CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Kautilya is often maligned and misrepresented as a scheming, venomous and envious strategist out to jeopardize the prosperity of neighbours for personal gains. Capt S M Hali even suggests that modern intelligence agencies of India like RAW, IB, NIA etc consciously and intentionally follow Kautilya’s wiles and machinations to systematically destabilize and destroy their neighbours. Nothing can be farther from the truth and the fallacy in this notion needs to be realized at once before this great thinker, who was an ideal combination of a realist and a visionary, is lost to posterity.

Kautilya has stressed on OFFENCE OVER DEFENSE against criminals, separatists and rogue-states, both internal and external, but never against peace-loving political or social entities. He was a lion but never a vulture. Chandragupta’s meteoric rise in the harsh and hostile contemporary political arena and subsequent popular and glorious reign all under Kautilya’s tutelage is ample proof of this.
In fact, Kauṭilya must have foreseen such misconceptions and so stated emphatically: Unmixed danger comes from the treasonable elements and from enemies only. तुष्टेभ्यः शतुभ्यश्च द्विविधा शुष्का आपदा। \(^2\) Immoderation, says Kauṭilya, such as passion and so on, instigates one’s own enemies, and wrong policy rouses foreign enemies. Both of these are follies that amount to demoniacal conduct. कामादिरञ्ज्येः स्वः प्रकृतिः कोपयति, अपनयो बाह्यः। ततुभयमासुरी वृत्तिः। \(^3\) They also call for Self-control on the part of the ruler. विद्याविनयेद्विन्दुन्द्रियायः कामोद्धलोभमानमदहर्वत्यागाल्पकारः। \(^4\) Self-control implies control over one’s personal weaknesses, especially over desire, anger, greed, pride, arrogance, and foolhardiness. If these weaknesses lead smaller men into fields of crime, they can plunge rulers and leaders along with their states into political, economic and social disasters. General discipline, both within the self and in society at large must prevail at all costs. When these are in control through good governance and vigilance aided by the instrument of efficient espionage, the ruler or leader must consolidate and fortify his position by acquiring traditional and secular wisdom from elders; be well-informed of relevant
developments and information through news-gatherers; secure general welfare by energetic action, protect social integrity by ordered action, obtain obedience by education, ensure prosperity by conservation and agglomeration of resources, and secure livelihood for all with good intentions. Planning and execution of all this was done by Kautilya’s powerful body of Counsellors and Spies.

Coming to the modern context, even though India has been following a policy of non-violence and peaceful co-existence, the same cannot be said of our neighbours, especially China and Pakistan, who have openly displayed their leanings towards political opportunism and aggression in the past. Subjugating Tibet, China has come right up to our northern borders, nibbled into our territory in the North-East, built the Aksai-Chin road and other road links right in the lee of our Himalayan borders. Similarly, being soft towards Pakistan, despite its subversive tactics in Kashmir, Khalistan or Assam has only increased their subtle aggression. Such greed for political and economic aggrandizement is noticed all over the world today. Despite the emergence of the United Nations Organization and growing world opinion on nuclear disarmament, might is still right and offensive often the best defensive. Indeed, it
is time for India to change her policy of tolerance and peaceful co-
existence to one of greater interference in the lines of Kautilya, the
sturdiest statesman of our times. Intrigue, according to Kautilya,
would prove very effective in this objective. He was aware that war
is self-destructive and should be the last option. Just as the collision
of an unbaked mud-vessel with a similar vessel is destructive to
both, so war brings ruin to both kingdoms, he maintained. समेत चार्म
पात्रमामेनाहतमियोभयत: क्षर्यं करोति।  

However, even in his preference
for peace and silent punishment, his emphasis was on not on
weakness but on power and strength; no piece of iron, that is not
made red-hot, will combine with another piece of iron, laid down
Kautilya. तेजो हि संधानकारणम् नातपतं लोहं लोहेन संधते।  

Kautilya
strongly believed that the time-honoured formula of Sāma, Dāna,
Daṇḍa and Bheda, that is, negotiation, conciliation, sowing
dissension, and meting out punishment, should be used, albeit
judiciously, by the king desirous of building an Empire (Vijigīṣu). It
is a hard truth that in the realm of diplomacy and statecraft caught in
the mire of political or economy hegemony, morality and
expediency cannot be necessarily complementary and at times,
pursuing one often has to be done at the cost of the other.
Although we speak of a new world order where humanism and international-mindedness shall prevail, it is a known fact that every country is either at war or on a footing of war-preparedness and we cannot shake off bellicosity which is inherent to the human race. War has dominated human psychology since time immemorial. The Tamil classic Silappadikaram even depicts war as a holy function in as much as the Eiynar aborigines of Southern India, who lived by cattle-lifting and highway robbery, invoked their goddess Korravai, the deity who would secure their victory after accepting their sacrifices. W. Mcdougall defines this pugnacity as the urge for selection of the fit and the extermination of the less fit during mutual conflicts. However, though wars were frequently fought, they were well planned out and executed with help from espionage networks, a practice that is very much in practice till date, albeit with advanced technology and supersonic gadgetry. Abolition of war is thus a delusion and beyond the pale of practical politics. Although it cannot be eradicated, efforts are surely being made to ennoble it. A classic instance of such modern crusades is the ongoing U.S. led War against Terrorism which seeks to annihilate international
anarchy. Espionage, here, is being used to ensure peace and internationalism.

**Psychological Espionage** is particularly significant in warfare. Stoessinger\(^9\) opines that the most important single precipitating factor in the outbreak of war is misperception of the power of one’s adversary. Most leaders see themselves as stronger than they really are and their adversaries as weaker than they really are. These misperceptions lead directly to distorted perceptions of adversarial intentions and capabilities which then precipitate a little too hastily into all out war. Each leader confidently expects victory after a brief and triumphant campaign, but this may not always happen, often due to poor reconnoitering, surveillance and experience of ground situations. He also states that leaders on all sides typically harbor self-delusions on the eve of war. If the leaders of the various nations involved would have given more weightage to reality through improved espionage mechanisms rather than their own distorted misperceptions, it may have been possible to avoid conflict on such a massive scale or even avoid war altogether. After all, wars are actually fought in the minds rather than in the war-
fields, and Kautilya's genius in mapping the adversary's mindset is a renowned fact.

Kautilya's recommendations about the secret service for keeping watch over state employees, or political activities, or for the purpose of criminal investigation, espionage and counter-espionage etc. are considerably relevant in today's democratic set-up also. His views about the state's ministers, employees, citizens regarding their work-culture, their qualification and appointment, their despicable corruptibility, disparaging attitude and apathy towards public interest and their lawful needs, and ways of monitoring and streamlining them have a bearing even today, almost 2500 years later. With corruption and sedition eating into the country's growth like cancer and endless scams in public finance, sugar, telecommunications, housing, animal husbandry, urea imports and so on, the country is suffering colossal losses running into crores of rupees. Tainted political leaders also indulge in fabrication of evidence to defend themselves. Aberrant police and bureaucrats work hand-in-glove with them. Horse-trading and bribery even reaches the highest echelons of power in the corporate and judicial world to hush up such scandals, all at the cost of the common man's
hard-earned money. For such unpardonable acts of dishonesty amounting to treason, Kautilya’s spies meted out chilling modes of punishment, even death by torture. Considering the stakes involved, the deterrent quality of such stringent action is certainly the need of the hour.

Indian intelligence agencies could do well to draw from Kautilyan concept of espionage. This is especially because, while our secret services have had their spells of glory, their failures have also been glaring and sometimes disparaging to the nation’s image. Defense analyst B. Raman has described RAW, our external intelligence agency, as the proverbial curate’s egg, which is good in parts! Outlining the expectations from an ideal intelligence agency, he feels that if India aspires to become a superpower by 2020, it should have an intelligence network that can see, hear, smell and feel, both far and near. In other words, it should be able to operate imaginatively and daringly, analyze lucidly, anticipate unfailingly and manage crisis situations effectively. An ideal spy should have the courage to tell the truth without worrying about the consequences, take pride in his work, resist all temptations and act as missionaries of knowledge-open and secret-and not as cheap
careerists preoccupied with the power-games of politics. Prior to the fortieth anniversary of the organization, Raman grades the strengths and weaknesses of RAW thus:

- Strong in its capability for covert action, weak in its capability for intelligence collection, analysis and assessment.
- Strong in low and medium grade intelligence, weak in high grade intelligence.
- Strong in TECHINT, weak in HUMINT.
- Strong in collation, weak in analysis.
- Strong in its ability to network with foreign agencies, weak in its networking with other agencies in India.
- Strong in investigation, weak in prevention.
- Strong in crisis management, weak in crisis prevention
- Obsessive in its secrecy, fearful of transparency.

The remedial measures Raman suggests bear significant resemblance to Kautilyan tenets of Espionage and fortify our faith in the continued relevance of this master-strategist of Ancient India.
• A recruitment policy, which is able to attract to the organization the best that the open market has to offer.

• Emphasis on merit in promotions and not on seniority.

• The constant weeding out of the unfit.

• Encouragement of professionalism and discouragement of careerism.

• A readiness to accept external auditing of its management and performance in order to constantly identify and eliminate inadequacies and bad practices.

• Elimination of service parochialism and cultivation of an esprit-de-corps.

This overhauling of the intelligence agencies is possible only when, our political leadership, like their worthy predecessors Kautilya and Candragupta, realizes that a well-performing intelligence agency is an indispensible tool and asset in policy-making. Intelligence agencies and security forces are the two eyes, as it were, of the nation. Neglecting any one may hamper the functioning of the other and expose the nation to great peril.
In view of the rising terrorist and insurgency threats across the sub-continent, the Indian Intelligence community has been steadily expanding. In 1947, it had two agencies- the IB and the Military Intelligence. Today, it has ten agencies-

1. Intelligence Bureau
2. Research and Analysis Wing
3. Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA)
4. Joint Cipher Bureau
5. All India Radio Monitoring Service
6. Joint, Intelligence Committee
7. Signals Intelligence Directorate
8. Aviation Research Centre
9. Directorate of Air Intelligence
10. Directorate of Navy Intelligence

- Intelligence Bureau: The IB was established in 1947 to assume responsibility for India's domestic security. The IB is shrouded in secrecy and there is little public information concerning its main operations.
• The Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) of the Cabinet secretariat was formed on September 21, 1968 and handles India’s external covert intelligence gathering. Although its budget is unknown, some estimates peg it at $160 million. It is believed to have about 10,000 agents or more in its payroll. The Chief of R&AW is designated as Secretary (R). The first to hold this post was R. N. Kao of the IB.

• Defense Intelligence Agency: This agency was established on 5 March 2002 with the appointment of Lt. General Kamal Davar as the first Director General (DG). It is supposed to be the nodal agency for all defense related intelligence.

• Joint Cipher Bureau: The Joint Cipher Bureau works closely with the IB and RAW. It is responsible for cryptanalysis and encryption of sensitive data.

• All India Radio Monitoring Service: The Central Monitoring Service of All India Radio monitors all radio broadcasts in India as well as all foreign radio broadcasts which can be received in India.

• Joint Intelligence Committee: The JIC is entrusted with the tasks of coordinating intelligence between all government
agencies, civilian and military. It consists of experts on several issues who analyze intelligence inputs.

- **Signals Intelligence Directorate**: The Signals Intelligence Directorate is a joint service organization, manned by personnel from the Army, Navy and Air Force. It has a large number of WEUs (Wireless Experimental Units) that carry out the task of monitoring military links of other countries.

- **Aviation Research Centre**: The ARC is the (signals intelligence) arm of the RAW. It has stations in Palam Airport in Delhi and at the Farkhor Air Base at Farkhor/Ayni in Tajikistan. It reports to the Director General of Security and RAW.

- **Directorate of Air Intelligence**: The DAI is responsible for air and satellite reconnaissance missions.

- **Directorate of Naval Intelligence**: This is the Indian Navy’s intelligence arm.

For detection of financial offences, a special branch called Directorate of Revenue Intelligence is functional. This Directorate deals with all matters connected with anti-smuggling in the Customs and Central Excise Organizations. The DRI, which also handles
customs duty evasion, has not increased in size, and employs only 600 employees. Some of the important functions entrusted to the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence include:

a. Collection, collation and dissemination of information on smuggling activities; b. Investigation of cases having inter-collectorate and international ramifications; c. Coordination of the anti smuggling activities in the Preventive Collectorates, Custom Houses and Central Excise Collectorates; d. Functioning as a store house of statistics on searches, seizures, adjudication, arrests, prosecution and other connected matters under Customs Act, 1962, detention under COFEPOSA, 1974 for prices/rates of gold, silver and other commodities sensitive to smuggling; e. Functioning as a store house of information on smugglers and maintenance of dossiers on important ones; f. Functioning as a nodal agency for alerts and communication of alerts to field formations for desired action on them; g. Functioning as liaison authority with the national and international customs agencies dealing with matters connected with smuggling/commercial frauds etc.
The sphere of work of these agencies is outlined clearly. Internal Security is monitored by the agencies like Intelligence Bureau, Joint Intelligence Committee, Central Bureau of Investigation, Criminal Investigation Department and All India Radio Monitoring Service. External Intelligence is the responsibility of the Research and Analysis Wing, Aviation Research Centre, National Technical Research Organization, Radio Research Center and Electronics and Technical Services. Defense Intelligence is handled by the Directorate of Military Intelligence, Defense Intelligence Agency, Directorate of Naval Intelligence, Directorate of Air Intelligence, Image Processing and Analysis Centre, Directorate of Signals Intelligence and Joint Cipher Bureau. Economic intelligence is the purview of Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Economic Intelligence Council, Directorate of Income Tax Investigation, Narcotics Control Bureau, Central Economic Intelligence Bureau, Directorate of Economic Enforcement and Directorate of Anti-Evasion. Besides, there are special organizations like the Sashastra Seema Bal, commonly known as SSB, who pitch in whenever required. The basic responsibility of the SSB is to inculcate feelings of national belonging in the border
population and develop their capabilities for resistance through a continuous process of motivation, training, development, welfare programs and activities. In the event of any aggression and forceful occupation by our neighbours, they are trained to merge with the border population, donning civilian attire, working a parallel administration and carry out the war of India with the help of Guerilla tactics. For gaining the trust of local populace, the SSB endeavours to present a benign face of the government in far flung and inaccessible areas, subscribing to the ethos of Service, Security and Brotherhood and standing steadfastly with them during difficult times. Interestingly, the SSB is the first border guarding force and lead intelligence agency (LIA) which has decided to recruit women battalions.12

As the coordination between the Samsthas and the Samghas in Kautilyan espionage was meticulously maintained by the Bhikshuki spies, similarly these varied departments handling intelligence at various levels need to be well-coordinated and synchronized to prevent mis-planning and mis-management. This coordination is a very important job and needs tremendous planning, liaising and profiling. The umbrella organization, namely,
the National Investigating Agency, created after 26-11-08, is presently supervising over it. Directly answerable to the Prime Minister, this organization is responsible for all joint operations and initiatives by these agencies.

Ajai Sahni, Executive Director, Institute for Conflict Management, is particularly critical of India's foreign policy and intelligence outputs. He opines that the absence of strategy and the incoherence of tactics have long afflicted Post-independence India, as the country finds itself responding continuously and insufficiently to provocations by its neighbours, and to a rising tide of subversion and terrorism. Worse, the pattern of responses has, with rare exception, reflected a quality of desperation and directionless-ness that, after decades of contending with these problems, is impossible to fathom. With over 25 years of Pakistan-sponsored Islamist terrorist activity on Indian soil, the country is still to correctly define the problem that confronts it, or to craft an appropriate 'strategic architecture' and to derive policies and practices that are in conformity with such an overarching design.
The unfortunate truth at the heart of India's crisis is the fact that, despite the continuous flood of rhetoric on 'proactivity' and 'synergy', the nation's responses have remained steadily frozen in a purely reactive mode, with little evidence of coherence or coordination between security and intelligence agencies. The result is, depending on the 'stimuli' generated by the enemy - directly, or through pressures from the 'international community' - the Indian response to terrorism has swung abruptly from one extremity of pacifism and conciliation, to the other, of jingoism and threats of war. Indeed, as George Tanham notes, "India has not developed a coherent internal strategy for domestic law and order and separatist and insurgency problems, or a counter to Pakistan's policy of assisting these separatist movements." Tanham notes further that India has, at best, developed counter-insurgency tactics, not an overall strategy. It has, in fact, in this context, been possible to speak of a "fruitless cycle" that has been "repeated in an endless succession of 'peace initiatives' at the highest level - regularly interrupted by escalating violence, military mobilization, coercive diplomacy and belligerent political rhetoric..." in a pattern that displays "the consistency of a
pendulum, swinging with insistent regularity from one extreme to
the other. This incoherence of response has been the single
most significant factor in the persistence of terrorist and extremist
movements in India over extended periods of time, as the gains of
each tactical or policy innovation or initiative are often cancelled
out by contradictory moves before they can be consolidated.

Steve Tsang describes the precarious situation in his study on
Global Terrorism and Intelligence. He opines that Intelligence
agencies are hard-pressed today. On the one hand, they must
uphold human rights and democratic values, and on the other,
heed to preempt the destruction wrought by suicide bombers and
other terrorist weapons. To overcome the enemy, they have to
think outside the box. They have to identify potential suicide-
bombers and win their hearts and minds before they are
indoctrinated into the cult of terrorism. Ironically, when a
government and intelligence agencies become so focused on pre-
empting terrorist attacks that they encroach on the rights of their
citizens, they unwittingly fall into a trap set by Al-Qaeda and its
kind. In their overzealousness, they unleash unknowingly a fresh
wave of mutual hatred and violence, creating a fresh pool of
terrorists. It is upto governments, civilians and media to work together to convince society of the evidence unearthed by National Intelligence agencies and instill the belief that terrorists are not engaged in any holy war. Unless the emotional or quasi-religious appeal of the global terrorists can be removed, the simple arrest of Bin Laden or the Al-Qaeda itself, will not be sufficient to prevent others from rising to replace them. The Kautilyan approach to espionage can provide some direction here. Kautilya’s wide and unbiased community-participation concept could reach out to and involve greater number of informers and leads to report on suspects, infiltrate seditious groups and warn of impending strikes and turmoil. His secular and non-judgmental approach towards middlemen and potential terrorist-recruits could even bring them round to the negotiating table and possibly persuade them to reconsider their stand on different issues of discontent and strife. His disinformation methods could be used to counter dangerous anti-India propaganda campaigns launched by so-called Jehadis and their hidden sponsors.

Incorporation of patriotic motivation very like Kautilya’s nationalistic fervor and concern for one’s countrymen can also
deliver. An intense desire to serve one’s motherland and work selflessly for public welfare egged Kautilya on in his initiatives towards a smooth administration, devoid of internal revolts, swindles, external invasions or terror strikes. In a similar manner, an intelligence agency whose personnel take pride in working for the national interests and are ready to go to any extent in safeguarding them is what India needs today at this perilous juncture. Officers who can resist the temptation to work for the partisan political interests of the party in power or their own personal interests are our only ray of hope. Crack commandoes who are patriots, brave-hearts and daredevils alone can save the country’s clandestine missions. Kautilya’s secret agents fulfilled all these callings and their modern avatars alone can tackle the catch-22 situation which prevails now. Israel’s famous secret agents of the Mossad can be cited as a classic example of such dedication and commitment. Although a small country, Israel has one of the finest and most efficient of Intelligence Services. In 1976, the rescue of 106 hijack hostages by Israeli crack commandos was hailed as a smart spy-operation by the world. A week earlier, on June 27, an Air-France plane with 300 passengers
was hijacked by Palestinian terrorists and flown to Entebbe, near Kampala, the capital of Uganda. Shortly after landing, all non-Jewish passengers were released. Acting on Intelligence provided by the Mossad, 100 elite Israeli commandos launched a top-secret rescue mission and flew over 2,500 miles into Entebbe airport under cover of darkness in Israeli transport-planes loaded with jeeps and command cars mounted with heavy machine-guns, lunchboxes and two complete surgery theaters, stormed the plane and rescued the hostages. All the hijackers, three hostages and 45 Ugandan soldiers were killed, and 11 Russian-built MiG fighters of Uganda's air force were destroyed. A fourth hostage was murdered by Ugandan army officers at a nearby hospital. On another occasion, having learnt in advance of an Egyptian plan for a surprise attack upon Israel, the Israeli commandoes hit back with lightning speed and accuracy, demolishing the entire Egyptian Air force. Later on, an extensive rocket-launching pad of the Egyptians was attacked by a small force of Israelis dropped from a helicopter, scooped up and flown back to Israel. This was an act of daring bravado and a perfectly planned operation and all due to accurate reporting by the Israeli Secret service. These men
have a mission, seeking justice for the millions of Jewish victims of Nazi inhumanity and regaining their Promised Land. Nations with such zeal and inspiration are seen to be most successful in espionage operations. The Arthasastra showers abundant praise on Kauṭilya’s secret agents as equally courageous and motivated and our future generations of spies shall surely benefit from them as role-models in this high-risk but noble and admired profession.

A particularly unique aspect of Kauṭilyan Espionage is that while most secret agencies sadly degenerate into terror-inducing tools and henchmen in the hands of the rulers or administrators, Kauṭilya’s spies remained impartial and equally harsh towards the royal powers or their representatives as well as ordinary criminals. At times, he even appears to be particularly curious and critical of the fidelity, honesty or efficacy of the govt. official, for a corrupt bureaucrat is more harmful to the country than a hundred petty thieves. Governmental integrity is essential for maintenance of resources and assets and for enriching socio-cultural advance. In his discourses on the nuances of good governance, Kauṭilya never exhibited any bias or prejudice to any group or individual. Anything that is good has to be accepted irrespective of the
source. He was apparently looking at the country as a nation in the modern sense, his interests transmitting the boundaries of Magadha. As for his own self, an office of power was something he was least interested in. He remained in prime-ministerial capacity only as long as it took to establish and consolidate Candragupta's hold over the fast-evolving Mauryan Empire and keep the foreign invaders at bay. As soon as he could convince the accomplished statesman Raksasa to assist Candragupta, he happily placed the mantle of office on his shoulders and returned to his first love, teaching polity. If at all he had any ambition, it was to guide the future generations of rulers in providing stable governance. His wish has been fulfilled; posterity has benefitted boundlessly from his wisdom and shall continue to gain from him till eternity.

Our Intelligence agencies have erred frequently of late. Frequent intelligence lapses have made the nation an easy target for bloodthirsty terrorists, mercenaries and fanatics. The 26-11-08 Mumbai terror strikes where a handful of armed henchmen from Pakistan could reach undetected right into the nerve-points of our commercial capital and wreck such extensive damage to life and
property has tainted the reputation of our espionage-system to no end. The German Bakery blast where a deadly plastic-wrapped bomb could be planted so easily despite prior warnings of possible strikes in the vicinity by U.S intelligence is another blow to our security and espionage capabilities.

The Telegraph contains many letters to the Editor which express the anger and indignation of the common man at the gaping holes in the functioning of the secret agencies of RAW, IB and the Indian Foreign Service personnel in the context of Ms Madhuri Gupta, a B-grade IFS officer and second secretary at the Indian Mission at Islamabad who was arrested in April 2010 on charges of passing sensitive intelligence-related information to the ISI since quite some years.

Some of the views expressed by these irate citizens are being highlighted here:

1. Bidyut Kumar Chaterjee, Faridabad, writes that in 63 years of Indian Independence, this is perhaps the first instance of a woman being involved in espionage. He is aghast at her revelation that she turned traitor mainly because the IFS treated its second
grade officers very shabbily. Nevertheless, this cannot be an excuse and she needs to be punished severely for treason.

2. Md. Motleb Ali, Kolkata, emphasizes that this spectacular case should act as a wake-up call to the Govt. to address dissatisfaction amongst its employees, especially amongst intelligence officials and the armed forces, who can have access to valuable secret information. Deprivation, resentment, frustration, both real and perceived, can have equally dangerous consequences and must be prevented at all costs. The lack of recognition and opportunities may well manifest itself in many such harmful ways.

3. Ahana Sengupta wonders about the inadequacy of our security systems which failed to detect an IFS officer spying for enemy countries, operating from the embassy itself, for about two to three years. Although the Ministry of External Affairs may try to dilute the matter saying that the information passed on was not very harmful, but anyone will realize that the extent of the information that she has betrayed to Pakistani Intelligence may not be known to the ministry as yet.
4. Kunal Das, Haldia, West Midnapore, explicitly points out that such instance of double agents are even more dangerous than terror-strikes. By and large, we can secure our country from terrorist attacks by deploying more forces or maintaining vigil in sensitive areas, but if our own diplomats in the highest echelons of power betray the country, there is little left to be done. A disturbing thought Kunal Das puts forward is that our intelligence agencies and foreign embassies may have other corrupt, disgruntled or traitorous employees still undetected. It is high time that these agencies and diplomats are put through a scanner.

Kauṭīlya’s relevance increases manifold at this juncture as he suggests continuous monitoring and cross-checking of the activities of ministers and bureaucrats by spies and vice versa for any such despicable and harmful behavior. The sub-continent can hardly hope to achieve durable and prosperous peace otherwise. A heartening step ahead is that, of late, the Kautilyan concept of strict and thorough over-sight and control of all espionage matters by the King and his Councillors and the active public interest and cooperation in aiding intelligence-gathering that he
advocated seems to have had some influence on our policy makers. On Tuesday, 5-1-2010, Vice-President Hamid Ansari gave definite thumbs up to a system of oversight to govern the intelligence community in India. Addressing senior intelligence officers for the R N Kao memorial lecture at the R&AW headquarters, he said while both accountability and oversight were anathema to intelligence communities, these needed to be introduced into the Indian structure. Agreeing that only honesty of purpose, commitment to uphold rule of law and acceptance of diverse cultures, religions and ethnicities alone can make this possible, Mr. Ansari said the current scheme where intelligence agencies are kept outside the ambit of parliamentary scrutiny is no longer tenable. "The traditional practice of oversight by the concerned minister and prime minister and only general accountability to Parliament... is now considered amorphous and does not meet the requirements of good governance in an open society," was his view.

Intelligence agencies have historically chaffed at suggestions of being open to Parliamentary scrutiny for a whole range of reasons - from fear of political interference to loss of secrecy that
they need. However, the Vice President stressed that the arrangement where intelligence agencies are accountable only to the executive raises concerns about the nature and scope of such supervision as well as the potential for misuse. He said that other democracies who also wrestled with the dilemma have finally opted for oversight. "The United States reached the conclusion that oversight of the intelligence community is essential because of critical importance of ensuring the nation's security as well as checking the potential for misuse of power." he informed the top brass of the Intelligence and Security services. Citing the different forms of parliamentary intelligence oversight worldwide, he argued, "Given these models of calibrated openness to ensure oversight and accountability, there is no reason why a democratic system like ours should not have a standing committee of Parliament on intelligence." Significantly, despite the talk of putting all intelligence agencies under the National Counter-Terrorism Centre proposed to be set up under the MHA, Mr. Ansari drew a distinction between external and internal intelligence. "Since internal and external intelligence do not in our system report to the same minister, the possibility of
entrusting the work to the standing committee on home affairs may not meet the requirement."

Ruling out all apprehensions and objections raised, Ansari said that far from being a stumbling block, such open discussion should be viewed as an essential preliminary to any wise action. Any misgivings here only belittle the capacity of elected representatives to be responsible in matters of national security. Also being overlooked is the fact that depending on the fall of the electoral dice, these same representatives are transformed into the political executive entrusted with the responsibility of supervising the work of intelligence agencies. He agreed that operational secrecy had to be maintained but asserted that the legislature which allocates funds was entitled to insist on financial and performance accountability. He disapproved of the current practice where the expenses of intelligence agencies are not subjected to the same kind of parliamentary scrutiny as in the case of other wings of the government. "The practice of subsuming allocations is not conducive to transparency; it may even encourage misuse. The proposed standing committee could fill this void; it could also function as a surrogate for public
opinion and thus facilitate wider acceptance of the imperatives of a situation. Given the nature of emerging threats, a wider sampling of opinion would in fact facilitate better comprehension of the issues and of possible remedies to attain national power and comprehensive defense," said the Vice-President.

Clearly, National Security is most precious and must be ensured by all possible means. Kautilya realized the complexities and challenges involved in this Herculean endeavour and approached the goal meticulously and methodically, with tremendous success. He advised that a nation must be vigilant and well-prepared at every cost. His core advice to the sovereign desirous of Empire (Vijigisu) in accomplishing effective espionage was that no enemy should be able to know his secrets while he should know all weaknesses and secrets of the enemy. Like a tortoise, he should draw in any limb of is that is exposed.

If a nation were to be made more powerful than any potential adversary in the Balance of power, he advocated spying both on friends and on foes! His perspicacious equation for a strong and sustainable Empire was: providing of physical infrastructure; following a cost-benefit approach in economic matters; paying
efficiency wages to advisers and high ranking defense officers for ensuring honesty, efficacy, loyalty and most importantly, for following a proactive and dynamic approach. Undoubtedly, for his incisive, pragmatic and judicious handling of the sensitive and complex concept of Espionage as an instrument of Public Administration and Welfare, Kautilya will continue to inspire present and future social scientists and policy makers.

Indeed, Kautilyan Spies were the worthy watchdogs of Monarchial administration, and should ideally continue their good work for society today and henceforth. Drawing from Kautilya’s line of thought, I also strongly feel that given the tremendous risks at work and brutal sufferings like torture and even murder faced if captured by the enemy, these silent, often unsung heroes deserve the highest motivation in terms of public honour, felicitation, salary and other assets. For one who stakes everything, even his life, for living dangerously as a spy, the nation owes him such a reward. The attractiveness and resultant recruitment of young and promising entrants to such positions, which has declined of late, shall also increase satisfactorily thereby.
Evidently, Kautilya’s espionage is the edifice on which subsequent spying designs can be structured, a model for future generations to admire and emulate. Our immense pride for this cultural heritage shall undoubtedly be honoured even by our strongest critic, and Kautilyan secret service shall imbibe confidence and credence to diplomacy and governance even in the forthcoming years.

***************

NOTES AND REFERENCES


2 KA, IX, 6, 1

3 Ibid, IX, 7, 1 and 2

4 Ibid, I, 6, 1

5 Ibid, VII, 3, 4
6 तेजो हि संधानकारणम्। नातपं लोहे लोहेन संधाते। KA, VII, 3, 8 and 9.


12 www.ssb.nic.in accessed on 12-05-10.


19 Letters to the Editor, The Telegraph dated 03-05-10.

20 KA, I, 15.