CHAPTER IX
DIGVIJAYA AND ANCIENT INDIAN POLITICS

In ancient India, empires arose as a result of the struggle for supremacy among congeries of states. The means adopted for the building of the empire was the *digvijaya* or conquest of quarters which was pursued within the bounds of safety. In this context, the *maṇḍala* theory, *Āśvamedha* and other sacrifices, were specially employed. Once the conquest was complete, the vanquished kings were reinstated in their kingdom as a matter of principle. They acted independently for all practical purposes. But the limitation of their independence was that they had to owe allegiance to the paramount king, either in the form of tribute or personal service. Such empires could not possess unified control, could not have an administrative machinery co-extensive with sphere of influence, i.e. *maṇḍala*, and guided from centre. They arose invariably after a foreign invasion, and necessity retained a military character. This military character was brought out by the *digvijaya* which was the genesis of the empires. It is needless to explain that such a character of certain empires would have worked as basis. However, its engineering was not so simple but included various concepts, and complexive ideas which worked as determining factors. The forgoing examination of such concepts, especially the *digvijaya* and its relevance towards the ancient state and politics, becomes quite necessary so
that we may understand their origin and evolutionary stages. Further, the emerging trend in development of state has also been examined.

1. Conquest and Nature of State:

The early Vedic society being tribal in nature generally remained king-less. However, the tribal leaders, who led as commanders of their group men in warrior activities, also acted as ruler of their tribal fellow-men. Such warfares usually aimed at ensuring and securing their pastoral economic interests. Besides, enslavement of males as well as females through subjugation of non-Āryan tribesmen was another important motive. Significantly, the use of metallic weapons and the efficient leadership converted Āryans as master of non-Āryans. Earlier the men began to organise themselves for the purpose of defence. They continued fight on foot with weapons of wood and stone until they discovered the use of metal. The invention of metallic weapons provided evolutionary change in their life and played a vital role in the establishment of the kingdoms.

Meanwhile, the Vedic literature testifies not only to the origin of king's rank but also the evolution and growth of a military hierarchy. So far as the rank of king is concerned it is asserted that the king, the supreme commander in the battle, grew out of warfare. In the same context, Indra the divine leader of war was respectfully recognized as the saviour and conqueror, who rose to
Significantly, the most important function of the king, was sought to protect his own subjects while retaining his power alongwith enhancement of his position.

Having successful kings as war leaders, the enthusiastic political thinkers came forward with concept for universal conquest (digvijaya) as a required ideal of the then period. In this regard they sought the position of their king as universal monarch, through performance of Rājasūya or Aśvamedha yajaṅs whose nature was politico-religious. It is asserted that the concept for universal conquest was perhaps born out of the battle of the ten kings in which the victorious side was led by Sudāsa.

It seems that most of the battles fought during pre-Mauryan times aimed at establishing one's supremacy over other kings or states as the Śat. Br. reveals about the struggles for suzerainty among the monarchs of ancient times when they delighted in arresting the progress of each other's sacrificial horse. The idea working behind the horse-sacrifice was only to collect tribute and to establish his superiority and not to annex the territory of subjugated state or king. It is also testified with the statement of

2. RV, III, 43.5
3. P.V. Kane, *op.cit.*, p. 70.
5. Śat. Br., XIII. 5.4. 19-22.
Arjuna who expressly says in *Sabhāparva*⁶ that he would bring tribute from all kings. Further the conquered kings have been told as submitting and making presents of gems, golds, horses and cows to the conqueror.⁷ Making a precautionary comment the *Viṣṇu Dh.S*⁸ enjoins upon the conqueror not to uproot the usages of the conquered country to establish in its capital some kinsmen (of the slain king) and not to destroy the royal families unless it be of low birth. *Mannu*⁹ also prescribed similar rule. Whereas the *Rāmāyaṇa*¹⁰ making a directive note asked the winner king to ensure stable government after uprooting the defeated King, either rethroning the same king or athroning another king.

What is noteworthy in this regard is that specific battle norms were framed and formulated. Someone who surrendered was generally not to be slain by the conqueror. Similarly, the life of wounded or fleeing away from the battle field was to be spared. Interestingly, the prisoners of war, if wounded, were to be cared by the army physicians. During war the Āryans who were converted slaves were usually

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7. P.V. Kane, *op.cit.*, p. 68.
exempted from their sale and liberated after the war. The early Vedic ideal of war i.e., collections of taxes from subjugated state after establishing superiority seems to have changed during later Vedic period. It all happened due to formation of big towns and state because of availability of sufficient agricultural surplus during 6th cent. B.C. Alongwith the formations of big states the problem of administration simultaneously arose. Further, these material sinews helped the expansion of Ujjain, Kosala and Magadha, which incorporated non-Vedic areas and peoples into their kingdoms with the result that they became less homogenous. The rise of large states with towns as their base of operations strengthened the idea of establishing a big kingdom under one emperor. This practice adopted by Nandas, aimed at establishment of sovereignty. Idea of an ideal conquest was not followed and they established a big empire by raiding the kingdoms of the neighbourhood and marching against the cities of the frontiers, giving them the ultimatum: 'Either surrender your kingdom, or give battle'. In the same context Mahapadmananda is called

Ekachhatra', in Purāṇa Thus, we notice that the concept of annexing the territories in order to establish a big empire was becoming strengthen and it gave a new direction to ancient Indian politics.

2. Emergence of Statehood and Empire:

The words 'state' and 'empire' both separately have different meanings, but in one sense state is a part of an empire because 'empire' is a mahārājya which consisted of a federation of small states. Sāmarājya was also something like an empire in which the other smaller states were allowed to continue as subordinate states. So, state seems to be a part of empire while Kane is of the opinion that sāmarājya and mahārājya both were also a type for state. He also classifies the state into eight types viz. sāmarājya, bhaujya, swarājya, permeṣṭhya rājya, mahārājya, ādipatyanaya and samantipriyai.

So far as the origin of state is concerned, numerous legends and mythologies, developed among people already accustomed to political life, highlight certain circumstances. Under such circumstances they first time got associated themselves into a developing political

16. B.L. Sharma, Economic Ideas in Ancient India, p. 55.
17. Ibid.
organization. In this regard, we have occasional speculations on the origin of the state in the *Mahābhārata*\textsuperscript{19} and *Dīghanikāya*.\textsuperscript{20} Similarly the *Śāntiparvā*\textsuperscript{21} also narrates in a legend form that earlier society which flourished without a king or law court did not last for a long time. With its failure moral degeneration, greed, selfishness and cupidity began to sway in people's mind. Consequently, the existing earthly paradise was soon converted into a veritable hell. Being the law of the jungle it was termed as *mātsyanyāya*. In order to restore the law and order, gods went to Brahmadeva, the chief god, who with the creation of an asexual son, named Virajas appointed him as a king. The people agreed to obey his orders and thus rank of king took origin. In the same context, at another place, the same story has been repeated with slight divergence. It talks about the appointment of Manu as a king (by creator) so that he could prolong the mutual contract among people for smooth functioning of various aspects of society.

The non-Brahmanical literature also provide references of such legends. As we find in the version of *Dīghanikāya*\textsuperscript{22} where it is explained that there the ongoing golden age (i.e. age of all round virtue and happiness) of dim past

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{19} *Mbh.*, XII. 58.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} *Dīghanikāya*, vol. III, pp. 84-96.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} *Mbh.*, XII. 58.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} *Dīghanikāya*, vol. III, pp. 84-96.
\end{itemize}
could not continue. In its place there arose anarchy and chaos. Eventually, there arose on the scene a wise virtuous person named Mahāyanasammata, who was born asexually. People requested him to become their king to overcome the prevailing chaos. Besides request the people offered him a part of their paddy in return for his services. Accepting their request he agreed to become their king and thus law and order was restored.

Taking the above survey into consideration it can be fairly said that at the diring demand of people the rank of tribal chief was converted into the post of king. Meanwhile he or his representative was also equipped with rules as his administrative tools. Gradually, the states began to form and most of then assumed monarchy form of administration while some other were holding aristocratic as well as republican nature also.

Such a view point can also be testified with numerous titles such as referred to the chiefs of specific Rgvedic tribes like the Yadus, the Purus, the Anus, the Turvasas etc. So far their state is concerned the reference regarding the notion of a rāṣṭra or a territorial state, which was being gradually, evolved as referred to in Atharvaveda.

24. *AV*, XX. 127. 9-10; XIX. 30. 3-4.
In the Vedic period monarchy was the normal form of government where king ruled with various titles such as rājā (a king), mahārājā (a great king), and samrāṭa (an emperor) as per their power and prestige. Some of them were called svarājjas and bhojas who were probably the feudatories and zamīndāras. They are also gleaned by Ait. Br. as the different types of states like rājya, bhaujya, vairājya and samrājya flourishing in different provinces of the country. The term vairājya denotes that a republic system i.e., a state without king was also in existence. The state where two kings simultaneously ruled with harmony was called dvairājya.

Some of Vedic references bring to our notice that sometimes kings met together in an assembly where a person alone could become a king with the consent and permission of the assembly. These passages indicate to the prevailing positive environment in to the favour of an oligarchy, where power was vested in a council of nobles. In such a system each member was entitled to call himself a kin and had a right to elect the chief of the state, who also was called a

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28. Ibid.
29. RV, X. 97.6.
30. Āt. Br., IX. 3.2.5.
Besides monarchy and oligarchy, there also existed republican government which was continuing even from early Vedic period. In the vicinity of the Himalayas, Uttara Kurus and Uttaramadras were called virat. (kingless), which seems to indicate that these people had certainly non-monarchical or republican form of government.  

Interestingly some of the prominent villages growing as big towns evolved their own system at administration. The Mahabharata clearly refers to such powerful *gramas* as city states. Most of these cities like Tripuri, Madhyamika, Ujjayini, Varanasi, Kausambi etc. also issued their coins.

It seems that before their conversion into capitals they were working as city states with their own authority in case of coins. With the government for aristocratic class some of the city states should have brought under their control some of the outlying villages.

Another development from administration point of view was establishment for composite and confederate states. The Kurupañchālas in the later Vedic period seem to have formed such a composite state which was ruled by a common king. Similarly, the Kṣudrakas and the Malavas which are referred

32. Ibid
33. *Mbh.*, II. 32.9
to separate states in the days of Pāṇini were very frequently mentioned as composite state in the Mahābhārata. Likewise, the Yaudheya republican states seems to have comprised three sub states.35

The states in ancient India were normally unitary in character. King was main source from which the ministers and provincial governors derived their power. It is noteworthy that the thinkers did not provide any specific yardstick to remark the areas for king's warfare. Infact, the whole country from the Himalayas to the sea could be the sphere for such activities. So far as smaller kingdoms are concerned, there used to be no natural boundaries for them. It can be fairly said that such states were usually small enough to be well governed and large enough to be self-sufficient.

Although there were several types of state in ancient India but no territorial size was fixed with. In other words the origin of state depended upon the origin of king's rank. As earlier discussed that rank of king took origin because of need of war-leader whose aim was to protect the law and order and to provide security to society. In this way the king acting as the head of the states was regarded to be like god Varuṇa (the upholder of the law and order)). He also punished the wicked and helped he virtuous people. Further, religion was to be promoted, morality was to be

35. Ibid.
encouraged and education was to be patronised\textsuperscript{36} by him. In the same context, the state however, was to secure not only the moral but also the material well-being of its citizens. It is needless to explain that in order to fulfil all his duties a king had to maintain his political and military supremacy as well as a sound kośa (treasury). In this regard he performed also the royal rituals like Āśvamedha, Rājasūya and Vājapeya. With the successful performance of these rituals the king as well as his state became more powerful and established superiority over others. Their ruling seats also became the centre of that empire as we find in the case of Pāṭaliputra during Nandas reign, Magadha during Guptas reign and Kannauj during Harṣa's reign. having a national character these states covered the whole areas under these important families and their state was treated as an empire. The small kings or feudatories paid the tribute to their masters who were known as the vijigīṣu.

3. Emergence of Feudal States:

The digvijayin or the sovereign king was not expected to annex the territory of a subjugated king. In other words, while converting into a subordinate state he left it without disturbing its autonomous character. He also issued villages or land pieces to his loyal persons. All this paved a way for the growth of feudal states. The feudatories used to appoint their representatives to the imperial court so that

\textsuperscript{36} Chhānd. Up., V. 11.5.
they could keep themselves in touch with their master to know about latest trends and developments at centre level. For example, Bankey, the feudatory governor of Banavāsi, had his representative named Gaṇapati at the court of the Raštrakūta emperor Amoghavarṣa I. (c. 850 A.D.).

The paramount king kept the feudatories under control as per his own capacity to make checks and balances over them. General obedience to imperial orders was expected and exacted. The feudatories were usually required to acknowledge their subordinate position in the official charters they issued by mentioning the name of the emperor first. They could not issue their coinage. Their attendance at the imperial court was required not only on ceremonial occasions, but also at periodical intervals. Epigraphs and literary works usually describe the imperial courts as teaming with feudatories who come to pay personal homage to the emperor. The regular tribute was generally sent to the imperial capital. However, the emperors also used to collect it sometimes during their tours. The feudatories were also expected to give special presents on the occasions of festivity in the imperial household like marriage or the birth of a son. The feudatories were even expected to offer their daughters in marriage, in case the emperor intended to wed them. Under the Guptas reign the kings who were reduced

37. EI, VI, p. 33.
38. IA, XI. p. 126.
to the feudatory status, used to be granted imperial charters re-granting them their territories under such conditions as were agreed upon.39

The internal autonomy depended upon the strength of feudal state. As we find in cases of such as the Uchchakalpas, the Pavivrājakas and the Varmans under the Guptas, the Gujarat branch rulers under the Rāstrakūṭas, and the Silāhāra kings under the Chālukyas and the Yādavas enjoyed large amount of internal autonomy. Some of them like the Uchchakalpas were so powerful that they did not even refer to the imperial power in their land grants. What is important to note is that with the payment of a certain amount of tribute, they enjoyed full internal autonomy. They even could appoint their own sub-feudatories along with their officers. Further they could assign taxes, alienate villages and even sell them without information to their emperor.40

The state of control which the proud feudatories were generally disposed to tolerate can be judged from an extract from a letter of Akkham, the Lohana chief of Brahmanabad, to Chacha, who called upon him to recognize his sovereignty, 'I have never shown you opposition or quarrelled with you. Your letter of friendship was received and I was much exalted by it. Our friendship shall remain and no animosity

39. Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta.
40. IA, XIII, p. 136; EI, III, p. 310.
shall arise. I will comply with your orders. You are at liberty to reside any place within the territory of Brahmanabad. If you have resolved to go in any other direction, there is nobody to prevent you or molest you. I possess such power and influence that I can render you aid.  

The freedom enjoyed by the feudatories depended upon the status of feudal lord. As we see in case of Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and Śatrughna Mahārāja, who were Vākāṭaka feudatories, Rudraṭa who was a feudatory of Vaināgupta, Parmagula, a subordinate ruler of Gaṅga king Śivāṁśa and Bhānuśakti, who owed allegiance to the Kadambas, all felt the necessity for securing imperial sanction for alienating the revenues of some villages in their own state. When Budhavarṣa, a feudatory of the Rāstrakūṭa emperor Govinda III, desired to grant a village to counteract the evil influence of Saturn, he had to supplicate for the permission of his feudal lord. Similarly, Śaṅkargana, a feudatory of the Rāstrakūṭa emperor Dhruva, is seen to take the imperial permission while making a village grant. The Kadambas also exercised a similar control over their feudatories. Another

41. Elliot and Dowson, History of India as told its own Historians, vol. I, p. 146.
42. CII, III, p. 236; IHQ, VI, p. 53; IA, VI, pp. 31-32.
43. IA, XII, p. 15.
44. EI, IX, p. 195.
similar example is in case of the Gurjara Pratihāra empire where feudatories even in the distant provinces like Kathiawar had to take imperial permission for the alienation of land or land revenues, which was usually paid through the resident Political Agents. Such agents used to sign the copper plate characters on behalf of the imperial power.⁴⁵ The same practice continued to reveal also under the Paramāras⁴⁶ in the 7th century in Kashmir.⁴⁷

The feudatories of lowest category were subjected to still greater control and interference. Their feudal overlords and even the latter's premiers are often seen granting away villages in their kingdoms. In the same context the Rāṣṭrakūṭa emperor Kṛṣṇa II gave a village in the jurisdiction of a Gujarāta feudatory of his, king Chandragupta.⁴⁸ The Paramāra king Naravarma gave twenty ploughs of land in a village of his feudatory Rāṇyadeva.⁴⁹ A feudatory of the Chālukya emperor Somesvara paid five gold coins for a certain charity because he was commanded to do so by the prime minister of the emperor.⁵⁰ Gaṅgadeva, a feudatory of the Paramāra king Jayavarman, is seen making a

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⁴⁵. Ibid., p. 9.
⁴⁷. IA, XII, p. 98.
⁴⁸. EI, I, p. 89.
⁴⁹. PRASIWC, 1920-21, P. 54.
⁵⁰. IA, I, p. 141.
land grant at the dictate of his sovereign.\textsuperscript{51}

Once a feudatory rebelled against his king and then defeated by the king in the war, was subjected to a number of indignities. For example Kumārapāla (c. 1150 A.D.) defeated and dethroned Vikramasimha a feudatory of his, and put the former's nephew upon the throne.\textsuperscript{52} Sometimes greater humiliations were in store for them; they were often compelled to sweep the stables of the conqueror.\textsuperscript{53} They had to surrender their treasures, horses and elephants as a punishment for their disloyalty. Often their states were taken over or annexed usually for a short period to give them some lesson.

Whenever the king or the central government became weak, the feudatories used to became practically independent. During the decline of the Gurjara Pratihāra empire a number of its feudatories quietly assumed the imperial title mahārājādhirāja parameśvara.\textsuperscript{54} They would discontinue mentioning the emperor's name in their charter, or refer to it only in a casual manner.

Their tributes would become weak more and more irregular. The imperial power, having become weak, would require their military support, and they could dictate their

\textsuperscript{51} EL, IX, pp. 120-23.
\textsuperscript{52} A.S. Altekar, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 307.
\textsuperscript{53} EL, XVIII, p. 248.
own terms when giving it. Thus Rāmapāla of Bengal had to pay a heavy price for getting the support of his feudatories to win the throne. Having a weak emperor the feudatories often started war in order to succeed to the imperial position. For example, the decline of the Chālukya power, the Yādavas, the Kalachuris and the Hoyasalas started a race to establish their hegemony on the Deccan in which the Yādavas eventually succeeded. Thus, the feudatories always cherished the hope throwing the imperial yoke one day.

Besides political supremacy the feudatories also remained busy in fray of establishing economic supremacy during collection of revenues. Śukra gives an interesting account of the grades and income of the different feudatories, because the status and power of the feudatories were not the same. Lowest in the rung of the ladder, sāmanta, had a revenue of a lakh of silver karṣas. then came māṇḍalika with a revenue of ten lakhs, raja with a revenue of twenty lakhs, mahāraja with a revenue of fifty lakhs, samrāṭ with a revenue of a crore, virat with a revenue of ten crores and sārvabhauma with a revenue of fifty crores. The scheme seems to be a theoretical and ideal one; it seems to be based more on the decimal calculations than on the realities of life. When terms like virat were in use, terms like sāmanta and māṇḍalika were not existent, as also the

Thus we find several grades of feudatories existing with different powers and incomes.

4. Sovereign and his Dependency on Feudatories:

The rethroning of defeated kings as feudatories was not a single sided business but, in fact, it was a reciprocal need. At one hand if it served the aim of paramountcy, it protected vested interests and favoured local autonomy on the other. However, it also instilled the element of instability (as its demerit) in the body politic as a regular feature. As a result the imperial king always had to keep a vigilant watch over their actions and intentions. But it could not disarm them, because the king needed their forces for his own purposes. Moreover, feudatories acted as the source of income for the imperial power. Furthermore, with the growth of feudalism the imperial powers were becoming more and more parasite on their feudatories.

The feudatories participated with supply of a certain number of troops in the service of their feudal lords during military campaigns. For examples, Kalachuri prince Sodhadeva (c. 850 A.D.) participated in the Bengal campaign of his suzerain Mihira Bhoja, Narasimha Chālukya (c. 910 A.D.) of southern Karnātaka fought in modern Uttar Pradesh against

56. Śukranītisāra, I. 183 ff.; Altekar, op.cit., pp. 303-304.

57. EI, XII, p. 101.
the Pratihāra emperor Mahīpāla on behalf of his overlord, the Rāṣṭrakūṭa emperor Indra III.58 The Chālukyas of Veṅgi had to supply forces to the Rāṣṭrakūṭas in their wars against Gaṅgas of Mysore during the 9th century. Nāgarasa, a feudatory of the Gaṅgas, had, at the bidding of his sovereign, to participate with his own forces in a feud between Ayyapadeva and Vīramhendra, wherein he lost his life.59 In the same context, Harṣacharita refers that a large number of army and horses sent in the Harṣa’s army belonged to his feudatories.60

Sometimes the powerful feudatories played a vital role for the continuity of his master's position especially during the period of weakening central power. The emperor also expected the support of their feudatories. Taking advantage of such condition the feudatories generally imposed their will through dictation of their own terms. The emperor in order to get support even had to pay to his feudatories under compulsion, as Rāmapāla of Bengal did. Sometimes during the war of succession their position became more important. With the exploitation of condition sometimes they even got success to put their own nominee on the throne and thus, acted the role of the king-makers. On such occasions they could pay off their old scores by imposing

58. A.S. Altekar, Rāṣṭrakūṭas and their times, p. 265.
59. Ibid., pp-91-94.
60. R.S. Sharma, Bhāratīya Sāmantavāda, p. 30.
their own terms on the new successors; the latter could hardly get or expect the same obedience to his orders from the feudatories who were his erstwhile benefactors.61

Most of the ancient Indian empires were merely loose federations of a number of feudatory kingdoms. They held together by masterful personalities for a few decades. Having imperial ambitions most of the feudatories aspired to the imperial status for themselves. Consequently big kingdoms and empires never remained in a state of equilibrium for a long time. Therefore, a constant tussle as a regular feature usually went on for the coveted position of a chakravartin as each king was expected to assure the expansion of his kingdom.62 It seems that the imperial king usually would have lived in suspense when any feudatory could rebel any time against imperial power.

Feudalism grown up in the shape of the conferment of fiscal and administrative immunities on priests and temples as a result of land grants. The practice introduced by the Sātavāhanas in the Deccan and developed on vast scale in central India where territories were held by the feudatories of the Guptas and in those held by the Vākāṭakas. The new fiscal concessions also transferred the royal rights over salt and mines to such feudatories which resulted the


curtailment of king's sovereignty on one hand and evolving decentralization of powers on the other. Similarly, the religious beneficiaries who were entitled to keep all collected taxes further adversely effected the central economy. In this regard the Gupta emperors went ahead while conferring the administrative privileges on the beneficiaries. They enjoyed freedom from the entry of royal agents, retainers, etc. which was also available in Sātavāhana regions. Further they were empowered with executive powers in order to punish the criminals upto guilty of ten offences. Interestingly the inhabitants under such beneficiaries were ordained by the king to obey their new masters and to carry out their orders. Thus, it was the beneficiary who bore the expenses of administration in his estate and ruled it with his salutary and stabilizing influence over the rural communities.

Keeping in view the evolving trend it can be fairly summed up that a process of decentralization of ruling powers had established under such circumstances the beneficiaries were working as the actual masters in socio-

64. Ibid.
65. R.S. Sharma, op.cit., pp. 81-82.
66. Ibid.
economic and political spheres. However, the central power could not be cornered. In fact the feudal lords were working as various autonomous bodies under a national entity. What is significant to note is that the central power was continuously weakening and the political instability had become a regular feature of the time. The increasing power of feudal lords also had become a routine feature under the administration of the emperor or the digvijayin.

5. Feudal Lords and Negligence of State Interest:

The prime duties of king were maintenance of peace, law and order, providing security and justice which could be performed only with successfully secured alround state's interests. Significantly, ancient Indian thinkers, knowing well the importance of state's interests, associated them with the seven constituents of state. In this context the king, the ministry, the territory, the resources, the ports, the military forces and the allies were considered as the seven constituents of the state. Out of seven constituents, Svāmin (king) and amātyas (ministers) constituted the central government, which exercised the sovereign powers and imparted the central unity. The rāṣṭra (territory), durgas (forts), bala (army) and koṣa (Treasury) constituted the

67. Ibid. p. 5.
68. Ibid.
69. Arthasaśṭra, VI. 1; Manusmṛti, IX. 294-7.
resources of the state. In the absence of tribal state territory was regarded as an essential element of the state. Forts and armed forces being quite necessary parts of the state were also regarded as its essential constituents. So far as the successful functioning of the state's expenses was concerned kośa (treasury) was regarded as quite indispensable. Further it was a balance of power which could be achieved with making suitable alliances in order to successfully govern the state.

The seven constituents of the state were regarded as the limbs of the body politic; the king as the head, ministers as eyes, friends as ears, the kośa as mouth, the army as mind, the durgas as hands and rāṣṭra as legs. All the limbs of its body politic were considered equally important and complementary to each other. A great emphasis was laid upon their co-ordination and integration as a necessary factor for the existence, growth and proper functioning of the state. Infact, none of them could function independently. Keeping in view their equal importance, mutual interdependence and indispensability. They were not only focussed in the rājadharma section of the

70. A.S. Altekar, op.cit., p. 44.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid.
73. Sukranītisāra, I. 61-62.
Sāntiparva\textsuperscript{74} of the Mahābhārata but also in the Purāṇas\textsuperscript{75} Kauṭilyas Arthaśāstra,\textsuperscript{76} Manusmrṭi\textsuperscript{77} and Kāmandakiya Nītisāra.\textsuperscript{78} All the seven elements constituted the wealth of the state.\textsuperscript{79} The king, out of seven elements, was given top priority by thinkers while talking about state formation process. As a chief among all organs he had to extend an equal treatment to all for maintaining the existence of the state. In spite of all adverse circumstances, difficulties and dangers, it was obligatory on the part of the king to do everything possible for his subjects.\textsuperscript{80} But this ideal could not be carried on for a long time because of his dependence upon feudatories. In the same context Manu\textsuperscript{81} while putting forth its justification explains that by appointing them as feudal lords king's responsibility was ended and the people of that area and their prosperity were left over the will of the feudal lords. The kings made religious donations also as we find in 496-97 A.D. when king Jainnatha gave a village to

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\item \textsuperscript{74} Mbh., XII. 56-128.
\item \textsuperscript{75} Agni Purāṇa, 239. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Arthaśāstra, VI.1.
\item \textsuperscript{77} Manusmrṭi, IX. 296, 297.
\item \textsuperscript{78} Kāmandakiya Nītisāra, IV. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Arthaśāstra, VI. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{80} G.P. Singh, Political Thought in Ancient India, pp. 30-32.
\item \textsuperscript{81} Manusmrṭi, VII. 115-117.
\end{itemize}
the trustee of temple and they used this village for their own prosperity.82 Not only this but whenever the villagers came to the king for their such type of problems the king never trusted them as Bāṇa referred to in Harṣcharita83 Some inscription of Orissa also indicate towards this rising tendency.84 As a result such type of activities gave a sound setback to the ideal of kingship.

As discussed above the primary duty of the king was regarded to replenish the treasury, amass the wealth by all pure means. In order to increase the resources of the state he collected taxes from different sources for not only consolidating his own financial position, but also to promote the growth of the state and welfare of his subjects. The whole transaction of the state was made from kośa and the kośa depended upon the taxes collected by feudal lords. Thus, the position of kośa depended on feudal lords. It is also testified by Harṣacharita that Puṣpabhūti collected taxes from mahāsāṁanta.85 Emperor was paid by these mahāsāṁantas and not by the common people. Similarly Vākāṭaka king Pravarsena II left all his rights or resources

82. R.S. Sharma, op.cit., p. 12.
83. Ibid., p. 16.
84. V.M. Misra, Medieval Dynasties of Orissa, pp. 24-25.
85. V.S. Aggrawal, Harṣacharita: Eka Sanskratika adhyana, p. 100.
in favour of his feudal lords.\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Raghuvaṃsa}\textsuperscript{87} informs about mines which were also a source of income for the king or state. But some land grants given during 4th century A.D. indicate that the ownership of mines was also given to Brāhmaṇas.\textsuperscript{88}

The nature of land grants began to change during Gupta period when executive powers were begin to conferred upon the grantees. In this context all farmers and artisans, were ordered not only to pay the taxes to grantee but also obey their orders so that the validity of land grants might establish. Further the government officials and army were ordered not to interfere the grantees administration.\textsuperscript{89} All examples clearly indicate that the king was transferring his administrative powers to his feudatories.

In course of time kings depended upon their feudal lords for army. Contrarily the feudal lords supplied a certain number of troops to their king as an obligation during his military campaigns. For example, Kalachuri prince Soḍhadeva (c. 850 A.D.) participated in the Bengal campaign

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{86} R.S. Sharma, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 3.
\item \textsuperscript{87} \textit{Raghuvaṃsa}, XVII. 66.
\item \textsuperscript{88} R.S. Sharma, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 3.
\item \textsuperscript{89} R.S. Sharma, \textit{Some Economic Aspects of the Cast system in Ancient India}, p. 325.
\end{itemize}
of his sizerain Mihira Bhoja.\textsuperscript{90} Kauṭilya\textsuperscript{91} in this regard suggests that soldiers should be valiant warriors, well versed in the art of war, and loyal to the king. According to the same authority the army was expected to be loyal to the king, but the soldiers coming from the army of feudal lords would not be necessarily always loyal to the king. Sometimes disloyalty of army had became the serious cause of the kings's death as happened in case of last Mauryan king Bṛahadratha.

On the above examined relevance and practice of the seven constituents of state it can be fairly said that it was not only the dire demand of governance of these that administrations which required a balanced functioning of all elements of state as a joint venture. Simultaneously, the emerging trend, i.e. growing decentralization of powers was pulling down the pre-existing utility and role of king's authority on one hand and extraction of the state resources was locally exhausted on the other. Further, the executive as well as judicial powers were also rapidly began to be invested at the hands of the local masters. There within an environment of compulsions the imperial king got converted into a more status symbol at national level who could enjoy the fruit of state but in dreams.

\textsuperscript{90.} Ei, XII, p. 101.  
\textsuperscript{91.} Arthasastra, VI. I.
Besides, the growing environment of political instability was always working as a suspense in kings mind who didn't know the uprising which as a rebel could take place in any part of the state.

6. **Sovereign and Selfishness of his Feudatories:**

From the very early days of the establishment of kings rank, the monarchs were expected to rule for the welfare of his subjects. Undoubtedly, he continued to work in the same direction until the conversion of their states into *mahājanapadas* during Buddhist period. Although such *mahājanapadas* were not bigger than modern commissioner's division but it was quite difficult to govern a big state without sufficient number of bureaucrats and their subordinates. Besides, the vast scale recruitments in military at both upper and lower levels further increased the staff of the king. Furthermore, the king was a centre of all military political, administrative and judicial powers. he ruled with the assistance of ministry. Simultaneously, as commander in chief he used to lead important military campaigns, as we notice in case of Samudragupta, Chandragupta II and Skandagupta, etc. He was also appointing authority of bureaucrats and other officers. What is noteworthy, in this regard, is that even assuring powers on vast scale the king did not role as an autocratic monarch.


93. *Ibid*
He, in fact, shared powers with ministers and other high officers who, usually worked as checks and balances over him particularly in regard to laws and customs.\textsuperscript{94}

Meanwhile, the feudatories who not only curtailed his powers but some of them also worked for welfare of people, as we find in case of reconstruction of Sudarśana lake by Parṇadatta in Saurāśtra. In south India, temples were built by feudatoreis under Sātavāhanas. It is noteworthy that such a practice of welfare was not followed by every feudatory but most of them generally worked in the direction of their selfish interest. In order to avoid their hegemony Kauṭilya says that in new settlements land fit for cultivation should be given to the peasant by the king.\textsuperscript{95} But the situation had been changed during Gupta period as we notice the statement of Yājñavalkya who lays down that land should be assigned to the cultivator by the land owner and not by the king.\textsuperscript{96} Now, land grants which were given by the king to feudatories, Brahmaṇas and others further redonated by the feudatories to their favourites. Another change occurring during the Gupta period was the transformation of village headmen into semi feudal officers. Now they were assuming the function of Mauraya superintendents in agriculture. But instead of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{95} Arthaśāstra, II. I.
  \item \textsuperscript{96} Ibid., II. 157.
\end{itemize}
honest job they worked to fill their own granary.\(^97\)

Another significant change occurred during the Gutpa period was the establishment of a new type of villages which served as the resort of royal favourities. As referred to by a Puranic text such villages were inhabited by majority of wicked and powerful people who were without fields but made their livelihood on the fields of others.\(^98\) The class of royal favourities, which formed a group of intermediaries, seems to have been an important concomitant of feudal development on the political side.

Sometimes land grants were provided to the officers in lieu of the payment of their salaries. Such beneficiaries were called bhogikas.\(^99\) In several cases bhogika continued as a hereditary rank upto three generations.\(^100\) Consequently such bhogikas got converted into powerful overlords who did their job comparatively free from the control of the central authority. Some of the cruel bhogapatis oppressed the rural communities and due to oppression the people often lodged complaints. In the same context Harṣacharita states that during the course of military march of Harṣa, villagers made false complaints against bhogapatis.\(^101\) Apparently in his

\(^97\). Kāmasūtra, V. 5.5.
\(^98\). Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, 49.49.
\(^99\). CII, III, 23, 18-20.
\(^100\). Ibid., 26,11,22-23.
\(^101\). D.C. Sircar, Selected Inscriptions, p. 212.
anxiety to present the administration of his patron in a favorable light Bāṇa does not give credence to these complaints. Taking such references into consideration it can be fairly judged that either the king or feudal lords did not head to the comforts of people.

Besides the secular land grants, donations of land pieces were also made to Brāhmaṇas who also formed another segment of beneficiary class. All these land grants decisively created powerful intermediaries wielding considerable economic and political powers. As a result, with the rising number of such Brāhmaṇa beneficiaries, many of them gradually began to leave their priestly functions. It also happened because of their changing interest that for them secular functions became more important than religious functions. It can be taken another ahead step in the direction of decentralization of centralized control.\textsuperscript{102} The process of delegation reached its logical end during later times when the king made over to the Brāhmaṇas not only against offences including family, property, person, etc. In central and western India some royal donors conferred upon the grantees the right of trying cases in the donated villages. Their grants used the term abhyantarasiddhi,\textsuperscript{103} which has been interpreted variously.\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{102} R.S. Sharma, \textit{Bhāratīya Sāmantavāda.}, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{103} \textit{CII}, IV, 31.1.41.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 154. fn. 1.
take it as adjudication of internal disputes in the village, which is thus made completely self dependent.\textsuperscript{105} Apparently this technical expression is the counterpart of \textit{sa-danda-daś-āparādhah} used in north Indian grants. But while the later limits the grantee's jurisdiction to criminal cases,\textsuperscript{106} the former extends it to civil cases, so that armed with such powers the donees could turn the benefices into practically independent pockets.

Generally these grantees or \textit{sāmantas} used to render military aid to their overlord. It is also testified in a reference of \textit{Harṣacharita} that the huge army of Harṣa while marching against Pulkesin II was made up of the troops men and horses supplied by the \textit{rājās}\textsuperscript{107} Although supply of military troops in war, maintenance of law and order, collection of taxes, etc. were the duties assigned to feudatories\textsuperscript{108} but they always did not necessarily performed such duties. Whenever they found the symptoms of weakening state they immediately rebelled as it was done by Vikramasimha.\textsuperscript{109} In the same context, we find numerous examples of such rebellion feudal lords. During the decline of the Gurjara Pratihāra empire a number of such feudatories

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{105} \textit{Ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{106} \textit{Ibid.}, III, 189-90. fn. 4.
\item \textsuperscript{107} \textit{Bāṇḍs Harṣacharita}, pp. 209-210.
\item \textsuperscript{108} R.S. Sharma, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 24.
\item \textsuperscript{109} \textit{EI}, XVIII, p. 248.
\end{itemize}
assumed the imperial titles. It is needless to explain that such cases were happening because the army was being held by them. So far as the associated royal rituals are concerned, Asvamedha, Rājasūya, Vājapeya, etc., were liberally opened to all those who had political aspirations. These royal rituals were performed for their personal gains. Consequently the rising utter selfishness among ambitious feudataries had become a common feature during early medieval period.

7. Digvijaya and Disintegration of Ancient Indian State:

From the examination of above factors, it seems that it was the failure of ultimate aim of digvijaya concept, i.e. imperial state, which also played a decisive role in disintegration of ancient Indian state. In this regard, establishment of the rank of king and the ideal of chakravartin propounded by the ancient thinkers earlier helped the ambitious monarchs in the name of digvijaya. Some rituals were also associated in order to achieve this highest form of conquest. The maṇḍala theory was also employed in it and the digvijaya enabled the king to become a sovereign of all quarters as emperor. But it was very difficult to control such a huge empire from one centre. Consequently it became necessary for the king to decentralize the whole empire which led to the growth of feudalism.

Gradually the circumstances made the emperor dependent upon his feudatories for army and taxes. Further the soldiers of feudal army were also not loyal to the imperial king but they were loyal to their feudal lords. The revenue collected by the feudal lords from their assigned areas was used for their personal interests and only a small amount was given to the king. With the growing powers, the feudatories became more powerful and desired also for the establishment of their own empire. They also did not remain faithful to their sovereign. They always cherished the hope of throwing the imperial yoke one day. Whenever the central power became weak, the feudatories used to become practically independent. They also started to perform Asvamedha sacrifice in order to become emperor. In this context, R.S. Sharma\textsuperscript{111} rightly says that the feudatories could claim even the title of chakravartin. It seems that the king usually had a very weak hold over their feudatories. He, in somewhat manner, became the king only of his feudal lords. In practice, the feudatories were the real kings of the people. They generally ignored the interest of the state and as well as of the people. Apparently they imposed heavy taxes over their people and made unjustice many a time to them. Thus we may safely conclude that the feudal system, prevailed in the ancient Indian politics, led the ancient Indian state to its disintegration.

\textsuperscript{111} R.S. Sharma, \textit{Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India}, p. 401.