CHAPTER VIII

POLITICAL LIFE

The political life is based on the social pillars of judicial system and political administration. Kingship and citizenship present the variegated aspects of political life.

The judicial system encompasses a fair and free trial of the accused and punishing those found guilty of any offences. A vigilant and dynamic police is required to maintain law and order.

The quality of political administration determines the quality of social life. The rulers have to safeguard the interests of all sections of the society in an unprejudiced manner and contribute to the process of social progress.

8.1 Judicial system

Rendering of justice in time with equity is the sine qua non for any civilized and cultured society. The power of the Judiciary is sacrosanct as it is a key social institution, which upholds human dignity, freedom and welfare. Rendering of proper justice without prejudice or bias paves the way for healthy democratic functioning of a nation. The judicial system has to be strengthened and given adequate powers so as to implement the laws of the land without fear or favour in the best interests of the society. The judicial process is evolutionary in nature which attempts to cope up with the dynamic changes in the society and its operating environment.
Some interests are so important to a society that folkways and mores are not adequate enough to ensure orderly social interaction. Therefore, laws are developed as a formal system of social control. The legal code, which consists of the laws or formal rules adopted by the political authority, is not the same thing as a society’s moral code, nor is crime synonymous with deviance.  

8.1.1 Arbitrator

When two parties to the dispute are unable to resolve the same amicably, they refer the same to an arbitrator who is neutral and whose decision is binding on both the parties.

There is reference about the existence of arbitrator to resolve the disputes.

_Eti sarvesām samānāḥ satyasthitā dāsasatyā sadāparipūrṇāḥ_

_Katham vahasi pakṣapātām pāṇḍavaprāmukēṣu preśaṇamapi sahamānāḥ._

8.1.2 City prison

Prisons are meant to house the offenders during the period of their punishment so as to protect the society from their evil impacts. Imprisonment is meant to be a soul-searching experiment for the prisoners so that they refrain from committing the offences, rectify the mistakes and reform themselves.

There is mention in _Vedānta Deśika’s_ works about City Prison for punishing the offenders.

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321 Acuta Satakam 21
Madhye tasyā niśecarapateḥ sadma ruddhāntariṅkṣam

Yugmam neyairdivi sumanasām sevyamānam vimānaiḥ

Karāgāram vibhudha sudṛśāṃ vikṣamaṇo vicitram

śokapritivyatikaravatīṃ vakṣyase cittavṛttim. ³²²

8.1.3 Crimes

Committing of crime is an action against the interests of the society. It affects the social order and causes injury to the members of the society. The root cause of committing crime is deviant, impulsive human behaviour with a negative approach to life and its associated problems.

Criminal and deviant behavior has been found throughout history. To account for this, scholars have proposed a variety of theories. Biological theories such as those propounded by Lombroso and Sheldon stress the importance of inherited factors in producing deviance. Psychological explanations emphasize cognitive or emotional factors within the individual as the cause of deviance. Psycholoanalytic theory suggests that criminals act on the irrational impulses of the id because they failed to develop a proper superego, or conscience, in the socialization process. Behaviorists argue that crime is a product of conditioning. Wilson and Herrnstein propose that criminal activity, like all human behavior, is the product of a rational choice by the individual as a result of weighing the costs and benefits of alternative courses of action.

³²² Hamsa Sandesam ii-6
Sociological theories of deviance rely upon patterns of social interaction and the relationship of the individual to the group as explanations.  

Crime is behavior that violates a society’s criminal laws. Violent crime results in injury to a person; property crime is committed with the intent of obtaining property and does not involve the use or threat of force against an individual. While the specific definition varies from state to state, the most serious crimes are termed felonies; less serious crimes are called misdemeanors.

Mention is made in the works of *Vedānta Deśika* about committing of crimes like theft.

Looting of treasury is indicated.

*Adya khalu vividha bhoga bhāndāgāra luntākahām Samsāra kaṇṭakānām viveka sainya nāsira vīrāṇam atidhirāṇam ...*  

8.1.4 Police force

Police force plays a vital role in maintaining and safeguarding the law and order situation. They have to be vigilant at all times.

There is mention about police force which safeguards the forest.

*Sāṅkhacchāyām tadanu vitatam tasya dhāmeva nilam

Nīlī rakraṃ niyata lalitam kānanam samvicītyāḥ!*
It is possible to break the security when the guards are asleep.

Ittham nīdrā samayamucitam viṅsya naktamcarināṁ
Pratyūṣe tvam prāṇaya madhurām śrāvayī syan maduktim !

8.2 Political administration

Political administration has a major impact on the social life of the people. It has to duly take care of the welfare of different strata of the society. It has to be flawless and efficient. Impartial justice should be available and accessible to all.

Vedānta Deśika advocates an effective and efficient political administration set up with the following features:

8.2.1 Courageous administration

Administration has to be rendered with full courage and conviction. The interests of all sections of the society have to be duly taken into account. The nation has to be properly protected against its foes.

People shall live without fear of enemies.

Avaśita ripu śabdānanyabhūstvam.

Raghupatipadarakṣa! labdharājyābhīṣekā

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328 ibid ii-25
329 Paduka Sahasram 205
8.2.2. Flawless administration

Administration has to be blemishless and faultless.
The administration shall be thornless.

_Sarvatas tvadabhiṣēka vāsare_
_Samyaguddhṛta samasta kaṇṭake !_\(^{330}\)

8.2.3 Efficient administration

Administration has to be efficient as well as effective so as to make people feel comfortable and happy.

People shall live without worries and anxieties.

_Tāpoḍgamastvabhiṣekajalaprvāhaib_
_Utsāritastvaritamuttarakosalebhyaḥ_
_Lebhe cirāya raghupuṅgavapādarakṣe_
_Lankāvarodhasudrśām hṛdayeṣu vāsam._\(^{331}\)

Political administration is tough in difficult times. But one shall administer the country efficiently even during such trying times.

_Mātastvayaiva samaye viśamepi samyag_
_Rājanvatim vasumatim avalokya rāmaḥ_
_Sanjivandya bharatasya samagra bhakteḥ_

\(^{330}\) ibid 215
\(^{331}\) Paduka Sahasram 221
Satyapratiśravatayaiva cakāra rājyam.  
The administrator shall be powerful.

Caranadvayamarbhakasya śoureṣaḥ
śaradambhoruhaacaaturidhurīṇaṃ
śakatāsuratādanepi guptam

Tava śaktyā kila pāduke! Tadāsiṇ.  

8.2.4 Efficient Financial administration

Financial power has to be harnessed in a proper manner by making judicious
and optimum utilization of the same.

Wealth is a snake. But taking out its poison, one can have it on his body. Through
five-fold tools, financial administration can be done efficiently.

Sapaṇṇaṇaṅgena Mantreṇa nitimāḥātmya nirviṣāṃ

Niyacchata niṇṇaṅgeṣu susaṅgimiva sampadam  

8.2.5 Administrative justice

Administration has to be rendered in a manner without any discrimination or
partiality between different classes of the society.

The administrative justice shall be rendered without any discrimination between
high and low.

332 ibid 234
333 Paduka Sahasram 272
334 Yadavabhudayam xxiv-27
Upagatānāmupatāpa sāntyai
Sukhāvagāhāṃ gatimudvahantim
Paśyāmi soureb padavahinim tvām
Nimneṣu tuṅgeṣu ca nirviśeṣām. 335

The administrator shall fulfil all his duties and responsibilities and protect good people.

Mātab! trayimayatayā caraṇaprāmāne
Dve vikramesu vividheṣu sahāyabhūte
Nāthasya sādhuparirakaṇakarmaṇi tvam
Duṣkṛdvināśanadaśāsu vihaṅgarājaḥ. 336

8.2.6 Selfless administration
Administration has to be rendered in a selfless manner without expecting any personal benefit.
One shall not expect anything in return while serving others.
Tvaptūjāsu mukundapātu! Kṛpayā tvam kāmadhenub satām. 337

335 Paduka Sahasram 279
336 Paduka Sahasram 287
337 ibid 349
8.2.7 Continuous administration

Administration has to maintained in a smooth and uninterrupted manner.
A Deputy shall be there to represent the administrator in his absence.

_Padasarasijametat pādute raṅgabhartuḥ_

_Pratinidhipadavim te gāhate svena bhūmna._  

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8.2.8 Confidentiality

State secrets have to be maintained very confidentially, otherwise the interests of the nation may be in jeopardy.

_One shall not reveal the state secrets._

_Anudghataniyamidam rājarahasyam_  

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8.2.9 Punishment for offences

Punishment has to be commensurate with the nature, type and gravity of the offence concerned.

An emissary who deserves punishment may be injured and driven out of the country.

_Nāradāḥ- Rājan! duṭāḥ khila!

_Mahāmohatab- hrvaṅgī kṛtya nīkāsyatām!_  

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338 Paduka Sahasram 46
339 Sankalpa Suryodayam i
340 ibid viii
8.3 Kingship

Kingship is an important social institution. Only through capable rulership, the citizens can get proper administration and live happily.

_Vedānta Deśika_ deals with various aspects pertaining to Rulership.

8.3.1 Unity

The Kings have to work unitedly and in close co-ordination with each other so that the integrity of the nation is duly protected.

_Vedānta Deśika_ gives the clarion call to the kings to stay united.

There should be unity amongst the kings as disunity would lead to disintegration.

_Pārthivānāṃ padaṛṣṭānāṁ svabhūtya cakravartināṁ
Janayatyaśirābdhem chidreṇa mahatānvayāḥ._ 341

8.3.2 Punishment for offenders

It is the prerogative of the King to punish those offenders in order to uphold the law of the land and render justice.

_Vedānta Deśika_ advocates punishment for those who are guilty.

A king who punishes the guilty is not to be condemned.

_Sadasantau vicinvānāḥ samavarti śamapradabḥ!
Api daṇḍadharo nityam lokapālab sadakṣīṇabḥ._ 342

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341 Subhasita Nivi ix-2
342 Subhasita Nivi ix-3
8.3.3 Four-fold tools
There are four types of tools available for a king to tackle a particular situation. These are *Sāma*, *Dāna*, *Bhedā* and *Danda* representing friendship, charity, differentiation and punishment.

*Vedānta Deśīka* espouses the tactical and appropriate use of the four-fold *upāyas*.

A King appropriately uses the four *Upāyas* of *Sāma*, *Dāna*, *Bhedā* and *Danda*.

_Yamena-pakrame jānanviśvādhiśam vyavasthitam!_

_Sāmādiśu ca tatvajñāb sa na kaḥ siddhimārhati!_ 343

8.3.4 War
The King has to take the ultimate responsibility for waging a war and its consequences.

*Vedānta Deśīka* holds that the king is mainly responsible for war.

There is no war without the king.

8.3.5 Path to victory
A king has to strategise his path towards victory. He shall have foresight and shall respect the advice of the Guru.

A King cannot be won if he has the following:

- The seven *angas* constituting leader, minister, friend, money, kingdom, fort and army.
- Mastery in archery

343 Subhasita Nivi ix-4

163
Praddhumno hyaniruddhatamā svananāma mānasodayah

vīraḥ kaściddhitanvita striprāyamakhilam jagat.

- Following the words of the guru
- Forethought

Angayuktāḥ kṛtāstraśca kurvan samyakpuroidhīm

Vijānanā saddhasādhyādīn vairinostrārīna pidayate.

Even defeat at the hand of an exalted person is a victory.

Astumāsmabhavadiptya nanyāyā vikṣaya jagadidam niyachatā

Nāthānispraigha tejasā twayā nanvayam mama parājayo jayah  344

8.3.6 Justice for all
The king has to render equitable justice to all without fear or favour.

Vedānta Deśika stresses the importance of proper administration of justice by the kings without fear or favour.

The King should always render justice to all. He should undisturbedly administer like a hill, which does not bend whimsically.  345

Vidhau labhadhṛitnityā vinatānandano dvijāḥ

Niyamamānaiḥ sthāneṣu bhujāṅgairapi bhūsyate.

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344 Vādavabhudayam xvii-92
345 Subhasita Nivi ix-10

164
8.3.7 Compassion

The king has to be sympathetic to the needs of the masses. He shall be affectionate and not authoritative and win over hearts of the citizens.

Vedanta Deśika gives the clarion call to the kings to be compassionate and kind towards the citizens.

He shall be affectionate to the people like a mother to her children.

Rathyāntareṣu caraṇāvani! Raṅgasāṅgi

Vātsalyanighnamanasa janasātkṛthosau. \(^{346}\)

8.3.8 Rulership

The King needs besides administrative skills, support from various quarters as matter of strategy to exercise sovereignty and consolidate his position. He has to be a deserving and fearless person.

Vedanta Deśika specifies the real source of strength for the king.

To exercise sovereignty over the earth, six strengths are needed for a king:

- Hereditary people
- Labourers
- Army
- Friend’s gift
- Enemy’s enemy
- General forest

\(^{346}\) Paduka Sahasram 289
Antarenabalaenaivadvividham vahata kṣamām

Yasya satvaepyasatvepi gatārtham sadvidham balam 347

A deserving person even though the father of one’s enemy can be made the king of the land won after the battle.

Nyashtarakhābaro rāgna youvvarājyamupāśrītab
śuśube pāratantriyena swatantriya vaśavartina 348

A king is pleased when praised by his followers for his act of valour.

Abhigata śatamakha hutavaha pittpati nīṛtī,

Varuṇa pavana dhanada girīṣa pramukha surapati nuti mudita 349

A wise king rules well, honours the righteous, punishes the guilty and enforces strict discipline. 350

Society will not tolerate if the authority does not punish hypocrisy and deceit at the appropriate time. 351

8.3.9 Protection of the poor

The Ruler shall protect the poor people and take care of their welfare.

Vedānta Deśika impels the king to safeguard the weak.

The King shall take the vow to protect the poor and be compassionate.

347 Yadavabhudayam xxii-31
348 ibid x-97
349 Raghuvira Gadyam
350 Subhasita Nivi ix-11
351 ibid iii-8
Adhinasatwaḥ śatrūnām dhinasamrakṣanavṛatī
Anvakampata dhātribhirupanitān stananatāṇ 352

8.3.10 Ministerial assistance
The Ruler shall take proper assistance from the council of ministers.
Vedānta Deśika underlines the importance of having proper ministers and listening to their words of wisdom.

The King shall have good ministers.
Malinaḥ satatasārair mantriḥścapalānyitaḥ
Vimukthaḥ sa babhou bhāswān meghairiva jadāśrayīḥ 353

Peaceful negotiations suggested by ministers at proper time will yield desired results.

Prayuktam mantriḥ kāle Bhaktibheda puraskṛtam!
Api jvalana vaktrānāṃ sāma samvananam param! 354

Proper advice from the loyal ministers, though unpleasant, will be of invaluable help to the King to conquer enemies. 355

352 Yadavabhudayam xxii-81
353 ibid x-111
354 Subhasita Nivi ix-9
355 Subhasita Nivi ix-10
8.4 Summary

This Chapter has presented the various aspects of political life including judicial system, political administration and kingship.

Human life is not consummate without spiritual pursuits. The various dimensions of spiritual life are explained in detail in the next Chapter.