CHAPTER THREE

CONCEPT OF ESPIONAGE IN KAUȚILIYA ARTHAŚĀSTRA

Ācārya Kauṭilya was an astute statesman whose sole interest was the welfare of his land and its people. The common man was his God and the King and other officials were all intended to work for the welfare of the common man. Verse I, 19, 34 of his Arthasastra summarizes Kauṭilya's views on Kingship thus:

praṇajasūkhē sukhō rajña cha hitē hitam
tatmapiyā hitā rajña tu priyā hitam

In the happiness of his subjects lies the King's happiness, in their welfare his welfare. He shall not consider as good only that which pleases him but treat as beneficial to him whatever pleases his subjects.

This concern for the masses on the part of the king is only expected, because it is the legitimate right of the subjects. Indeed, the King who was the single and supreme ruler of the state owed his very origin to the concerted efforts of the ordinary citizens of the land. Kauṭilya maintains that the very existence of the king depends
on the well-being and happiness of his subjects, because legend says that the common man created the king!

Overwhelmed by the law of the fishes, where bigger fish swallow the smaller ones, the people made Manu, the son of Vivasvat, their king. They assigned one-sixth of the grains, one-tenth of the commodities and money as his share. Maintained by that, kings bring about the well-being and security of the subjects. The subjects who do not pay fines or taxes take on themselves the sins of kings and kings who do not bring about well-being and security take on themselves the sins of the subjects. The ruler is thus dependent on the suffrage of the ruled.

The State, opined Kautilya, was the king’s instrument to serve his subjects. The state must maintain Order, based on justice and social helpfulness, for on Order depends the progress of the common man. Even those who were without relatives had to be necessarily maintained by the state. 

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1. [Verse Reference]
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must also be looked after by the state. The noble concept of a ‘welfare-state’ was clearly evolving and was here to stay.

In this supreme duty, Kautilya proclaimed the sovereign importance of just and disciplined acquisition, preservation and augmentation of the pursuit of philosophy, the three Vedas and economics for the good of the subjects. Its administration constitutes Daṇḍanīti, the science of politics. आन्तिकोश्कात्रावार्तानां योगस्थमसाधनो दण्डः, तस्य नीतिदण्डनीतः, अलंक्खलाभार्य लब्धपरिश्रयणी रक्षितविवर्धनी च।  This seeking the orderly maintenance of worldly life, the King, just with the Rod, is honoured. यथार्थदण्डः पूज्यते। 6 Gifted with exceptional prudence and insight, Kautilya could realize that the material well-being of the subjects is an all-important prerequisite for politics, power wielded by a nation and peace in its vicinity. Hence he opines that the source of the livelihood of men is wealth, in other words, the earth inhabited by men. The science which is the means of attainment and protection of that earth is the Science of Politics. मनुष्याणां वृतिर्ष्यःं, मनुष्यवती भूमिरित्वर्धः। तस्यः पृथिव्य लाभपालनोपयः: शास्त्रमर्थः:शास्त्रमितिः। 7
This is the concept of welfare state which presupposes two things - maintenance of law and order and adequate administrative machinery. If the law was suspended, the economy corrupted or political conflict induced, society would easily lapse into anarchy in spite of all-round progress. The law of the fishes, where the strong swallows the weak, would prevail. A well-planned Espionage system was an effective means to check such anarchy. A king should keep a watchful eye by means of spies, opined Kautilya. That the theory of the divine origin of monarchy is deliberated upon by secret agents in open congregations of people to confirm the loyalty of the subjects towards the king is ample proof of the importance of the spy in the entire scheme of things. Planning of vital intelligence was essential for the survival of consolidated authority, where loyalties have to be constantly evaluated and intentions frequently assessed. This was even more
indispensible in an age where news-service was non-existent and communication facilities weak.

Kauṭilya advocated continuous vigilance of the highest order in public administration which alone could ward off certain threats to good governance. The first threat was Royal irresponsibility caused by lack of information on vital issues arising from ignorance of ascertainable facts. The second danger comes from incomplete knowledge arising from faulty evaluation of observed facts and trends. The third danger arises from inferential errors and delays. The fourth threat is imprecision in execution of espionage arising from faulty organization of intelligence services. These dangers can be minimized only by exactitude and multiplicity of intelligence sources. The King shall have to be like Indra who had a thousand eyes—a thousand sources of information and counsel. इन्द्रस्य हि मन्त्रिपरिषद्धिष्ठिणा सहस्रम्। स तत्त्वाक्षः। तस्मादिम् द्वयक्षं सहस्राक्षः। 12

To ensure such foolproof, incisive and exhaustive Intelligence that could assist the king in his supreme duty of serving his subjects, an intricate and wide-ranging Espionage network was evolved by Kauṭilya. Outgrowing theocratic elements and establishing itself on a secular basis, Kauṭilyan Espionage pervaded all classes and
categories of citizens: pseudo-student, ascetic, householder, merchant, saint, women especially prostitutes and widows, poisoner, mendicants and so on. Integration of all available resources was essential as one wheel alone cannot move the chariot of progress, maintained Kautilya.

Such wide participation of the general public in a monarchical setup was a remarkable feat generating considerable support and awareness. The effectiveness of a sound spying network is appositely described by Kautilya himself when he says that an archer may or may not hit the target by throwing an arrow, but by throwing diplomatic talent one can slay even a foetus in its mother’s womb!

एकं हन्यात्र वा हन्यादिंशु: किश्लोध्युनुष्णत।
प्राजेव तु मति: किश्लता हन्याद गर्भगतानपि। ।

In the Chapter seven of the 1st book of the Arthasastra, Kautilya speaks of the Eight Methods that should be applied by the ideal king in governance. The king should acquire control over the senses, cultivate his intellect by association with elders, keep a watchful eye by means of spies, bring about security and well-being by (energetic) activity, maintain the observance of their special duties (by the subjects) by carrying out (his own) duties, acquire
discipline by (receiving) instruction in the sciences, attain popularity by association with what is of material advantage and maintain (proper) behaviour by (doing) what is beneficial. 

This is the first mention of the significance of Espionage by Kauṭilya and he elaborates on it diligently thereafter. The first efficient system of police and criminal administration in Indian political history buttressed by an elaborate system of espionage was developed during the Mauryan period. This totally indigenous concept of the organization of criminal administration supported by a well-planned hierarchy of spies who were employed to keep an eye and report on the criminal and anti-government activities of the people was Kauṭilya’s brainchild to help build a formidable Empire that could ensure welfare and growth of its citizens.

**Classification of spies**

Uninhibited and methodical in approach, Kauṭilya recommends two types of secret service. One is saṁstha, ‘the establishment’, where the agents are stationed in a single place, the
headquarters. The other is samcāras, ‘the rover’, agents who move from place to place as per the requirements of their individual assignments. These two categories were further subdivided into subcategories.

The Samsthas are of five kinds: ¹⁶

a. Kāpatika – the sharp pupil or apprentice reporting any suspicious or evil dealings to the SAMAHARTR or minister of spies.

b. Udāsthita - a dissident monk made the center of an intelligence network of similar monks.

c. Grhapatikavyaṇjana - the spy posing as a farmer.

d. Vaidehakavyaṇjana - the trader at the center of the spying network of traders.

e. Tāpasavyaṇjana - the bogus ascetic made a secret agent but posing as a great seer.

The Samcaras contained four varieties: ¹⁷

a. Sattrin - an orphan trained as agent.

b. Tiksṇa - an assassin who secretly liquidated all enemies of the state.

c. Rasada - a chemist and poison-giver.

d. Bhiksukī - a Brahmin nun who spies on the very families who
trust and honour her. Heretical nuns were also similarly employed.

The nature and mode of work of these spies was elaborately outlined by Kautilya in the Arthasastra.

A Kapatika or sharp disciple is a skillful person capable of guessing the mind of others. Encouraging him with money and honour, the Samahartr would direct him to report at once any evil-doing or suspicious behaviour of any person he may notice.

An Udasthita or recluse spy is one who is initiated in asceticism or fallen from it but possessed of pure character and foresight. Provided with money, land and disciples, the Udasthita spy shall carry on agriculture, cattle-rearing and trade. From the profits of his produce, he shall provide his subordinate ascetic-spies with subsistence, clothing and lodging. These subordinates shall induce their followers similarly. Thus an Udasthita spy actually maintains a
chain system of spying. स वार्तकिंगम्प्रदिशियां भूमी प्रभृतिहिंसणात्केवासी कर्म कार्येत्। कर्मफलाच्च सर्वप्रजाजितां ग्रासह्माणदनवसस्थान् प्रतिवद्ध्यात्। वृत्तिकामार्काशृंपपते गत्ये एतसैव वेश्येण राजार्थश्रृंगतिवो भक्तवेतस्तनकाले चौपस्थात्वयम्। इति। सर्वप्रजाजिताश्च स्वतं स्वं वर्गमैवद्युपपते॥।  

A Grhapati is a farmer of depleted livelihood but possessed of intelligence and honesty. This seeming householder shall carry on cultivation of allotted land. Out of the profits, he shall maintain other cultivators with subsistence and lodging for spying under him in a chain manner. कर्मको वृत्तिक्षीणः प्रजाशृङ्गचृः गृहपतिक्षिणः स कृषिकिंगम्प्रदिशियां भूमी। इति समानं पूर्वेण।  

A Vaidehaka or a trader spy is one who has fallen from his trading profession, but has foresight and honesty. This seeming merchant shall carry on manufacture and sale of merchandise and out of his profits, maintain other trader-spies for collecting secret information for the king. These spies shall again employ similar trader-spies in a chain manner.  

वाणिज्ञको वृत्तिक्षीणः प्रजाशृङ्गचृः वैदेहक्षिणः। स वाणिकिंगम्प्रदिशियां भूमी। इति समानं पूर्वेण।  

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A Tāpasa, a spy under the guise of an ascetic, is a man with shaven head or with matted hair and supposedly practicing austerities. Imposing on the gullible as a great seer, this seeming ascetic, surrounded by a host of similar disciples would reside in a suburb. Pretending to live on a handful of vegetables or grass, he would secretly take his desired meals. His bogus forecasts would be seemingly materialized by the king’s agents.

These five classes of Samstha spies were mainly responsible for ascertaining the purity or impurity of character of the king’s servants.

The Sancāra spies worked in the following manner:

Satrins or classmate-spies are to be recruited from those orphans who are to be necessarily fed by the state and are put to
study sciences, such as palmistry, sorcery, hypnotism and illusions, the duties of the various orders of religious life, omens and augury. They are called classmate-spies because of their learning and collecting information by social inter-course. ते चाप्यसंवन्धनः अवश्यभर्त्यास्ते लक्षणमिश्रितां जम्भबिरियां मायागतमाश्रयं निमित्तमन्तरचौमित्यधीयतानां सत्त्रिणं संसर्गविरियां वा ।

Tikṣṇas or fiery spies are to be selected from those brave desperados who, fearless of personal perils, confront raging beasts in fight for earning livelihood. They proved to be efficient assassins of state enemies. ते जनपदे श्रृङ्गस्त्यकात्मानो हस्तिः व्यालं वा दृव्यहेतुः प्रतियोधयेयः तीष्णः ।

Rasadas or poison-giver spies are to be recruited from those who have no trace of filial affection left in them and are very cruel and indolent. ते बन्धुः निःस्मेहः कृृग अलसः ते रसदः।

These two, Tikṣṇas and Rasadas, administer what is called Upāmsūdanaḥ ‘secret punishment’ or Tushnimdaṇḍa ‘silent punishment’, to seditious elements, criminals, deserters, double agents etc, in order to deter future antisocial behavior. In the chapter titled कृत्याकृत्यप्रस्त्रक्षणम् (Keeping watch over seducible and non-
seducible parties), Kauṭilya recommends such exemplary
Upāmsūdanā to discontented, seditious citizens who could not be
conciliated or pleased with gifts, well-meaning advice, or after
incurring the wrath of the citizens as tax-collectors. तथाप्पत्तेनो
danda-kārasādānaśādikāraṇa jānapadavideṣe grahyaṇe vibhīṣyate
danda-kāraṣaṇaṃ sādānaṇe sādānavat.

Even the prince, if found perennially and incorrigibly addicted to
one or more vices or seditious activities, can be secretly eliminated
by secret agents with weapon or poison, to protect the king from
harm. If the secret agents have not given up hope of his reform yet,
they should make him addicted to wanton women or to drinking or
hunting, and seizing him at night, should bring him to the king. त्ययः
godāvanā: jñānaśādānaḥ hanyu: | अत्ययः tuṣṭāśीलामिः स्त्रीधि: पानेन मृगवता
va prasādāyaḥ dhāraṇyavāgānanaye: | 30

Simultaneously, Kauṭilya has strictly lain down that such
punishment was to be administered only to the treacherous and the
unrighteous, not the innocent. एवं दूषेषु अधार्मिकेषु च वर्ते, न इतरेषु 31

Bhikṣukīs were poor widows of Brāhmaṇa caste, very clever
and desirous of earning their livelihood. They would act as spies in
the guise of women ascetics. Parivrajikās (wandering nuns) and
Vrshalis (prostitutes) also served as spies. Shaven-headed nuns of Sudra caste were also used. They could spy in houses of ministers or other high officials because they were trusted and honoured everywhere.

They also had the important duty of relaying information collected from the Sancara Spies to the Samstha spies. They acted as mediators.

The Ubhayavetana spies were an important category. They were engaged by the king and sent to a foreign state. Although in the secret service of one state, they succeed to secure service in a strategic post in the inimical state and pass valuable information to their mother state.
They may spread disinformation causing dissension in the foreign state also. Even while aware of other agents, they took care never to associate with each other. Recipients of pay from both states, the Ubhayavetna were an esteemed class because of the risks taken. However, in order to deter the Ubhayavetana spy from double-crossing his native state, Kautilya advises the king that his wife and children should be held as hostage. Also, the king should seek to identify such Ubhayavetana spies sent by enemies hidden within his own men through ascertainment of their loyalty through similar spies. In today’s world, they are known as **Double Agents**.

Clearly, civilians from all walks of life, on possession of requisite qualities could participate in intelligence-gathering. Indeed, next to the army, the spy department of Kautilyan administration appears to have involved the largest number of citizens.

Under these nine broad types of spies, worked about one hundred and one sub-types of spies, differing according to the varied
disguises and transfigurations they assumed. KC Chakraborty enlists them thus:

Agni-jiva (Blacksmith)
Agni-jivi (Fire-keeper)
Agni-vyanjana (In the guise of Fire-God)
Aditi-stree (Woman under the guise of Displayer of pictures)
Anta-Pāla (Border security personnel)
Andha (Blind)
Amitra-vyanjana (In the guise of the Enemy)
Āśva-Vaṅja (Horse-merchant)
Ācārya (Teacher)
Aṭāvika (Forest-Dweller)
Ativāhika (Caravans)
Apupika (Cake-Maker)
Arya (Noble Lady)
Aralika (Meat-seller)
Aṣtaraka (Bed-Spreader)
Āsana-grāhi (Throne-Attendant)
Āsara-vyanjana (Member of the Allied army)
Asara mukhya vyanjana (Chief of the Allied army)
Iksanika (Reader of Forebodings)
Udaka- Paricaraka (Procurer of water)

Unmatta (Lunatic)

Upakaraṇa-haraka (peddler in miscellaneous articles)

Audanikas (Seller of cooked rice)

Kalpaka (Barber or Toilet-maker)

Kanyā-vāhika (Member of wedding party of bride)

Karmakar (Labourer)

Karū (painter)

Kartantika(Astrologer)

Kirāta (Tribal Hunter)

Kubja (hump-backed)

Kuśilava (actor)

Kuḥaka (Magician or Hypnotist)

Kausika-stree (Snake-charmer woman)

Gāyaka (Singer)

Gāyika-stree (Songstress)

Gopalaka (Herdsmen)

Go-vanija (cow-merchant)

Go-raksaka (cow-protector)

Cakra-cara (World-Trotter)

Caraṇa (bard)
Cikitsaka (physician)

Caitya-devata-vyanjana (In the guise of the Altar-God)

Caura-vyanjana (seeming thief)

Chatra-grahi (Umbrella-Bearer)

Jaṭila (Braided haired spy)

Jaḍa (Idiot)

Daṇḍa-Vṛddha (Aged military person)

Durgapala (Watchman of Fort)

Dusya-vyanjana (under the guise of a traitor)

Duta-vyanjana (Under the guise of an Ambassador)

Devi-vyanjana (Under the guise of the Queen)

Dhanya-Kreṭr- Vikreṭ (Purchaser or Seller of grains)

Nartaka (Dancer)

Nartaki (Female Dancer)

Nāga-vyanjana (God of Nagas)

Nāgarika (officer in charge of the city)

Naimittika (Teller of omens or sooth-sayer)

Pakvamamsika (Seller of cooked meat)

Paṇḍaka (Eunuch)

Padukagrahi (Shoe-bearer)

Paṣaṇḍa (Heretic)
Purāṇa-caura (Notorious thief)
Purohita (priest)
Paurāṇika (Story-Teller)
Pracchandaka (Mystic)
Pratirodhaka (Robbers)
Prasadhaka (Dress or Toilet-maker)
Plavaka (Swimmer)
Vadhira (Deaf)
Bandhu vyanjana (In the guise of Friend or relative)
Vanecara (Forest-dweller)
Bandhaki (Prostitute)
Bandhaki-posaka (Keeper of Prostitutes)
Vagjivaka (Humorist)
Vadaka (Player of musical instrument)
Vāmanā (Dwarf)
Vanagrahi (Horse or Elephant Attendant)
Vrsali (Female of Sudra-caste)
Vesa (Visitor of Brothels)
Vesyā (prostitute or harlot)
Vyanjana-grahi (Fan-Bearer)
Vyadha (Hunter)
Mauhurtika (Augur or Horologist)

Yāna-grāhi (Chariot- Attendant)

Saundākika (Vintner)

Snapaka (Helper in bathing)

Hastijīvī (Keeper of elephants)

These innumerable spies operated throughout the length and breadth of the empire, collecting information both about government personnel and general populace, functioning as vigilance and anti-corruption squad, and working for espionage and counter-espionage both within the country and in foreign territory. The Sāṁsthas worked under the direct command of the Samāhartr. The Sāmcaras also reported to the Samāhartr but via the Sāṁsthas. 38

Vigilance in administration must be restrained by concealed tests of loyalty and constant screening of administrative personnel. This was a primary duty of the secret agents. Those who pass specific tests are to be given specific responsibilities. The 10th Chapter of the first book deals with ‘Ascertaining through temptations the purity or impurity in the Characters of ministers’ (उपयाधमि: शौचाशोच्चाचाचज्ञानमात्यायानम्) 39 These temptations are of four kinds: a) धर्मापथ or Religious Allurement b) अर्थापथ or Monetary
Allurement c) कामोपथा or Love Allurement and d) भयोपथा or Allurement by fear.

The Dharmopadhā and Arthopadhā are to be carried out by the Satri spies. Kānopadhā is to be carried out by Women Spies while the execution of Bhayopadhā is the duty of the Kapatika spy.

The king shall seemingly dismiss a priest on the pretext of his refusal to teach the Vedas to an outcaste or to perform sacrificial ceremonies undertaken by such persons. Then the dismissed priest shall, through a Satri spy, who assumes the guise of a classmate, instigate each minister, one after another, to be a party in setting up another righteous king in place of the present unrighteous king. If the minister refuses to do so, he shall be considered pure. This is Religious Allurement. 40

Similarly, a falsely dismissed commander due to alleged support given to evil omens should instigate each minister through Satris to murder the king, with the offer of a tempting material gain. If the minister repulses the offer, he is upright. This is Monetary Allurement. 41

A wandering nun, who enjoys the confidence and honour of different ministers, should secretly suggest to each minister individually, “The chief queen loves you and has arranged a secret
meeting and also offered huge wealth.” If the minister repulses the proposal, he is pure. This is Love Allurement. 42

A minister should invite all other ministers to a secret party. Apprehensive of conspiracy, the king should imprison them all. A sharp pupil, pretending similar imprisonment, should individually suggest to such dishonoured and impoverished ministers to kill this wicked king and install another. If they refuse, they are pure. This is Allurement by fear. 43

Now the king should assign those proved loyal by the test of piety to posts in the Judiciary for suppression of criminals, those proved upright by test of material gain to the office of the Administrator and Director of stores, those proven pure through test of lust to Guardianship of inner apartments of the queens and others, and finally those proven honest by test of fear to Duties near the person of the king. Those who pass all these four tests should be made the King’s Councilors unhesitatingly. Those found dishonest by these tests should be employed in mines, forests or factories. 44

Maintaining maximum credibility of these spies must have determined the use of Satris and Kapaṭikas in specific tasks. Further, Kautilya strictly mentions that the king or his queen must never directly engage themselves in such tests of loyalty and should
ascertain this information only through spies, because a perverted minister may be actually tempted to subvert or kill.\textsuperscript{45}

Some scholars of Kauṭilyan studies raise the question that as Kauṭilya takes up the appointment of Amātyas (Ministers), Mantri (Councilors), Purohita (Royal priest), and Gūḍapuruṣa (Spies) in the 8\textsuperscript{th}, 9\textsuperscript{th}, and 11\textsuperscript{th} Chapters respectively, how could spies test the previous three categories and then approve their appointment? A possible answer is that such testing was a routine check of these already appointed officials conducted to ascertain their continued loyalty and not initial commitment. Even the spies themselves were subject of such periodical tests of loyalty by the Amātyas (Ministers).

Kauṭilya devotes significant attention to the appointment of spies and their essential qualifications. He insists that a Kāpaṭika (a fraudulent disciple) should be able to guess the minds of others and be bold. एकाएकायानां कापटिकः प्रगल्भक्षात्रत्र: कापटिकः: एकाएकायानां कापटिकः प्रगल्भक्षात्रत्र: कापटिकः: \textsuperscript{46} The Udāsthita (a recluse), a Gṛhapatika (a house-holder) and a Vaidehaka (a trader) spy should all be possessed of intelligence and honesty (प्रज्ञावैधव्यचयः). Besides possessing these essential requisites, a Tīkṣṇa and a Rasada must have some added traits. A Tīkṣṇa (fiery) should be brave and
desperate, reckless of his own life, who confronts elephants or tigers in fight, mainly for earning money. A Rasada (poisoner) spy should be selected from the persons who have no trace of filial affection left in them and who are very cruel and indolent in nature. Spies, in general, should be loyal, faithful, expert in assuming disguises and skilled in many languages and fine arts.

They should also be able to transmit spied out news by means of sign language.

The Mudrārākṣasa of Visākadutta, which vividly describes Kautilya’s stratagem, depicts Viracagupta, an enemy spy assuming the guise of snake-charmer who wrote a letter in symbolic language. Kautilya is described as deputing classmate spy Indusarma in the guise of a shaven-headed monk who finds the enemy minister, Rākṣasa and wins his confidence.

A detailed account of the salary structure and wages of spies is outlined in the Arthaśāstra of Kautilya. The Samsthas got large landed estates or factories for their maintenance and expenditure.
These estates were revenue-generating and did not incur any recurring maintenance costs to be borne by the state. The Śancāras were paid regular salaries by the state. Kauṭilya laid down 1000 panas per annum for each spy, such as Kāpaṭika, Udāṣthita, Gṛḥapatiṣka-Vyaṇjana, Vaidehaka-Vyaṇjana and Tāpasa-Vyaṇjana. Five hundred panas was allocated for each Superintendent of village and spies like Satri, Tikṣaṇa, Rasada and Bhiksūki. Two hundred panas per annum was the pay of each subordinate to the spies called Śancāri and their wages were liable to increase depending on their efforts. The Envoy would receive ten panas per yojana, a double wage beyond ten yojanas up to one hundred yojanas. The Pana was a silver coin about three quarters of a tola in weight. The salaries appear to be liberal and encouraging, also reflecting the prosperity of the State.

Acquiring Economic intelligence was a vital objective of spying. Kauṭilya has emphasized repeatedly that out of the three goals of temporal life, Acquisition of Wealth (Artha) is of supreme importance for the sustenance of Public life and should be the target of a king seeking welfare of his subjects. Spiritual good (Dharma) and Sensual pleasures (Kama) depend on it totally.

अर्थ एव प्रथान इति कौटिल्यं। अर्थमूलो हि धर्मकामाविति।
The main source of Wealth in the royal treasury is the Revenue generated by the working and trading class, which must be effectively collected by the king in the form of Tax. A general maxim extended by Kautilya here is: The king should take from the kingdom fruits as they ripen, as from a garden; he should avoid unripe fruit that causes an uprising, for fear of his own destruction.

पक्वं पक्वभवामात्कलं राज्याद्वायुयात्।
आत्मचछेदमहादामं वर्जयेत्कोपकारकम्॥

Secret agents had a vital role to play in Revenue-Collection. The Samāharta, responsible for Revenue-Collection, was the chief administrative officer of a Janapada or the countryside, usually divided into four districts. The District officer was called ‘Sthānika’ under whom there were officers called ‘Gopas’, who maintained the revenue account of five to ten villages as directed by the Collector-General or Samāharta. To inspect the work done and means adapted by the village and the district officers, there were special officers termed ‘Pradeṣṭā’, deputed by the Collector- General. All these officials were assisted by the secret agents to ascertain the income and expenditure of the subjects, wherever needed. They also monitored the accounts finally submitted by these officials.
The householder spy had to ascertain the number of fields, houses and families in each district, their area, output, tax charges, exemptions, caste, class, number of family members, nature and causes of emigration and immigration of inhabitants, and activities of spies. The trader spy should find out the quantity and price of the goods produced from mines, fields, water-works, forests and factories. They should survey the foreign merchandise, conveyance charges, cess, etc. The ascetic spy should ascertain the honesty and dishonesty of farmers, cow-herds, and traders. Kautilya also made some spies take the guise of thieves to detect the movements of other thieves.

When even after routine collection-drives from farmers, traders etc, the king’s treasury was rendered depleted, the spies of the king were entitled to collect money from certain classes of subjects like unrighteous traders or traitors for replenishing the treasury for the welfare of the people. The pretexts given for such special collection-drives were varied. Propitiation of evil spirits, false reports of robbery of a big trader’s money, loans for ambitious enterprises, funding of community feasts etc. were some excuses put forward for such collections. The secret agents were instructed to first give large amounts themselves, referring to which other citizens
would be asked to make corresponding contributions. However, such demands were to be made only once, not twice and sharp pupils reproached those who affluent citizens who gave only little and coaxed them to give liberally. Kauṭilya emphasizes that such extortion to replenish the royal treasury should be directed only towards treasonable and unrighteous persons, not towards others.

Kauṭilya also used spies for surveillance over public servants in order to find out corruption in general and fraud, embezzlement, misappropriation, thefts in particular. Various means were adapted to detect these offenders. He shrewdly observes that most employees are liable to be tempted by corruption. Indeed it is nearly impossible for an officer who handles state funds or stores to resist the temptation to steal them just as one cannot but taste a little of the honey or poison even though placed beneath the tongue.

Such officials are as hard to detect as a fish drinking water and as unpredictable as the movement of birds in the sky.
He describes officers who variously deplete the treasury. They may prevent revenue from being raised or delivered, lend state goods at interest, use them personally, substitute inferior goods for high quality ones, and so on. He enumerates about forty ways of embezzlement. Crimes like theft of valuables from mines, factories, stores or treasury, corrupt acts of the judges or jail wardens etc are also severely punishable on detection. The Samāhartr was responsible for detection of such financial crimes. Victims of such corrupt practices were invited to declare their experiences. Informers were welcomed with the offer of handsome rewards for reporting or exposing frauds. Specific secret agents called Uttaradhyaksas were earmarked for such exposes. For prevention of such crime, number of chiefs was plenty to enable in-house vigilance and they were also frequently transferred. The punishments prescribed for such offences against the state varied from high fine to imprisonment for long periods or on extreme cases, even torture and death. When the king’s treasury was rendered depleted, the spies of the king were entitled to collect
money from certain classes of subjects like unrighteous traders or traitors for replenishing the treasury for the welfare of the people.  

The crisscross network of secret agents and the deterrent character of the punishments held the state employees on tenterhooks and made them always alert, honest and dutiful in the discharge of their assigned functions.

Internal security of a state was considered as important as economic stability and foreign policy by Kautilya. The spies should keep an eye on the private and public activities of the eighteen High Officials (Tirthas) of the Bureaucracy which are enumerated as: the councillor, the chaplain, the commander-in-chief, the crown prince, the chief palace usher, the chief of the palace guards, the director, the administrator, the director of stores, the magistrate, the commandant, the city-judge, the director of factories, the council of ministers, the superintendents, the chief of the army staff, the commandant of the fort and frontier-fort, and the forest chieftain.

ल्हान् राजा स्वविषये
मन्त्रिपुरोहितसेनापतियुवराजदैवराजकान्तवर्षिकम्प्रशास्त्त समाहर्तं संनिधातुप्रदेश्यायक
पौर्ववहारकार्मान्तिकम्निपरिषदश्यक्ष्यदण्डुर्गरांपाला विभेदिके अपसर्यात्

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Furthermore, Kautilya recommended sowing spies against the ally, the middle king, the neutral king as well.  

Kautilya also employed spies for monitoring the, seducible and non-seducible elements both within the state and in enemy states. Employees, both high level and ordinary, were prone to treason. Such subjects were called Kṛyas and disgruntlement was a chief reason for such shameful acts of disloyalty. Kautilya analyzed four causes of such discontent: a) Krodha (Resentment or anger) – forgotten promises of promotion, unexpected supersession or demotion often caused such destructive anger b) Bhaya- Fear due to some crime committed but still undetected c) Lobha- greed arising out of poverty, addiction to vice or miserliness and d) Mana or a tendency to rashness. Secret agents had to detect any such discontent or grievance and also try to win over any such disgruntled officers from the enemy’s state. After detecting the parties for and against the king’s cause, honour and rewards should be conferred upon the contented, while the dissatisfied should be brought around by conciliation, dissension, or punishment.  

Seditious activities, corruption, robbery, arson, and other antisocial problems would crop up regularly and secret agents were instructed to assist the Samāhartr in this vital task of
Kanṭakaśodhanam or Suppression of criminals. Looking out for criminals, investigating activities of those with secret incomes and rounding up gangs of dacoits by the spies also helped in asserting the power of the king and thus maintain order. The spies were expected to ferret out the deceitful practices of traders, artisans, craftsmen like weavers, washermen, smiths etc. with respect to the quality and quantity of the goods sold by them. Secret income is generally procured by those who give false evidence for money, practitioners of fraud, dealers of counterfeit coins, poison, stupefying drugs and so on. Sedition, the tendency to instigate rebellion within the masses, was a serious obstacle to internal security. Secret agents were instructed to locate seditious elements and deal with them, either by awarding punishment or by eliminating them silently. If high state dignitaries involved in the bureaucracy were found to garner seditious thoughts, the four upayas of Sāma, Dāna, Daṇḍa and Bheda were recommended for winning them over and if these failed, then getting rid of them secretly. The chief or mukhyas who were capable of endangering the king's ruler ship and may prove traitorous, were called Duṣyas. Silent killing by cruel ways for getting rid of such Duṣyas was employed but only with those influential ones who were suspected
with high treason and whose open accusation might trigger a mutiny by their accomplices. For instance, secret agents were to create strife between the seditious official and some friend of his for bad treatment received over an inheritance or over a woman. When the quarrel escalated, the agents are to get one party killed by the other, the latter being then openly executed for the murder. Another way of liquidation may be sending the Dusya on a military expedition with weak troops and concealed agents who were to seize the chance to slay him secretly and blame the enemy for his death. These means, however harsh, were unavoidable because it was the question of the ruler's survival. The open acknowledgement of the necessity of such liquidation in the Arthasastra, speaks more of Kautilya's political realism rather than downright unscrupulousness. Kautilya apparently believed in the theory of the end justifying the means. He did not hesitate in employing wine, women, poison or spies for elimination of his detractors. He did not allow ethics or emotions to intrude into the interests of politics and war.

External affairs and foreign policy were to be negotiated through the Dūta, the ambassador or envoy. The Dūta was usually of three kinds, the Nisṛstartha or the plenipotentiary, the Parimitārtha with limited powers of negotiating and the Sāsanahara or the
message-bearer. Apart from his usual diplomatic duties of negotiating treaties and consolidating alliances with foreign countries, the Envoy (Duta) or ambassador to a foreign state also indulged in spying but of a somewhat varied nature. While a spy works in secret, the envoy openly performs similar activities. A Duta is superior in status to a spy. The Duta supervises the work of spies in a foreign land, collects and verifies information from them who are in the payrolls of both the kingdoms and are operating in enemy land in the guise of ascetics, physicians, beggars or heretics. Through the Udbhayavetana spies, he shall ascertain the nature of intrigue prevalent among parties favourably disposed to his own master as well as the conspiracy of hostile factions, and understand the loyalty or disloyalty of the people to the enemy. कःत्यपश्चोपजायं, अकःत्यपश्चे गृहप्रणिधानं, रागाधारागी भर्तिः, रस्यं च प्रकृतीनाम्, तापसवैद्यकयुग्मजनाध्यामुपलभेत। तयोरत्ववसिष्ठिः: चिकित्सकपश्चष्णकयुग्मजनोभयवेतनेवा। 79 He should seek to win over enemy’s friends to his side and also dispatch spies on clandestine operations, especially tactical warfare, subversion and ambush.

The ambassador, on being questioned on the purpose of visit, should state the exact message of his master, even at the cost of his
Secretly, he is to compare the military stations, sinews of war, and strongholds of the enemy with those of his parent country. He shall ascertain the size and area of forts and of the state, as well as strongholds of precious things at assailable and unassailable points. For this, he shall befriend the enemy’s officers, such as those in charge of wild tracts (Aṭavipāla), of boundaries (Antapāla), of cities (Puramukhya), and of country parts (Raṣṭramukhya). If unsuccessful in this direction, he should gather information by eavesdropping on the conversation of beggars, intoxicated or insane persons, persons talking in sleep, by observing the signs made in places of pilgrimage and temples, or by deciphering paintings and secret writings.

Kauṭilya has summed up the duties of the Envoy very aptly.

Sending communications, guarding the terms of a treaty, upholding his king’s majesty, acquisition of allies, consolidating of alliances, creating dissension between two or more neighbouring states hostile to his own, instigation, dividing the enemy’s friends, conveying secret agents and troops into enemy territory, kidnapping the
enemy’s kinsmen and treasures, getting the treasury of the foreign prince robbed, ascertainment of secret information, showing valour, helping in the escape of hostages, and resorting to secret practices—these are the functions of an envoy.

These activities of espionage and counter-espionage in foreign lands should be carried out by the Envoy through his subordinate envoys and careful watch should be kept over enemy-envoys by deputing counter-envoys and spies as well as open and secret guards.

Military Espionage was also upheld by Kautilya for the welfare of the land. Fighting or Yuddha was of three kinds: PrakāśaYuddha or Open battle in the place and at the time indicated, KūtaYuddha or concealed fighting involving the use of
tactics on the battlefield, and śatānti yuddha or silent fighting implying the use of secret agents for enticing enemy officers or killing them. Kauṭilya is most candid in observing that when a king is superior in strength to his enemy and the season and terrain of the battlegrounds are favourable to him, he should resort to Open warfare. Such a fight is considered most righteous or Dharmistha. However, if the king is inferior in military strength to the enemy, and the season and terrain difficult for him, Kūta yuddha is a wiser option. Kūta yuddha may involve the following tactics:

a) Attacking enemy troops when they were in a vulnerable position or on unfavourable terrain.

b) Feigning a retreat and thus drawing them to treacherous terrain, suddenly turning round and attacking.

c) Using elephants to break the closed ranks of the enemy troops.

d) Attacking on one flank first and when the enemy troops are pressed back, attacking them from the other flank.

e) Using inferior troops first to tire out the enemy and then striking with superior forces.
f) Enticing enemy warriors in a hunt or a cattle-raid and killing them in an ambush.

g) Keeping enemy awake by a feigned attack at night but actually attacking these fatigued troops the next day

h) Attacking them when the sun and wind are directly on their faces and so on.

All sorts of tricks are described for the capture of a fort without a serious fight, which amounts to *Tuṣṭim yuddha* or silent war. One significant aspect was that Kautilya was never a war-monger by temperament. If the end could be achieved by non-military methods, like intrigue, duplicity, and tact, he preferred it to open war. Attempts were taken to seduce the principal officers of the enemy from their loyalty to him, so that they may desert him.  
Advantage should be taken of the credulity or superstitious nature of the enemy king to induce him to come out of his entrenched position in the fort, where he can be killed conveniently. Other tricks include the smuggling of troops into the fort in some disguise or inducing a part of the garrison to come out for putting down dacoities or enticing the troops in the fort to come out to help an ally supposed to be attacking the besieging king and so on.
Evidently, all such exploits were clandestine and required skilled spies to execute them gainfully. Kautilya upholds the wiles of spies in war thus, ‘the spy as an assassin may be able to achieve with weapon, poison and fire more than a whole army.’ तीक्षणो हेकः ज्ञात्वर्तसामनिभि साधयेत् । अर्थे सर्वसंदेहकर्म विशिष्ट्य वा करोति | 89 He stresses on the necessity for constant precaution, on the forewarning of risks, on protection by means of energetic entrenching and vigilant sentries. He elaborately elucidates measures for the collection of Defense-intelligence and means to defuse the military efforts of the enemy. He instructs agents to collect information about enemy’s strength, preparations, morale of troops, creating revolts, breaking hostile combinations, protection of one’s troops, surveying areas for camp sites, topographical details, harassing enemy troops and demoralizing their officials. The envoy’s spies poisoned and demoralized the minds of rival king till their energies frittered away and their capacity to sustain a war decreased. Mutual distrust was created between two enemy countries who were once allies to one another. Revolts and mutinies were instigated in the enemy troops. The army chiefs of the enemy were lured by prostitutes and later murdered by secret agents. Some were given
poison on the pretext of love-winning medicines. They started whispering campaigns circulating failings and frailties of enemies while publicizing the strengths of their own sovereign. They could poison the food, water, fodder etc of the enemy. Women agents purchasing wine, milk, grains, butter, oil from the shops in the vicinity of enemy detachments should pour these items in their own utensils containing poison and later, feigning anger due to bargaining, pour these back in the traders' containers, thus contaminating all contents secretly. Dacoits and robbers were used by agents to plunder enemy barracks. Of these agents, Kautilya says 'by being deceitful, the king should kill the enemies by secret practices, like a fowler using cloak and bait.'

वीत्तसनगिलवच्चारीन् योगैःचरिते: घषः।
घातवेत्यसमिष्ट्यां विश्वासरोगमिष्टेन च II 90

Kautilya mentions many potions and concoctions the secret agents can use to sabotage enemy interests. His deep understanding of chemical and biological sciences is awesome. The spy in the guise of 'holy men' could interpret omens and celestial events in a manner detrimental to the enemy. Occult practices were also tempered with and adopted to strike out stealthily at the enemy.
The Personal Security of the king was an important element of security. Being 'well-guarded' was a foremost necessity for kingship. The security of the king should be overseen with great care by trusted agents. Kautilya advised the king not to trust his ministers or even the queen and princes in matters of personal safety and so remain alert and guarded by trusted agents. These agents should maintain extreme caution in selection of personal guards. These guards should not only be brave, of good birth, intelligent, practical and honest but also prepared to sacrifice their lives for the security of the king. Keeping in mind the impressionable minds of young princes, spies should tactfully teach them righteousness to dissuade them from vices or from harming their own patriarch. Varied tactics are recommended here. For instance, if they are tempted towards women, the spies should arrange for an impure woman to terrify him at lonely places. Those attracted to liquor should be served adulterated liquor as deterrents by spies. Those over-zealous about hunting should be terrified by spies in the guise of highway-robbers. Those aiming to attack their fathers should be first taken into confidence and then dissuaded saying, "If the attack fails, you will be put to death; if it succeeds, you will face either hell or annihilation by angry subjects." A prince disaffected by all this
advice should be reported against by the spy to the king who shall decide his fate. 91

**Viṣakanyās**

Kauṭīlyya was a shrewd observer of human frailties. The inherent weakness for wine, women and wantonness in man was exploited by this wily statesman to serve the interest of the monarchy. Women spies played a prominent role in Kauṭīlyan Espionage and he refers to their activities in about twenty five chapters of the Arthaśāstra. Kauṭīlyya speaks of the most lethal variety of Women spies as the Viṣakanyā or the Poison-woman. Her deadliness is mostly in the poison smeared on her body parts which kills the unsuspecting admirer. Thus Kauṭīlyya guards his king against her saying: Water mixed with various herbs, sandalwood, etc. is used to wash the poison on the limbs of women who are close to the king. 92 The poison on the Viṣakanya mentioned here may refer to poison in general or it may signify a special damsel with a poisonous body, the vicinity or contact with which could kill. References in popular literature like the Mudrārākṣasa of
Visākhadutta point towards the frequent use in Mauryan politics of such lethal ladies whose bodies were prepared as instruments of death. Rākṣasa, the minister of the Nandas, in the Mudrārākṣasa laments the futility of his appointed Viṣakanyā whose poison kills only at the first contact and Candragupta has survived it by passing her on to Parvatakā, an ally who was a potential threat. The murder of Parvatakā is lamented by Rākṣasa, his ally.

Rākṣasa laments that the efficacious poison-maid, destined to kill one man, whom I had reserved for the destruction of Candragupta, came in contact with king Parvatakā, and to the great good luck of Viṣṇugupta, killed him whose very death was sought by him (i.e. Viṣṇugupta), just as the powerful missile, the one-man slayer, which was kept in reserve by Karna in order to kill Arjuna, smote, to the great interest of Viṣṇu (Kṛṣṇa), the son of Hidimba, whom he (Kṛṣṇa) wished to make his victim.
The ‘Viṣakanya’ mentioned as the ‘messenger of certain death’ was prepared by Rākṣasa for Candragupta’s death, but on being discovered by Cānaka, was coerced to cause the death of Parvataka, who though an ally, was considered by Chanakya as a potential threat to Candragupta. Nipuṇaka, Cānaka’s spy refers to this diversion of the Viṣakanyā by another spy, Jivasiddhi (on secret instructions of Canakya himself):

This is seen as the first historical mention of ‘Playing back a spy’- an intelligence operation called Double-agent or Triple-agent Handling in modern parlance.

The Viṣakanyā of The Mudrārākṣasa had regular doses of virulent poison administered to her from a tender age. Being systematically fed on small doses of poison for a long period makes her body so saturated with it that physical contact or close proximity can cause instantaneous or slow death. This poison must ooze out of her body or be discharged so that her sweat, touch and sexual or oral contact proved fatal. Some such young girls may have succumbed to the poison but those who developed immunity to the poison lived to
kill on order. Again, poisonous paste applied to the women’s limbs may have also caused death on oral contact.

A woman infected with a deadly venereal disease may also transmit it during intercourse and thus prove fatal. This apprehension is referred to in the popular legend of Aristotle and Alexander when the former warned his pupil not to have physical relations with unverified women of the Orient. He told thus:

“Remember what had happened when the king of India (Candragupta) sent thee rich gifts, and among them that beautiful maiden whom they had fed on poison until she was of the nature of a snake; for I fear the clever men of those countries and their craft; and had I not found by proof that she would be killing thee by her embrace and by her perspiration, she would surely have killed thee.”

Interestingly, the Suṣruṭa Saṁhitā (7th cen. BC), Vol.II, Ch I, p 673 also suggests that a girl can become poisonous through regular doses of poison and even her touch, sweat and breath become fatal. Even insects, mosquitoes and bugs die when they come in contact with such a woman. Thus the authenticity of the Viṣakanyā stands the test of physicians and ancient medicinal systems.
The uniqueness in the use of this deadly seductress called the Viṣakanyā for liquidating public enemies by Kautilya is that it was clearly propelled not by any ruthless or crude intention of exploitation of female sexuality but by a nationalistic fervour to liberate an embryonic empire from intrigue and corruption.

Kautilya has mentioned many other Women spies as well. Defining the Bhiksuki spy, he speaks: a woman ascetic who is a poor, respected widow of Brāhmaṇa caste, very clever, bold and desirous of earning a livelihood would spy in houses which trust her.

Heretical nuns with shaved heads, even from Sudra caste, also secretly operated as spies. They had access to the harem and residences of ministers. Other notable Women spies were:

a) Aditistree-Woman in the guise of displayer of pictures.

b) Gāyika Stree (Songstress)

c) Nartaki (Female dancer)

d) Bandhaki (Prostitute)

e) Vṛṣali (Female member of Sudra caste)

f) Vesya (Prostitute)
g) Bhārya (wife)

h) Matr-Vyaṇjana(a feigned mother)

i) Silpavātī Stree (accomplished woman)

j) Rūpajiva (earning by physical beauty)

k) Gopi (milkmaid)

These spies worked not only in the inner apartments but outside too, both in the home-state and in the inimical state, even in the enemy camp and in the battlefield. Kamopadha or the test of lust of ministers was accomplished through women spies. For rectification of a wayward prince, bold women were asked to terrify them by their wantonness. To ascertain the honesty, fidelity and purity of the queens, elderly women spies under the guise of Mothers of servants who were to observe them continuously. He allowed courtesans to visit the queens only after thorough bathing and changing of garments. This may indicate possibility of Homosexuality and Lesbianism whereby passing of venereal diseases was common. Even military personnel were tested by spies posing as Prostitutes. During a siege, women spies in the guise of food-vendors stole into enemy camps and killed the soldiers with poisoned food. Seditious ministers were assassinated by women spies by instigating their wives against them. A woman-spy could
tempt the wife of a treasonable minister into using certain love-winning potions to attract her husband, but mix poison in the potion after gaining her confidence. 102 Two seditious ministers may be instigated to kill one another by false allegation by women spies regarding their designs on the other’s wife, daughter or daughter-in-law. 103 Another ploy was the visit of a women spy in the guise of the queen to a seditious minister’s room and getting caught purposely. The minister could be put to death on this pretext. 104 Women spies in the guise of mistresses were used to observe the movements of foreign spies who usually visited bars or gambling houses in the guise of noble men. The oligarchies must have posed a potential threat to kingship, for Kautilya lays great emphasis on creating dissension amongst them. Here, he uses women spies quite often. Tempted by their bewitching beauty, many chiefs of these corporations could make advances only to be thwarted for another chieftain. In the ensuing quarrel, assassins could kill them and pass it off as an act of sheer vengeance. 105 During financial crises, replenishment of a depleted treasury was approved by kingship and women agents, mostly those servants who possessed great beauty and youth were used to facilitate special Revenue collection. 106 Again, after infatuating wealthy men (seditious only) through agents
posing as pious ladies, they could be caught red-handed and their property confiscated. Such men could also be charged by a female agent posing as a mother to have killed her son. Assassins could kill him on this pretext.

Interestingly, women spies do not find mention in any other ancient Indian text before Kautilya, who thus appears to have been the first recruiter of women as spies.

**Spying in the oligarchies**

Although monarchy was predominant in Ancient India, Sanghas or oligarchies existed. An oligarchy is a corporate state with a government run jointly by a group of people headed by a chief. Kautilya in his *Arthaśāstra* mentions the corporate states or Gaṇas of Kamboja, Suraśtra, Śrenis, Licchīvika, Vrajika, Mallaka, Madraka, Kukura, Kuru and Panchāla. These Sanghas originated from clan rule and followed the principles of democracy. Often, a Sangha had more than one chief or mukhyā. In some Sanghas, the chiefs even styled themselves as Rājan or king. They posed considerable threat to the monarchies and the vijigisu always proposed to have suzerainty over the Sanghas. In his attempts to control them, the spies were his medium.
Causing dissension and conflict among the oligarchies helped to weaken them. The spies would first gain the confidence of these corporate states (Gaṇas) and then find out potent areas of jealousy, revenge, greed, hatred and malfunctioning in them. Next, they would sow the seeds of dissension, resentment and quarrel in a well-planned manner.

In the guise of teachers, they would cause childish embroils in the local pupils which could gradually diffuse to their elders. Fiery spies may cause quarrel among the chiefs by praising inferior rival leaders or supporting seducible parties. They could instigate young princes enjoying low comforts to demand superior ones or excite their ambitions by unduly praising their high birth. In cases of legal disputes, they can injure property, cattle or men at night. The financially weaker party should be aided with men and money and instigated against the stronger one. A chief’s son may be incited to rebel saying he was a king’s son and had been forcibly detained. Women spies were especially effective in creating such differences and fomenting confrontation. Thus, with the spies serving as catalysts, the small republican states were weakened in order to establish the supremacy of the monarchial setup.

Mode of work- Cooperation and collaboration
Most Ancient Indian texts on polity advised that spies should work separately without knowledge of the work carried on by others.\textsuperscript{109}

The Mahābhārata says:

चार्येषां शतरं चालिनिदित: परेः।
परिक्षितेषु विवधे: स्वराष्ट्रेऽपरेः च। \textsuperscript{110}

The Ramayana, also insists that the spies should not know each other:

कथिरद्धर्मशान्तेषु स्वराष्ट्रे दश पञ्च च।
त्रिभिस्त्रिभिरनिःशतेवेषि सीत्याणि cha:। \textsuperscript{111}

Such prohibition of communication could prove both advantageous and disadvantageous to the efficacy of the system. Kautilya’s views in this regard are notably more pragmatic and advanced.

Spying necessarily involves three phases: a) collection of significant information by the Samsthas through the Saṅcharis b) Conveying the same to the Samāhartṛ and the King and c) Analysis by the seniors and strategems executed through spies.

In the preliminary phase of Acquisition of information, Kautilya instructs the Bravoes (तीष्णा:) to spy and ascertain the out-of-door activity of important court-officers (the eighteen Tirthas)
like the councilor, the chaplain, the crown-prince etc. Classmate spies (सत्त्री) would communicate that information to the Establishments (संस्थास्वर्ध्यव: ). The Poison-givers (रसदा:) were assigned the task of ascertaining the indoor activity of those officers. Nuns (भिस्मुकी) should communicate that information to the Establishments (संस्थास्वर्ध्यव: ). Evidently, these spies were working in cooperation with one another.

About the subsequent relay of this information by the Establishments to the Samāhartr and the king, Kautilya says that assistants of the establishments should carry out the transmission of the spied out news by means of sign-alphabets or code. Neither the establishments nor these assistants should know one another. Songs, recitations, writings concealed in musical instruments could also be used to get the secret information that is spied out conveyed outside. All this concealment of identity was probably intended to ensure confidentiality and safety of the valuable news and the news-bearers. It also prevented the possibility of one spy stealing the news-report of another and presenting as
one’s own. To prevent any misreporting fuelled by vested interests of spiteful elements that could lead to the conviction of an innocent, Kautilya strictly maintains that only when there is agreement in the reports of three spies, credence should be given. "याणाभे संप्रत्येकाचे विविधांकृत रिकॉर्ड"।

Further, casualness, corruption or complacency in reporting by the spies was totally unpardonable, opined Kautilya. "तेषामबीजसनिपतते तूणीदलण्ड": प्रतिष्ठेः। In case of continuous mistakes by the spies, ‘silent punishment’ is the means of their removal.  

In the final phase of planning and executing strategy for eradicating harmful seditious and corrupt elements, spies frequently collaborated with each other as is evident from the following instances:

a) A spy, in the guise of an astrologer, may gradually delude the enemy’s prime minister that he is possessed of all the qualities of a king. In the meantime, a woman spy in the guise of a mendicant may tell the minister’s wife that she has all the qualities of a queen and will give birth to a prince. Thus, the prime minister may be instigated to revolt or conspire against the enemy king.  

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b) Secret agents should tempt the enemy greedy of money or women with rich, beautiful and young widows, taken to him for the sake of inheritance or deposit. When he agrees, these spies, concealed in ambush, could kill him in course of his intimate moments with the seductress.  

Clearly, such strategies would be possible only through close communication and planning between the spies involved and Kautilyan espionage was quite adaptable to newer challenges of subversion and sabotage that cropped up with each passing day.

Post-Kautilyan schools on polity and governance were considerably influenced by this Kautilyan Concept of Espionage as an instrument of public administration and statecraft and later works on the subject reflect this phenomenon abundantly. Even popular literature (Kāvya), both Śravya and Drṣya, drew their plots from the exciting and death-defying exploits of spies which caught the imagination of readers tremendously.

**Spying in the Ānīṣāstra of Kāmandaki**

Kāmandaki, the author of the Ānīṣāstra, is a revered political thinker of the post- Kauṭilya period. He generally upholds the views of kauṭilya. In the chapter of the Ānīṣāstra titled ‘Caravikalpa’, he discusses the institution of spying describing the qualifications,
divisions, utility, duties and mode of working of spies. He has also compared the duties of spies to those of envoys.

Persons capable of understanding the minds and gestures of others, having good memory, mild in temperament, having power of speedy movement, painstaking, diligent, expert and influential, are fit to be appointed as spies.

Clever spies in the guise of mendicants, craftsmen and traders should move about collecting the views of all classes of men. Spies should go out each day and come in to the presence of the king and convey to him all current information. Like other political theorists, Kāmandaki feels that spies are like the eyes of the king. Aided by his spies, the king is said to have distant vision. Such a king remains awake even when he is sleeping physically.

As the sun covers the whole world with its rays and as the wind blows all through the world, the king should cover the whole world with the help of his spies who are acceptable to the people. A ruler having sufficient number of spies as his eyes can move about
without difficulty or danger: without them the king stumbles like blind men even on level grounds. Just as a priest can take any sacrifice being guided by the Vedic sutras, so can a king undertake any action guided by spies. A ruler who does not keep himself well informed through spies about enemy movements in his own territory as well as in the foreign state, is like one asleep while his enemies are wide awake.

An ambassador is called Prakāśācara or an open and declared spy, while the secret agents are called Aprakāśācara. Secret agents are of two classes: Sañcara and Saṃstha. The Sancaras again are of four types-i) Tiksna ii) Pravrajita iii)Satri and iv)Visada while Samsthas are of two types i)Vaṇik ii)Kṛśivala iii) lingi iv) Bhikṣuka and V) Adyapaka. Spies, especially the Samsthas should be provided with necessary remuneration and comfortable living conditions.

Spies should be posted in all important administrative departments of the king’s own state as well as in those of his enemies. In the king’s own territory, spies should detect persons angry with the king for genuine or non-genuine causes. Persons who plot against the king without any genuine cause should be eliminated
by the spies. But persons with genuine reasons are to be won over with honour and gifts. Thus are the Kaṇṭakas or thorns of the state to be detected and subjugated.

“Spies who feign to be idiots, dumb, deaf, and also eunuchs, mendicant beggars, minstrels, maidservants, garland-makers and artists etc. should be employed to collect information regarding inner apartments of Mahāmatras (high officials) and the movements and messages of these high officials should be watched through carefully appointed spies.”

Kāmandaki concludes saying that just as the sun by its rays draws up moisture from the earth, so the expert spies, well-versed in many arts, moving about in various disguises, should collect information about actions and reactions of people inside and outside their master’s dominion. The king should know that the measures he uses to know the moves and intentions of the enemy are also adopted against him. So he should be cautious and vigilant about the spies.

Espionage in Nitivākyamṛta of Somadevasuri

This treatise on ancient polity belongs to the Post-Kautilyan period and devotes an entire chapter titled ‘Carasamuddesa’ to outline the spies of that period.
The first seven sutras describe the field of action, importance, qualities, wages, credibility and utility of spying. The remaining thirty four sutras mainly enumerate the classes to which the spies belong. The reverence and general adherence to Kauṭilya’s line of thought regarding espionage noticeable here establishes Kauṭilya’s authority on the subject.

Somadeva echoes Kauṭilya’s line of thought when he observes that spies are the eyes of the king. श्वपरमणालकार्यार्थाबलोकने चारांश्वशुष्णी द्वितिपतीनाम्। Through these spies, the king sees the deeds that are for and against the interest of the kings, their allies and enemies belonging to the Rājamaṇḍala. Thus the entire Rājamaṇḍala becomes the field of work of the spies. The king must know the affairs of his own territory and the foreign territory as well through his spies.

Although Kauṭilya and other ancient thinkers mention many qualifications and merits of the spies, Somadeva has mentioned only four qualities necessary in a spy. These are: i) Ungreediness, ii) Unsluggishness iii) Truthfulness and iv) Power of argument. अलौल्यमानकाममणाश्बायिनिचत्वाहुःकत्वचेति चारणां। This is, of course, the essence of all qualities of an efficient spy.
Spies should always be paid handsomely and up to their satisfaction. Somadeva argues that spies satisfied with the anticipated reward will always be speedier in their action. तुढिदनमेव चाराणां वेतनम्। ते हि तल्लोभात् स्वामिकायेषु अतीव त्वरन्ते।

Like his predecessors, Somadeva too opines that the report of a spy should be believed only when it has been corroborated by three other spies. संदिग्धविषये त्रयाणामेकवावेये संप्रत्ययः

A king without spies is sure to be destroyed by the enemies just as a king without a night-guard deserves no welfare.

अनवसपौर्णं हि राजा स्वेतः परीश्चात्संस्थितेत्

किमस्त्वायामिनरस्य कमलम्।

Spies have been divided into two broad categories by Somadeva, ie. Sthayi and Yayi. Those who carry on their duties from a certain place, are called Sthayi, while those who move from place to place for executing their assignments are known as Yayi. This classification is similar to Saṃstha and sancara spies of Kauṭilya. These are again divided into thirty-six sub-classes. These are: i) Kapatika or fraudulent householder ii) Udasthita or recluse iii) Grhapatika or Householder iv) Vaidehaka or trader v) Tāpasa or ascetic vi) Kitava or gambler vii) kirata or tribal hunter viii)
Aksasalika or keeper of a gambling house ix) Yamapatika (one who lives by showing the pictures drawn on the punishments inflicted by Yama on the sinners x) Ahitunḍika or a snakecharmer xi) Saunḍika or a vintner xii) sauvika or a juggler xiii) patacchara or a pilferer xiv) Vita or paramour xv) Vidūṣāka or a jester xvi) pitamardaka or a seeker of amorous pleasure xvii) Nata or an actor xviii) Nartaka or a dancer xix) Gayaka or a singer xx) Vadaka or an instrumentalist xx) Vakjivaka or a storyteller xxii) Gaṇaka or a fortune teller xxiii) Sakunika or a fowler xxiv) Bhisak or a practitioner of ayurvedic medicine xv) Aindrajalika or a magician xvi) Naimittika or reader of omens xvii) Suda or a cook xviii) Aralika or expert in recipes xix) Samvahaka or masseur xxx) Tiksna or a fiery spy xxxi) Krura or a cruel person xxxii) Rasada or a poisoner xxxiii) Jada or an idiot xxxiv) Muka or a dumb man xxxv) Vadhira or a deaf person and xxxvi) Andha or a blind person.
One noteworthy point is that women spies, so prominent in Kautilya’s spying network, are totally absent in Somadeva’s work.

**Spying in the Yuktikalpataru of Bhojaraja**

The Yuktikalpataru of Bhojaraja is a commendable work on polity and statecraft of the post-Kautilyan period. On the role of spies in public administration, Bhojaraja opines that a king having spies can go around the whole world as the sun goes around the world with its luster and the air with its speed.

Regarding his qualifications, Bhojaraja says that a spy should be prompt in understanding the arguments and gestures of others and be able to express his own intentions; He must have a good memory and be expert in all works. He must be fearless, painstaking, loyal and intelligent.

A king can easily destroy an enemy state with the help of spies, such was the power wielded by them. They should thus be recruited when the time is ripe and fit for counseling. These spies
out to destroy should be sent to the inimical state in the guise of Pāsāndas and Tāpāsas.

Spies must be pure of character and judicious in nature. They must be free from anger and greed. According to him, the spies be plenty in number and must have full knowledge regarding matters of home state and foreign state. Bhojarāja preferred eunuchs, dwarfs, hunchbacks, and other disabled persons as spies, probably due to their greater commitment. For monitoring the going-on in the harm, Bhojaraja advises the recruitment of women spies preferably from beggars, maid servants, garland-sellers and artists. The report of one spy should be relied upon only after corroboration from at least two other spies. The Yuktikalpataru propagates the theory of spying by ambassadors.(Duta). The ambassadors are the open spies and the secret agents are ambassadors.
The Mudrārākṣasa of Visākadutta - A practical application of Kautilyan Espionage.

The general usage and acceptance of spying in everyday life is reflected from its frequent occurrence in popular literature like Dramas and Fables. The Mudrārākṣasā of Visākhadutta is a classic example of this literary trend. Assigned to the later Gupta period, it is a political drama that vividly illustrates the intrigues and counter-intrigues between the two celebrated political strategists- Kauṭilya,
the prime minister of Candragupta Maurya and Rākṣasa, the prime minister of the rival Nandas.

In his efforts to win over Rākṣasa to subserve the interests of the nascent Mauryan Empire, Kauṭilya employed his pervasive secret service to maneuver all political moves to Candragupta’s advantage and foil those of his enemies. All techniques of espionage, i.e. intelligence, counterintelligence, espionage, sabotage, arson, political assassination and disinformation that are prescribed in the Arthasastra are abundantly employed here, which clearly establishes the argument that Espionage continued throughout the succeeding centuries, and was certainly well known during the Gupta period when Visākhadutta flourished.

The drama Mudrarākṣasa, although written by Visākhadutta in the later Gupta period (about nine hundred years after Kauṭilya), vividly describes the strategies of espionage adopted by Canakya alias Kauṭilya in winning over Rākṣasa, the efficient but hostile minister of the rival Nandas, to the side of Candragupta, the new king (322-298 B.C). Rākṣasa’s counter-strategies to tilt the scales in favour of his patron, the Nandas, are also remarkably brilliant, displaying a high level of objectivity, clarity and discretion. The operational techniques of intelligence, counterintelligence, sabotage,
arson, propaganda and political assassination as prescribed in The Kauṭiliya Arthaśāstra are applied into practice here, effectively establishing the fact that the Kauṭilyan Concept of Espionage was acceptable not only in the Mauryan age but continued throughout the succeeding centuries, and was certainly well known during the Gupta period. It satisfies the oft-expressed opinion of historians of the dearth of real instances of Operational Intelligence in the Arthasastra.

In the First Act of the drama, we see that having engineered the destruction of the Nandas, and installed Candragupta on the throne, Kauṭilya is trying to persuade the reluctant Raksasa to accept the Prime-ministership of Magadha. Kauṭilya’s band of spies is therefore active throughout the country to know the whereabouts and tactics of Rākṣasa and other antagonists of the Mauryas. An agent, Nipuṇaka acquires a signet ring used by Rākṣasa centering which kauṭilya weaves his strategy of combating the wiles of Rākṣaśa and his allies. In the second act, a spy called Virādhagupta appointed by Rākṣasa, in the guise of a snake charmer, investigates the happenings at Kusumpura, the capital of the Nandas which the Mauryas have seized. Another spy, Siddharthaka, reports to him the
apparent conflict that has suddenly arisen between Candragupta and Kautilya.

Rākṣasa instructs two spies in the guise of bards to inflame this conflict and sends his Superintendent, Karabhaka as spy to Kusumpura to know the consequences of this conflict. In the third act, the spy of Rākṣasa tries to flatter Candragupta with hollow praise. Candragupta, understanding his motive, rewards him handsomely and convinces him with the false information that Kautilya has given up the ministership in a fit of anger. The fourth act shows that Kautilya’s spies have become active in the camp of Malayaketu, an enemy king plotting against Candragupta. The spy, Bhāgurāyaṇa, engaged by Kautilya but serving as secretary to Malayaketu, tries to vitiate him against Rākṣasa. The latter narrates his secret plan and persuades Malayaketu to stand by him. In the fifth act, Malayaketu is camping in the vicinity of Kusumpura to attack it. Jivasiddhi, a spy of Kautilya, in the guise of an ascetic, requests Bhāgurāyaṇa for a permit to leave the camp. Knowing that Malayaketu was overhearing the conversation, Jivasiddhi states that staying with Rākṣasa was dangerous as he had murdered Malayaketu’s father with a Viṣakanyā or a poison woman. In the sixth act, Inflamed at Rākṣasa’s alleged treachery; Malalaketu
controls his wrath with difficulty. Immediately thereafter, he learns of the discovery of a letter bearing Rākṣasa’s stamp and some of his ornaments in the possession of Siddhartaka, another spy of Kauṭilya planted in the enemy camp. This letter was actually forged by Čanakya. Stamped with the signet-ring and bearing the handwriting of Śakatadāsa, a close associate of Rākṣasa, it contained adverse information pointing to doubtful intentions of Rākṣasa. Moreover, it was accompanied by ornaments given to Rākṣasa by Malayaketu previously. Falsely established a traitor, Rākṣasa denied the charges but in vain. He is discharged by Malayaketu and all his plans against Candragupta come to naught. In the sixth act, he is seen hiding in an abandoned garden near Kusumpura. Another spy of Kauṭilya, feigning grief, informs him of Candanadāsa’s fate. Not fearing for his own life, he is anxious for his friend Candanadāsa who has been caught by Kauṭilya’s spies and shall be spared capital punishment only if he, Rākṣasa, surrenders to Kauṭilya. In the seventh act, Rākṣasa arrives at the place of slaughter and sees Candanadāsa surrounded by wailing family members. Rākṣasa pleads for his life whereupon Kauṭilya meets him privately and divulges all his past activities to implicate Rākṣasa. Even the two executioners were a ploy to instigate Rākṣasa to surrender. Rākṣasa agrees whereupon
Candanāsā and Malayaketu are set free. Kauṭilya’s target is accomplished.

The play reaches its denouement only through the spies and counter-spies and their well-planned strategies. In fact, there is not a single act in the play where the spies are not active. It translates into action all the techniques of espionage i.e. intelligence, counter-intelligence, sabotage, arson, political assassination, disguises, double-agency and disinformation that were prescribed by Kauṭilya.

**Agents and Cover jobs in The Mudrarakṣasā**

A large number of secret agents, viz, Nipuṇika, Indrāśarma, Jivasiddhi, Siddhartaka, Samiddhartaka, Viradhagupta, Sonottara, Daruvarmaṇ, Varvaraka, Abhayadatta, Praviraka and Udumbara were used by Kauṭilya and Rākṣasa. Conversant with various terrains, disguises, languages, manners and methods of handling suspects, they watched over Magadha and surrounding areas to gather information suitable to their respective objectives. An agent under the ‘cover’ of a religious man carrying a Yamapaṭa (a roll of cloth with pictures depicting the activities of Yama) and another disguised as ‘a snake charmer’ are mentioned. Both these covers being attractive and imaginative, the spies gain entrance into both crowded places and elite circles. The Yamapaṭa man conveys
intelligence of the positioning of many of Rākṣasa’s spies in the city, who, unknown to him, were actually Caṇakya’s spies in disguise. 122

**Positioning of spies in enemy camp**

Many sharp men cunningly infiltrated enemy lines either by seeking direct employment or by accidentally coming into their contact and slowly won over their confidence. Bhadrabhata, Candragupta’s trusted general against the Nandas, the Brāhmaṇa IndraSarma, the Jain mendicant Jivasiddhi, Śakaṭādaśa and Siddharthaka joined Malayaketu and Raksasa’s camp. Jivasiddhi successfully engineered Parvataka’s murder by diverting the Viṣakanyā meant for Candragupta towards Parvaka.

Malayaketu, though suspicious by nature, could not detect the double agents. 123 Rākṣasa too could not fathom Caṇakya’s strategy of sending Śakaṭādaśa to him. 124 Śakaṭādaśa, who was arrested along with his family members and sentenced to death, was the pawn of a calculated intelligence mission. 125 Caṇakya deployed Siddhartaka, one of his agents to visit Śakaṭādaśa in prison, cause some confusion and effect his escape, as described in the chapter dealing with ‘Liberation of Hostages-समाधिमोक्षः’ of the Kauṭiliya Arthaśāstra. 126 Bhāgurayaṇa, another agent of Caṇakya who was planted as
Siddhārtaka cleverly procured the ornaments of Rakṣasa as rewards given for good service. These ornaments were then used by Kautilya along with the signet-ring and letter written unsuspectingly by Śakaṭādāsa for a shrewd Disinformation operation. Siddhārtaka willingly gets caught with them in his possession which implicates Rakṣasa because Malayaketu had once given him these ornaments and Čaṇakya’s purpose is served.

During grueling interrogation, Kautilya demoralized Candanadāsa, the imprisoned friend of Rakṣasa, showing him a glimpse of the mock execution squad prepared supposedly for Śakaṭādāsa. Čaṇakya also arranged for the supposed arrest and banishment of Jivasiddhi for plotting Parvataka’s assassination. In order to plant his enemies in the enemy camp, Kautilya arranged that his senior officers defect from the royal camp and join Rakṣasa. Rakṣasa believed Śakaṭādāsa and Jivasidhhi to be his plants in the enemy camp while they were actually Double Agents. Rakṣasa, under this misconception, hopefully observes, “Śakaṭādāsa has been kept in the royal camp with large funds for hiring persons adept in
administering poison and causing injury to Candragupta, and for
communicating the secret doings of the enemy. Friends like
Jivasiddhi and others have been deployed to secure information
about the enemy movement and to break up their confederacy." 132

Communication tools

The secret agents of the Mudrārakṣasa successfully pass on
intelligence to their handlers by the use of coded expressions
without disclosing their identity. The popular drama also mentions
written reports submitted by secret agents.133 Records were also
maintained of the information collected by spies.134

Propaganda

Organized dissemination of ambiguous information,
disinformation, disaffection, false allegations and rumours to enemy
ranks was frequently recommended in the Arthasastra to lower their
morale or bewilder them. These practices are widely seen in the
Mudrārakṣasa. Canakya got the report circulated that Parvataka, a
friend of Rākṣasa, had been killed by the latter by means of a
Viṣakanyā. This created confusion and panic in the mind of
Malayaketu.135 Śakaṭadāsa was falsely alleged of planning to kill
Candragupta and imprisoned.
Rākṣasa is also seen to have planned a disinformation campaign which however backfired and pushed Rākṣasa into his own trap. Virādhagupta, trusted spy of Rākṣasa in Magadha, told him about the growing incompatibility between Candragupta and Caṇākya. Rākṣasa promptly advised Virādhagupta to proceed to Kusumpura and contact Sthanakalasa, the undercover agent who was directed to fan this flame of discontent. The wily Caṇākya staged a fake quarrel between Candragupta and himself and allowed the news to spread willingly. As expected, Rākṣasa was duped to think that Candragupta was vulnerable now that he had no mentor.

Kṣapaṇaka, the agent of Caṇākya, placed earlier, had cleverly conveyed to Malayaketu that Rākṣasa was responsible for the murder of Parvataka, his father, by a poison damsel or Viśakanyā. Bhāgurāyaṇa, another spy, instigated him further lamenting the futility of material relations.

Forgery as an Intelligence operation

The differences between Rākṣasa and Malayaketu were aggravated by the sealed letter and ornaments found with Siddhartaka. Bhāgurāyaṇa, apprehending voluntary disclosure of facts by Śakatadāsa if produced before Malayaketu, cleverly dismissed that possibility by saying that Śakatadāsa would never
confess before his master. This presence of mind of Bhagurayana was enough to convince Malayaketu about disloyal and treacherous designs of Rakṣasa. Thus, Chāṇakya’s operation-forgery succeeded in his mission of winning over Rakṣasa. This usage of illegal practices like forgery, fraud etc for entrapping opponents and ensuring the ultimate well-being of subjects appears to be justified by Chāṇakya. The technique of opening a sealed cover without breaking the seal speaks of skilled forgery even in those days.

Security of the Royalty

The top-level security assigned to the King surpasses modern VIP security arrangements if not in technology but surely in earnestness and zeal. Several assassination attempts on Chandragupta Maurya’s were arranged most skillfully by Rakṣasa and his spies but foiled with even sharper cunning and expertise by Cāṇakya’s counter-espionage operatives. The Viṣakanyā that finds special mention in The Arthaśāstra is actually used here by Raksasa to entice and murder Candragupta but was played back or killing Parvataka, a powerful political ally whom Chāṇakya wanted to eliminate.

After overthrowing the Nandas, Candragupta and his Royal entourage were scheduled to make a heroic entry into the palace in 196
Kusumpura. During the top-gear security build-up, Caṇākya had directed the artisans to decorate the eastern entrance. But the carpenters informed him that the chief carpenter, Daruvarman, had already decorated the front gate with special golden arches for this purpose. Caṇākya smelt a conspiracy as Daruvannan had prepared the arch without consulting Caṇākya. He made an immediate change in schedule and incorporated a coronation ceremony for Vairocaka, the brother of Parvataka into the celebrations. Flattering him thus, Caṇākya lulled Vairocaka to enter the palace mounted on Candragupta’s elephant.

Interestingly, he was also persuaded to wear the same clothes and ornaments as Candragupta. Varvaraka, Candragupta’s driver but Rākṣasa’s spy, now prepared to slay Vairocaka whom he mistook for Candragupta. However, the elephant, sensing danger, suddenly rushed ahead, disturbing all time-speed based calculations of the assassins, and crashed into the arch, killing Varvaraka instantly. Daruvarman also attempted to kill Vairocaka but was caught and lynched by Candragupta’s bodyguards instead. All traces of these killings were instantly removed at Caṇākya’s instructions, possibly to prevent any apprehensions in the royal family or the subjects.
A ‘physician agent’ was also deputed by Raksasa to assassinate Candragupta by administering poison concealed in medicine. The ever vigilant Cāṇākya placed the medicine on a gold plate which triggered such chemical reactions that indicated poison. The agent was compelled to drink his own preparation causing instantaneous death.

Praviraka, another potential assassin, was detected by Cāṇākya’s spies from the ostentatious display of wealth which he had procured in advance as payment for the killing and made contradictory statements which could not defend such huge assets. Bibhitasaka, another killer spy, had concealed his armed goons in the hollow wall of the bedroom assigned to Candragupta. While conducting a routine anti-sabotage check, Cāṇākya noticed a line of ants coming from a crevice carrying grains in their mouths. Deducing the presence of assassins behind the wall, Cāṇākya ordered the whole bedroom be set on fire. Blinded and suffocated because of excessive smoke, the assassins perished.

The intensity and passion for foolproof security is evident in Kauṭilya’s own monologue in the drama. A product of an age of intrigue and aggression, Kauṭilya’s iron will and intrepid determination to achieve his target of a strong and prosperous
empire is evident in his open challenge to his adversaries, saying, “

Who is it that wishes to snatch away, with force, from the mouth of
the lion, with his mouth wide open, in the act of yawning, his bright
jaw, the colour of which is reddened with the blood of the elephants
(just) tasted (by him), and which (consequently) appears like the
digit of the moon tinted red by the twilight?”

आस्तवादितित्रिदशृणितश्शृणिः सन्द्याहृणामि व कलां जशालाभचचनस्य

जृभाविदारितमुखस्य मुखात्सकुत्तीम् को हतुमिच्छति हरे: परिभूय दंश्राम् ॥ १३६

Appreciating his opponent’s operational strategy, he remarks
that finally here was the minister, Rākṣasa, by whom, the great-
minded one (Candragupta), his army and his (Kautilya’s) own
intelligence were seriously taxed for a long time with the heavy
troubles of preparations, and of devising of plans, which were the
cause of protracted wakefulness.

अये अयमसावमात्यराक्षसस्!! येन महात्मना

गुरुभि: कल्पनाकल्पेत्रत्रार्थव्याकरात्मकेतुभि: ॥

चिरमायासिता सेना वृष्णस्य मतिष्ठे मे ॥ १३७
Even the underlying principle of Kautilyan stratagems, i.e. the noble end of Welfare of the subjects justifies all occasionally unethical or cruel means is echoed in this political drama.

Thus the immorality of Canakyan operations is greatly redeemed by his desire to avoid general bloodshed, consolidate Candragupta’s political strength aided by the able Prime-ministership of Raksasa and the sheer absence of any personal gain.

Kālidāsa’s Rāghuvaṃśam and spying

Although The Raghuvamsam does not deal with war or politics, its kings are depicted as alert and well-versed in the business of espionage. In the 17th canto, king Atithi is shown as to have recruited so many spies in his territory that everything has become clear to his vision just as there is nothing the earth cannot see when the sky is cloudless.

These spies were not known to one another and moved with ease in the home state as well as in enemy territory and the king, even when asleep, were watching, through his spies.
Bhaṭṭikāvyam and spying

Bhaṭṭi, in the 9th Canto of his Kāvyā, mentions Hanuman who had been sent to Lanka for searching out Sītā, sometimes as Dūta (Envoy) and sometimes as Cara (spy). Although Hanuman enters Lanka, finds out Sītā and delivers the message of Rāma to her as a spy, he introduces himself as an envoy of Rāma on getting caught. As is expected from an envoy, he advises Rāvaṇa to conciliate with Rāma, but on finding the latter too arrogant, warns Rāvaṇa of the dangerous outcome of war with Rāma. ¹³⁸

Spying in the Kirātārjunīyam

Bhāravī has presented a befitting characterization of an ideal spy in his Kirātārjunīyam, which reveals his deep understanding of the science of polity and good governance. Yudhiṣṭhira, in a concerted bid to regain his lost kingdom, appoints a spy to ascertain Duryodhana’s prowess. Upon gathering all information, the spy returns. Before speaking, he begs to be pardoned, as all his observations may not be pleasant. But he has resolved to speak the bitter truth, which alone could help Yudhiṣṭhira.
Spies are the eyes of the king, who should never be deceived by his own subordinates, who have been assigned difficult and secret missions. Words, both wholesome and agreeable, are rare but must be uttered for the welfare of the people and their ruler.

The spy's reporting should be well-grounded, with appropriate words and dignity of sense. Bharavi's spy had thorough knowledge of the intricacies of polity. He refers to Duryodhana's application of Six-fold peace-policy.
He is also aware of the faithful spies appointed by the shrewd and alert Duryodhana from whom he learns thoroughly all the plans of other kings but his own secret plans are known only after their successful fulfillment.

After reporting all gathered facts about Duryodhana’s regime, he urges Yudhiṣṭira to take up counter-measures for no intelligence, however sensitive or genuine, would yield the desired result if not communicated or acted upon immediately.

Espionage in Māgha’s Śīṣupālavadha
Māgha, one of the most lucid poets and pragmatic thinkers of ancient India, unequivocally stated that statecraft can flourish only with help from a well-oiled espionage network. His observation on the indispensableness of espionage is famous now. According to Māgha, the statecraft in which even a single step is not taken in contravention of the science of Daṇḍanīti which provides a decent living and liberal grants, does not shine to advantage without (the employment of) spies as the science of grammar does not shine without PaspaśaBhāṣya (Introductory part of Patanjali’s Mahābhāṣya), though it has Nyāsa, a good vṛtti and an excellent Bhāṣya.

अनुत्तृत्रापदन्वासा सदृति: सत्त्रिबन्धना।

झांब्दविबेठव नो भार्ति राजनीतिःप्रस्प्याः।

Uddhava, the chief minister of the Yādavas, calls for spies to monitor a corrupt bureaucracy. He observes that as people can easily go down into water by first making landing places for access thereto, so the enemy can be easily captured if loopholes in the eighteen departments of the state are detected by the spies. कृत्वा कृत्तिक्षणमस्थानं प्रणिधय: पदम् विदाःवर्न्तु महत्तस्तलं विद्विषदभ्यस:।
Spying in the Dasakumaracaritam

The Daśakumāracaritam of Dañḍin, a prominent Prose Romance relating historical incidents, presents a very practical outlook towards human life and society. The eighth chapter called 'Visrutacaritam' shows how the application of spying helped Bhāskaravarman, the heir-apparent of the kingdom of Vidarbha, regain his claim to the throne which had been seized by the neighbouring king Vasantabhanu of Asmaka through his own brand of spying. Vasantabhanu had been helped in stealthily occupying Vidarbha by the wily Candrapālīta, his minister’s son, who planted many spies disguised as singers, dancers, prostitutes and servants to overthrow Bhāskaravarman’s wayward father, king Anantavarman. After many hardships, Prince Bhāskaravarman with help from Visruta, his cousin, and by applying various spying strategies, could free his kingdom from the usurpers and also acquire the kingdom of Mahismatī from his treacherous uncle, Mitravarman, all with nominal military exercise.

चन्द्रपालितो नाम अशमकेन्द्रामात्यस्वेन्द्रपालितस्य सूनरस्हुत्: पितृनिर्वाचितो
नाम भूत्व बहुभिश्यारणे: बहीसिनत्त्वकौशलाभि:
Spying in the Pañcatantram

The Pañcatantram, a significant treatise on polity and didactics, presents its views on statecraft through Fable Literature very skillfully. Its authorship is attributed to Viṣṇusarman, the court-pandit of King Amaraśakti of Mahilāropya in South India. Visṇusarman, a scholar adept in polity (Nayāśāstra), adopted the method of story-telling to educate the three uneducated sons of king Amaraśakti.

After saluting the great exponents of polity like Manu, Vṛhaspati, Śūkra, Paraśāra and Cāṇakya, Viṣṇusarman states that he has written this book of five Tantras after collecting the essence of politics from the great masters.

मनवे वाचस्पत्ये शुक्राय पराशाराय
चाणक्याय च विदुषे नमोस्तु नवशास्त्रकर्त्त्वयः ।
सकलार्थशास्त्रसारं जगति समालोक्य विष्णुसमर्द्धम्
तत्रं: पञ्चभिषेत्वचकरे सुमनोहरं शास्त्रम् ॥ १४७
In *Mitrabheda*, the first Tantra of the Pañcatantram, there is the famous fable of the crow-couple. A powerful snake which was terrorizing the couple and eating their new-born, was put to death by the crow not by physical strength but by a shrewd plan. The queen’s necklace was picked up by the wily crow and dropped into the snake-pit. The royal guards killed the snake and procured the necklace. Thus, what one can accomplish by means of stratagem is not possible by physical exertions or valour, opined Visṇusārman.

उपायेन हि यतःचर्यात्म काब्यं पराक्रममः।

काक्यार्दशकसूत्रेण कृष्णसर्पः निपातितः।

उपायेन जयो यादृष्टिपोस्तादृशं हेतुभि।

उपायेन स्वयं सत्यकायोऽध्वि न जुरैः परिभूयते॥ १४८

*Kākolukiyan*, the fifth Tantra of the Pañcatantram, contains many maxims on the utility of espionage. Sthirajīvi, the minister of the crow-king, declared his intention of adopting *Dwaidhibhāva* (the policy of deception) and knowing the flaws of the enemy by sending spies, before destroying them altogether. ‘एष्ठ दैवधीभावस्य कालः’ was one of Sthirajīvi’s famous tenets. He advocated this
shrewd policy of feigning friendship outwardly while secretly practicing sabotage against a powerful enemy.

Having gained the enemy’s confidence through subtle moves like political alliances or friendly offerings, they could be destroyed by putting them off guard as a cough infection is easily wiped out after enhancing it with jaggery juice, says Sthirajivi.

His strong conviction about the efficacy of espionage is evident from the assurance he gives to King Meghavarṇa of tracing the enemy through his spies. ‘छिद्राणि तस्य प्रकटीकरिष्यामि प्रणिधिः।’

Spies are indispensible to statecraft; this was the guiding principle of Sthirajiva’s philosophy. Cows recognize things by smell; scholars see through the eyes of the Vedas and the king knows all matters through his spies.

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The king who keeps track of both his own and the enemy’s officials (Tirthāṇi) through his spies never fails in governance.

Sthirajīvi advises the king to employ his teacher, physician and also the royal astrologer as spies to keep a watch over the activities of his own men, while spies in the guise of snake-charmers and lunatics should be employed by him to study the political activities of his enemies.

These persons can be very good spies as they have an easy access everywhere and can watch the moves of the enemies without being suspected. They can ascertain the functioning of the enemy’s officials and ministers just as expert swimmers can fathom the depth of water-bodies.
Indeed, Sthirajīvin himself acted as a spy of his master, the crow-king, in the Kākolukiyam. Posing as a great friend of the owl-king, and being taken into confidence by the enemy, he destroyed the owls suddenly with the help of other crows by burning down the cave-dwelling of the owl-king. Clearly, espionage was well in use in the age of the Panchatantra.

The Malavikāgnimitram, a play of Kalidāsa, has a character of a Parivrājikā or a female mendicant who functions as a female spy, as she conceals her identity in the royal household and facilitates the union of the Heroine, Princess Malavikā posing as a maid, and King Agnimitra of Sunga dynasty. She is also instrumental in the wily acquisition of the approval of the two disapproving queens. Well-versed in singing, dancing, science of medicine, etc, she efficiently spies both on the Palace personnel and the commoners.

Espionage in The Kural of Thiruvalluvar Nayanar

The Thirukural composed by sage Thiruvalluvar, which is a gem of Tamil literature, contains significant verses on spying and their mode of working. The section on ‘Spies’, as translated in English by G.U. Pope along with his interpretations, stands thus;

Detectives (Book 2.1.21.)
These two: the code renowned and spies,
In these let king confide as eyes.

Let a king consider as his eyes these two things, a spy and a book (of laws) universally esteemed.

Each day, of every subject every deed,
'Tis duty of the king to learn with speed.

It is the duty of a king to know quickly (by a spy) what all happens, daily, amongst all men.

By spies who spies, not weighing things they bring,
Nothing can victory give to that unwary king.

There is no way for a king to obtain conquests, who knows not the advantage of discoveries made by a spy.

His officers, his friends, his enemies,
All these who watch are trusty spies.

He is a spy who watches all men, to wit, those who are in the king's employment, his relatives, and his enemies.

Of unsuspected mien and all-unfearing eyes,
Who let no secret out, are trusty spies.

A spy is one who is able to assume an appearance which may create no suspicion (in the minds of others), who fears no man's face, and who never reveals (his purpose).
586 As monk or devotee, through every hindrance making way,
   A spy, whate'er men do, must watchful mind display.

He is a spy who, assuming the appearance of an ascetic, goes into
(whatever place he wishes), examines into (all, that is needful), and
never discovers himself, whatever may be done to him.

587 A spy must search each hidden matter out,
   And full report must render, free from doubt.

A spy is one who is able to discover what is hidden and who retains
no doubt concerning what he has known.

588 Spying by spies, the things they tell
   To test by other spies is well.

Let not a king receive the information which a spy has discovered
and made known to him, until he has examined it by another spy.

589 One spy must not another see: contrive it so;
   And things by three confirmed as truth you know.

Let a king employ spies so that one may have no knowledge of the
other; and when the information of three agrees together, let him
receive it.

590 Reward not trusty spy in others' sight,
   Or all the mystery will come to light.
Let not a king publicly confer on a spy any marks of his favour; if he does, he will divulge his own secret.

The Čānakyanīti: an adjunct to Kauṭilya’s political ideology.

The Čānakyanīti, also attributed to Kauṭilya, is a treatise relatively smaller than the Arthasastra yet equally significant as it deals with the political ideology of this great strategist through pithy maxims. It focuses Kauṭilya as a gritty statesman who believed in strong measures to suppress treacherous evildoers, harmful enemy states and unscrupulous elements in general. Espionage as an instrument of statecraft espouses many of the worldly-wise dictums of the Čānakyanīti as its guidelines and principles.

Kauṭilya advocates top secrecy in conception, planning and execution of strategy. In a significant maxim reflecting his political ethics on discretion and tact, he counsels: “Do not reveal what you have thought upon doing, but by wise counsel keep it secret, being determined to carry it into execution. Another strikingly relevant instance is the famous aphorism which forbids the disclosure of one’s future plans to anyone, even a close friend, who in an unforeseen flash of rage, may reveal all to the enemy”.

मनसा चिन्तितम् कार्यं वाचा नैव प्रकाश्येत् ।

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Interestingly, the former director of the Israeli Intelligence Service, The Mossad, Shabtai Shavit (1989-1996), in an interview to the Discovery Channel TV went on record saying: The Mossad believes in not revealing secrets to even friends. “1+1=2, but for us, 1+1=11!” As soon as a second person learns a secret, it does not remain confined to two, but spreads to many.

The Čaṇakyanīti puts forth a good number of adages that are effective in understanding and appreciating Kautilya’s stern and uncompromising attitude towards evildoers and destructive elements of state and society. He advocates strict discipline and harsh measures in dealing with such enemies to public wellness. श्चेष्टे ज्ञायं समाचरेऽ दैवेद, ‘Be evil to evildoers’ was his motto to bring them to book. Compassion or leniency towards seditious factors is a luxury which a king or kingdom cannot afford. So he counsels:

i) Do not be very upright in your dealings for you would see by going to the forest that straight trees are cut down while crooked ones are left standing.
ii) Those base men who speak of the secret faults of others destroy themselves like serpents that stray onto anthills.\textsuperscript{158}

iii) We should carefully scrutinize that place upon which we step (having it ascertained to be free from filth and living creatures like insects, etc.); we should drink water, which has been filtered through a clean cloth); we should speak only those words, which have the sanction of the sastras; and do that act which we have carefully considered.\textsuperscript{159}

iv) Nothing can reform a bad man, just as the posteriors cannot become a superior part of the body though washed one hundred times.\textsuperscript{160}

v) He who possesses intelligence is strong; how can the man that is unintelligent be powerful? The elephant of the forest having lost his senses by intoxication was tricked into a lake by a small rabbit. (This verse refers to a famous story from the Niti-śāstra called Pañcatantra compiled by the Pandit Viṣṇusarma 2500 years ago)\textsuperscript{161}

vi) He who forsakes his own community and joins another perishes as the king who embraces an unrighteous path.\textsuperscript{162}

vii) The elephant has a huge body but is controlled by the ankusha (goad): yet, is the goad as large as the elephant?
A lighted candle banishes darkness: is the candle as vast as the darkness. A mountain is broken even by a thunderbolt: is the thunderbolt therefore as big as the mountain? No, he whose power prevails is really mighty; what is there in bulk? 163

viii) The wicked man will not attain sanctity even if he is instructed in different ways, and the neem tree will not become sweet even if it is sprinkled from the top to the roots with milk and ghee. 164

ix) We should not fret for what is past, nor should we be anxious about the future; men of discernment deal only with the present moment. 165

x) If the king is virtuous, then the subjects are also virtuous. If the king is sinful, then the subjects also become sinful. If he is mediocre, then the subjects are mediocre. The subjects follow the example of the king. In short, as is the king so are the subjects. 166

xi) The enemy can be overcome by the union of large numbers, just as grass through its collectiveness wards off erosion caused by heavy rainfall. 167

xii) There are two ways to get rid of thorns and wicked
persons; using footwear in the first place and in the second shaming them so that they cannot raise their faces again thus keeping them at a distance. 168

xiii) There is poison in the fang of the serpent, in the mouth of the fly and in the sting of a scorpion; but the wicked is saturated with it. 169

Kauṭiliya, the genius, teaches us that lofty ideals and strong principles can uplift human life, strengthen society and consolidate an empire if we intelligently work towards achieving our goal in a determined, progressive and practical manner.

Considering the immense worth and potential of Kauṭiliyan Vision in various disciplines, Kauṭiliyan Espionage being prominent amongst them, the year 2009, the centennial anniversary of the publication of the Kauṭiliya Arthaśāstra by Dr Shyamasastri of Mysore in 1909 after discovery of the manuscript in 1904, was hailed as a momentous year by academicians and statesmen alike. As China and India emerge as rapidly-growing super-powers of the 21st century, dominating South Asian economy and power-politics, strategic thought from Asia’s wonderful past is likely to occupy centre stage. Indeed, Roger Boesche’s book, The First Great Political Realist: Kauṭiliya and his Arthashastra’,170 especially its
third chapter titled “Kauṭilya’s Spy State”, proves that international interest of World Politics in Kauṭilya is already growing and India should prudently and rightfully lead the Quest here.

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