or the doctrine of *digvijaya* adversely affected the invaded kingdoms which suffered in various ways.

B. Social Change:

Alongwith politico-economic structure, the doctrine of *digvijaya* also simultaneously affected the social order of the then society. Infact, some of the social institutions which were associated with political system and institutions such as the custom of *sati*, child marriage, decline of social values, etc. got accelerated. Beside, the changing social scenario of the then period also witnesses some other effects made by the doctrine of *digvijaya*.

1. Sati:

So far as the efficacious custom of *sati* is concerned though it seems to be a later accretion; as a we get only scantly references to the ritualistic survival of the custom during pre-Dharmasūtra period. It is believed that this practice was prevalent among ancient Greeks, Germans, Slaves and other races. Such prevalence considerably influenced the nobles and princely class of India in the initial stages.7

It is noteworthy that neither a Vedic passage nor any reference of grhyasutra contains any direction prescribing the procedure of widow burning. Perhaps the custom arose in

Brāhmaṇical way of life a few centuries before Christ. Similarly, the aspect of its origin (either Indian or non Indian) also still remains as unsolved riddle. It is none other than Viṣṇu Dh. S. which contains reference of satī. But the Manusmṛti is quite silent about it.⁸ Significantly, it is stated that the Greeks under Alexander found practice of satī among the cathaei in the Punjab.⁹ While the Viṣṇu Dh. S. leaving it on the will of widow states, 'on her husband's death the widow should observe celibacy or should ascend the funeral pyre after him.'¹⁰ There are numerous epigraphic records in the Gutpa inscriptions referring satī practice. Similarly, the Eran posthumous stone pillar inscription of Goparāja talks about the event of her wife's immolation on his funereal pyre.¹¹ In Nepal Inscription of 705 A.D., Rājyavati, widow of Dharmadeva, asked her son Mahādeva to take up the reins of government because she would follow her husband.¹² A grant was made in Śaka 1103 to a temple by Sinda Mahāmandalesvara Rachamalla on a request made by two satī widows of his general Becirāja.¹³

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⁹. Ibid.
¹⁰. Viṣṇu Dh.S., I. 86.
¹¹. P.V. Kane, op.cit., p. 629.
refers to Manikyadevi who became satī on the death of her husband Amana (an officer of king Harīśchandra).  

The practice of satī is also testified by the visit of Huen-Tsang, a Chinese pilgrim. He remains silent about satī and merely talks about the non practice of remarriage. However, the intention of Harṣa's mother to commit self-immolation with her husband's dead body leaves no iota of doubt that the custom of satī was prevalent during Harṣa's period. In the same context, the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata as well as the Viṣṇu Purāṇa provide references about cases of self-immolation. So far as the hetrodox sects are concerned the Jain literature does not speak about satī; the Buddhist probably deterred it. Only by a palatable falsification of hymn has the existence of the custom forcible put into the text.

2. Child Marriage (Bāla Vivāha):

The Vedic society knew no child-marriage. Having an equivalent position to that of boys, the girls even could remain unmarried throughout life. However, Vas. Dh. S.

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refers to her degrading position. But by the Mauryan period, she was not only ritualistically reduced to the status of the Śūdras but also fully turned into dependent on her parents. Her right to education was withdrawn and trainings confined to domestic affairs only. In a net shell it can be said that pre-Christian centuries witnessed females secondary rate status in comparison to that of male. Consequently, a trend in pre-puberty marriage of girls was rapidly evolving. Kauṭilya, in this regard, asked the parents to marry their daughters at the age of twelve years. It is noteworthy that pre-puberty marriage came into vogue since the beginning of the Christian era.

Along with the degradation of traditional social order, the foreign invasions and other warfares also decisively acted in this context. It is asserted that a series of foreign invasions particularly after Alexander's invasion severely effected the institution of marriage in the case of girls. After their victories entitled as asuravijya some of the invaders either forcibly married themselves with Indian girls or kidnapped minor girls. As a result, parents began to marry their minor daughters at the early age in order to

20. Vas. Dh. S., 17.70.
over come the situation.24

3. Increasing number of widows:

The endless series of wars in ancient India increased the number of widows because of the countless casualties happened in the wars. The widow is stated as anāthā. The state of widowhood is described the greatest calamity for a woman. This state was more acute if the widow was issueless. It shows that wars made the widows a luckless creature and an object of piety.

4. Slavery:

It seems that wars in ancient India played an important role in the origin of slavery. During the wars, the conquerors used to make captive the people in enemys' state and they were made slaves in their states. Their services were taken for domestic and agricultural purposes. Gaṇḍavaḥo (697, p. 191), a later work, informs us that even the members of subjugated royal families were treated as domestic slaves. Thus, a new class of people was created in the society. In course of time, particularly after the Guptas, the wars aimed also for the subjugation of the enemy’s people to make them slaves as the landed property under the growth of feudalism required servants to work in the fields. Thus it

24. Ibid.
The concept of digvijaya paved way for the social change in society.

5. Chaotic Conditions of Social Order and Decline of Values:

The Rgvedic Āryans realized that there was order everywhere in creation. They called this cosmic order, the early Vedic form of dharma (ṛta). The controller of this cosmic order was called Varuṇa. The god Varuṇa was expected to punish those who did not fulfill their assigned duties. Simultaneously, the term dharma was used in the sense of social order which was considered capable of holding harmonious working condition in India.

For maintaining this social order every man was expected to control his desires, feelings, thoughts, instincts and needs. Making the social synthesis an ideal, the thinkers associated it with socio-moral values which every individual inherited from his forefathers. The aspects of reason and knowledge were further attached with values so that man might continue his duty appropriately under all circumstances. Consequently, these values of life find expression in the form of our conduct, duties and mutual relationships. In brief the classical social organization was based on these values of life. It was expected that every

25. RV, V. 85.
26. RV, I. 187. 1 and X. 92.2.
individual should conduct pro-social system so that all round progress could be achieved in the society. In the same context, Kautilya lays down 'non-violence, truth, purity, not to speak ill of others, kindness and forgiveness are the virtues which persons of all classes and in all stages should follow. 27

Right from the later Vedic period, the traditional society was divided into four varṇas (Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras) 28 enjoined upon the members of each varṇa the performance of certain duties.

This four tier social structure integrated all sections whether they were rich or the poor, the intelligent and the less intelligent. However, privileges conferred upon some sections in this social system also mismanaged in some ways. For example, it arrested intellectual development of a major section of the society because education was meant only for the upper sections of the society. Therefore, it created a feeling that intellectual development was far superior to manual work. It degraded arts and crafts and resulted in the destruction of economic guilds. Consequently, such a disparity began to pave the way for the socio-economic degradation and violation of duties assigned to various professional groups. Especially, the violation of marriage

27. O. Parkash, Religion and Society in Ancient India, p. 100.
28. Ibid., p. 108.
rules prominently affected the pre-existing classical social system. Further, foreign invaders and marauders and as well as Indian kings also accelerated the inter varṇa marriages. Such type of marriages were called *amuloma* and *pratiloma* marriages.\(^{29}\) Contrarily the classical thinkers came forward with the restoration programme. In this regard, the *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* ordained that the upper three castes would respectively reborn as Chāṇḍāla, Pukkasa and Veṇa if they commit theft in this birth. Similarly, Baudhāyana opined that all these castes came into existence as a result of mixed marriages.\(^{30}\)

The observations made above help to observe that if deterioration in varṇa system tended to decline it the economic system at one hand, the concepts of *lobha* and *asuravijaya* caused for the destruction of the cities or villages on the other.

The infiltration of foreigners in society further disintegrated the varṇa system. Moreover, the doctrine of *digvijaya* while establishing new big kingdoms also paved a way for the changes which occurred in the classical society. In order to successfully govern the state, the king appointed detectives and other employees. Sometimes some of the politically ambitious officers while acting as conspirators even killed kings as Puṣyamitra Śuṅga did

\(^{29}\) *Baudh. Dh. S.*, I. 8. 16.2-5; *Vas. Dh. S.* I. 24-25.

\(^{30}\) O. Parkash, *op.cit.*, p. 118.
against last Mauryan king Brhadhratha.

Various impacts on its society particularly degenerating social order and moral value system, the infiltration of foreigners and social upheavals of various kinds brought numerous changes. However, they could not bring absolute change in social organization. It maintained its basic cultural peculiarities even under Muslim rule and resisted aliens and their ways by social ostracism and sheer non recognition of everything alien. If the Ksatriyas resisted the foreigners in every fort and village their women courted fire in order to leave a mighty tradition of unsullied chastity. According to Sydney Law "it is the main cause of the fundamental stability and contentment by which Indian society has been braced up for centuries against the shocks of politics and cataclysm of nature".31

6. Professional Warrior Class

The doctrines of sārvabhauma (ruler of the whole earth), chāturanta (ruler whose authority extends to four limits of the quarters), chakravartin (of whose chakra or wheel of the state chariot rolls everywhere) were associated with the Hindu theory of politico-religious sacrifices like Aśvamedha, Rājasūya, Vājapeya, etc.32 In order to become paramount rulers the kings, went on waging senseless wars in their attempts to subdue those whom they thought they


could. In this regard the Vedic king could do nothing fruitful as they lacked in sufficient standing army. He depended on local levies who brought their own armies and weapons in times of war. These levies were provided by the smaller tribal chiefs. This army consisted of both kṣatriyas and the vis who constituted the ordinary kinsmen. Significantly, the Mahābhārata highlights that the kin based units did not work because of their conflict within he emerging varṇa order. It can be testified with the story of war fought between the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas. It does not show the presence of a state system although we hear of huge number of people fighting in the war. They were not paid soldiers but either included the kinsmen or relatives of both the parties. For example, the main soldiery of the Pāṇḍavas consisted of the Yādava contingents was supplied by their relative Kṛṣṇa.

The danda or army which constituted a very important limb of the state has been defined by Sukra as a body consisting especially of men provided with weapons and missiles. It was said that "if there is no army, there is

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no government, no wealth, no power.\textsuperscript{37} It is by resorting to
the arms that a king could win over demons and the gods alike. Therefore, "... a king should..... zealously
maintain an unconquerrable army."\textsuperscript{38}

Generally, the army composed of the following types of
troops: (a) Regular troops (b) Feudal levies (c) Irregular
levies (d) corporation troops.\textsuperscript{39} The most efficient and
reliable section of the army was formed by the regular
troops of the state. This portion of the army was generally
composed of a professional class of troops who were either
hereditary troops or were mercenaries. Usually the
hereditary troops were well known for their loyalty,
swordsmanship and spirit of sacrifice. They also formed the
personal bodyguards of the king. Some of them even could go
to the extent of committing voluntary self-immolation at the
death of king. For example, at the time of
Prabhākarvardhana's death (the father of Hārṣa) a number of
his ministers, servants and even his physician committed
self immolation in his pyre.\textsuperscript{40}

Among all four sections, the hereditary troops were
treated with special respect and reputation as we find in
case of Sultans of Delhi who laid even a condition in this

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p. 83.
\textsuperscript{38} G. Oppert, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{39} S.K. Bhakari, \textit{Indian Warfare}, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
regard, that only that person would be enrolled as a cavalier, whose forefathers had been outstanding horsemen and had never been accused of scheming and rebellion against the state.\footnote{41} It is noteworthy that such type of hereditary troops were successfully forming a prominent part of army right from the days of Kauṭilya who termed them as "maula" troops.\footnote{42}

Generally, foreign soldiers and officers were also employed in the regular armies in order to make it strengthened. But this idea was not adopted by all states. In fact, the martial traditions of the concerned state decided the aspect of their inclusion. As we find that Gurjara-Pratihāras did not have need of foreign mercenaries.\footnote{43} Whereas, numerous states had employed foreigners in their troops. For example the king Dahir of Sind had 500 Arab troops in his service\footnote{44} had also been sanctioned by the \textit{Arthasastra}.\footnote{45} As a result, the Kṣatriya's monopoly upon fighting received a sound set back. Consequently the entry to army in case of common men became feasible.

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\footnote{41}{S.A.A. Rizvi, \textit{History of early Turkish Rule in India}, p. 144.}
\footnote{42}{\textit{Arthasastra}, IX. 2.}
\footnote{43}{C.V. Vaidya, \textit{History of Mediaeval Hindu India}, vol. II, p. 244.}
\footnote{44}{Elliot and Douson, \textit{The History of India}, I, p. 156.}
\footnote{45}{\textit{Arthasastra}, IX. II.}
Besides the hereditary troops, the second major category belonged to the troops which were supplied by feudatory chief in accordance with their terms and conditions. It can be testified with the information provided by Dhanapāla's Tilakamañjarī which highlights the condition of c. 1000 A.D. In the same context, we notice that whole of Uttarāpatha alongwith chief towns and villages of Kashmir appear to have been assigned to prince Harivāhana and the remaining territories to his companion Samarketu and Kamalagupta. They in turn distributed their territories among the Rājaputras as per their merits or eligibility. Probably those were the people who formed maula element in the army of feudal lords.46

It can fairly be observed that most of the leading dynasties of India used to maintain large standing armies. But along with this when grave emergencies cropped up imperiling national security, the local levies were raised in accordance with the old Vedic practice.47 These irregular levies were composed of all sorts of people, gentlemen and even bandits. Having no fighting tradition and scare training, this category of troops were considered a very unreliable wing. In this regard it has been rightly asserted by Basham that "when battle was raging in all its fury, and

46. A.L. Basham, The Wonder that was India, p. 94.
unable to sustain the onslaughts of the enemy, they easily took to their heels, leaving the rest either to die or to follow them in their flight. Irregular levies, therefore, formed the most inefficient, frailest and undependable lot, who merely added to the mass. Sometimes at the victory of war these levies unwillingly tortured and looted the subjugated masses. Such a devilish exposure tended to change the aim of war from Dharma Vijaya to Asuravijaya.

7. Ayudhajivī Samghas:

The srenīs or guilds usually played a significant role in the economic structure of the ancient Indian society. The traders and artisans formed their own ganas or corporations. Some of these corporation's emerged even so powerful that they dominated most of the state's economic policies. For example, a corporation of elephant drivers which wielding considerable power and influence has been recorded by the Nagardhan plates (belonging to 7th cent A.D.) of Swamrāja. Its assembly was called samūha whose president and members of the executive committee were called sthavira and pramukhas respectively. They also included the pilupati (chief of the elephant force) and the physicians of elephants (hastivaidya). They even affixed the seal of their corporation on the grant.

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49. CII, IV. Part. II. No. 120, pp. 611-17.
These guilds and corporations had their own militia which could be called upon to serve the state when required. A leading military śrenī like the Swiss guard of medieval Europe formed itself into a quasi-military corporation. Its soldiers rendered their services at the disposal of the highest bidder on the occasion of war between two or more states. They were entitled as the āyudha jīvī saṅgha (guilds by Pāṇini. Their livelihood depended upon the profession of arms and included Vāhalikas, Yaudheyas, etc. In this regard Monhan opines that such military śrenīs acting as special troops... were enlisted in the royal army under their own chiefs. They would be called śrenīs from analogy to trade guilds and no doubt, served for pay...... They seemed to be like the corporation enlisted in the troop of Lichchhivika, Vṛjika, Mallaka, Madraka, Kakura, Kuru, Pañchāla and others as refereed by Kautilyan Arthaśāstra. It is stated that they served under leaders who styled themselves as rājās.

Another category of the śrenī was the kṣatriya śrenī (corporation of warriors), which had settled down to one or the other art or industry. Side by side they carried on the profession of arms, like the Kṣatriyas of Kamoja and

50. Ibid., IV. part I, p. clxx.
51. P.C. Chakravarty, op.cit., p. 5.
53. Arthaśāstra, XI. 1.
Saurāṭra who lived by agriculture, trade and wielding weapons. 54

Some of the guilds (recorded by inscription) which resembled to the similar nature can be drawn from Mandsor Inscription of Kumāragupta I and Bandhuvarman. They speak about the silk weavers guild whose members were well versed in archery and annihilated their enemies in battle by fighting valiantly. 55

The third category of śrenībala was the militia maintained by some of the corporations or the guilds. They could be ordained to render their service for the state at the requirement 56 as above referred. Infact, the maintenance of militia forces by the trade guilds was needed for the protection of their trading rights, centres and caravans. The rising insecurity due to the ravages of frequent wars and foreign invasion further increased their demand. Having their private armies, these corporations assumed tremendous importance from time to time. Besides, such troops, obviously provided extra source of strength to the rulers.

Moreover, they sometimes working as reversely also caused as nightmare to the kings. So far as the reasons are concerned these are as follows: firstly, being armed and

54. Arthaśāstra, I. 1.
55. CII, III. No. 18.
56. CII, I, p. CLXX.
having narrow parochial loyalties they got indulged in frequent armed brawls.\textsuperscript{57} Secondly, they at that times, could not endure calamities and were susceptible to enemy "intrigues and other passions.\textsuperscript{58} It was quite a challenge to the mental ingenuity of the ruler to keep these turbulent bodies of men pre-occupied with the tackling of complex political situations. In this regard it was advised that a corporation of armed men should be provided with "a piece of land constantly under troubles from an enemy; the combination of corporations with a piece of land close to the territory of a powerful king; a corporation invincible in war with a piece of land, under both the above troubles.\textsuperscript{59} The rulers made use of many contrivancies for handling corporations such as sowing seeds of dissension, causing 'childish embroils', occasioning "quarrel among the leaders in taverns and threaters," exciting "ambition, giving publicity to the acts of nepotism, destroying at night the things, beasts, or persons concerned in some legal disputes"; existing love for and jealousy because of women, so on and so forth.\textsuperscript{60} All this truly brings out the seriousness of the menace posed by them to the sovereignty of the kings. In regard to the contribution made by these

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{57} Naradasmṛti, X. VL; P.C. Chakravarty, op.cit., p. 8.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Arthaśāstra, VII. 11.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Ibid., VII. 16.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Ibid., XI. I.
\end{itemize}
guilds, it can fairly be concluded that these corporation have been working as instrumental for the rise and fall of ruling dynasties. In addition to this they also had been playing an important role in the political system and institutions of India under the period of study.