Chapter-II

The State and The King

The State:

Western Political thinkers have given varied interpretations of the term state. Dr. Gerner, an eminent scholar says — “State as a concept of political science and public law, is a community of persons more or less numerous, permanently occupying a definite portion of territory, independent or nearly so, of external control and possessing an organised Government to which the great body of inhabitants render habitual obedience.”¹ Another great Occidental statesman, Prof. Gilchrist upholds that “The state is a concept of political science and a moral reality which exists where a number of people living on a definite territory, are unified under a Government which in internal matters is the organ for expressing their sovereignty and in external matters is independent of other Governments.”²

According to the Vedic Samhita, the most sacred treatise of the Hindus the term rastra bears numerous meanings. After a wide review
of the term 'rastra', Vedic scholars show what the term actually means. According to Sayanacarya, the celebrated commentator of the samhita portion of Vedic literature, the term ‘rastra’ is used to denote subjects, country, kingdom, desa etc. Some other ancient treatises like Manusamhita, Mahabharata etc. take the term in the sense of kingdom, realm, empire, dominion, district, country, territory, region and so on. But in the Vedas ‘rastra’ is considered as nation, people and subjects.

The term ‘rastra’ is derived from the root ‘raj’ which means ‘to shine’. Thus the root ‘raj’ in addition with the affix ‘stran’ makes the term ‘rastra’ which contains three meanings: (1) that which manifests all the people; (2) that which spreads lustre all over the world; (3) that which is manifested everywhere with its own generosity and immensity.

The Samhita portion or mantrabhaga of Vedic literature as well as the Brahmana literature comprehend the term in a munificent and spiritual sense. It is said in the Vedas that the rastra of a Ksatriya is of two moulds — (1) just like a god to us and (2) like the people of that particular portion of land. On the other hand, Satapatha Brahmana takes the term rastra equal to an Asvamedha sacrifice. Some other Vedic texts exhibits
the uniqueness of the concept of 'rastra' comprising a refined culture, devotion to motherland as also unity of mind, thought and action.

Thus, we find that according to Vedic literature, the rastra is a splendid spiritual geo-cultural unit comprising of a land having an well-organised society with an administration of highest mark of spirituality and devotion to the land of origin. This spirituality of the vedic rastra is displayed by the seers of the RgVeda and Atharvaveda also. In these two vedas, the vedic seers beseech to Brahmanaspati, the Almighty God, being propitiated with sacrificial oblation laid into fire, to nourish them for the prosperity of rastra just as He fosters Indra with prosperous sacrificial oblation (or with valuable jewel– according to AtharvaVeda)⁹. The vedic sages reflect that rastra is congruent with all gods, and by a solemn address to darbha (kusa grass) they pray for protecting all the deities, Indra, Brahmanaspati as well as rastra.¹⁰ This hymn undoubtedly proves the supreme spirituality of rastra. The RgVeda also highlights the same notion through the expression ‘疴蒽⁹ (KeyCode: 9871) 芦⁸ ① 埪 ② ’¹¹.

Besides the Vedic literature the ancient political thinkers of India further upholds the idea of state in the Puranas and other books like Nitisastra, Dharmasastra, Smritis, the ancient epics – the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and the Arthasastra. These treatises serve as the source of vital information about the origin and characteristics of the state. The
Sukranitisara says that the word state (rastra) denotes the inanimate world (trees, forests, mountains etc). as well as the transitory world (animals, men etc). For example:

Constituents of the State:

Western scholars' definitions of state reveal that there are four constituent elements of a state. These are – (1) population, (2) territory, (3) government and (4) sovereignty, whereas the ancient Indian thinkers observe that there are seven co-related constituents or limbs of a state. The concept of Saptangarajya or Saptatmakarajyam (the state having seven limbs) is illustrated by Sukra, Manu, Yajnavalkya, the Mahabharata, Kamandaka, some of the puranas, Kautilya and Amarakosa. The Ancient Indian political statesmen put forth the idea of the state or rajya as an organic whole of seven limbs viz. (1) svamin (king), (2) amatya (ministers), (3) janapada or rastra (territory and the people). (4) durga (forts) or pura (nagara or capital city), (5) Kosa (treasury), (6) danda or bala (army) and (7) mitra (allies). While considering its organic constitution, they compare the state with a human body. As a human body has seven principal organs, so also the state consists of seven limbs or organs. All the seven organs of human body are conjunct; thus all
the seven limbs of a state are also considered congruently important. Sukra compares the seven constituents of the rastra with the limbs of the human body; thus, the king is compared with the head of the human body, ministers with eyes, friends with ears, the kosa with mouth, the army with mind, the fortified cities or durgas with hands and rastra with legs.\textsuperscript{13}

These Saptangas, otherwise known as prakrtis, are complementary to each other. They cannot work independently. All-round development and /or protection of the organs are very much important for the growth and development as well as for the proper functioning of the state. The existence of the state depends on the appropriate functioning and development of these saptangas. Absence of any one of these seven elements may cause destruction of the state.

Manusamhita also puts forth the same idea about the seven constituents of a state. He says, the seven limbs or saptaprakrtis are – (1) Svami, (2) amatya, (3) pura, (4) rastra, (5) kosa, (6) danda and (7) suhrt. He also opines that these saptangas are equally important and complementary to each other.\textsuperscript{14}

This saptanga theory is also found in the Arthasastra of Kautilya. In the Arthasastra, these seven limbs are mentioned thus (1) svami, (2) amatya, (3) janapada, (4) durga, (5) kosa, (6) danda and
(7) mitra.\textsuperscript{15} Kautilya also observes that all these seven elements constitute the wealth of the state. In the Kamandakiya Nitisara also the seven elements or saptaprakrtis are enumerated. It also occurs in this work that the saptangas are complementary to each other.\textsuperscript{16} In the Yajnavalkya smrti, the order of seven prakrtis runs thus – (1) Svami, (2) amatya, (3) Jana, (4) durga, (5) kosa, (6) danda and (7) mitra.\textsuperscript{17}

Other than these, the Santiparvan of the Mahabharata\textsuperscript{18} the Agnipurana,\textsuperscript{19} the Padmapurana,\textsuperscript{20} the Visnudharmasutra\textsuperscript{21} also contain the list of seven elements of the state with a minor change in one or two names. A lexicon named Amarakosa\textsuperscript{22} also gives the list of seven constituents as (1) svami, (2) amatya, (3) suhrt, (4) kosa, (5) rastra, (6) danda and (7) bala.

Again, the Santiparvan of the Mahabharata, the Agnipurana, Manu Samhita, Kamandakiya Nitisara, Kautiliya Arthasastra– all these books unanimously opine that these seven elements of the state are equally important, reciprocally interdependent and absolutely necessary for the state.

In the course of our research endeavour, it is found that the concept of saptanga-rajya lie scattered here and there in the Valmiki-Ramayana. Valmiki, the author of Rama-story, uses at random the terms like bala, kosa, mitra, rastra, durga, jana, rajan, mantri or amatya etc. in
 Usage of specific words like ‘Kosagrham’ and rastranathah for treasury and head of the government respectively, are remarkable. It is also noteworthy that the term ‘saptabarga’ is used in the Valmiki-Ramayana to denote the seven constituent elements. The words like (the territory having a good state-policy) clearly indicate the presence of a well-planned and well-established city life.

The frequent use of the words like janapada, rastra etc. in the Valmiki-Ramayana is noteworthy. It is found that in the event of killing of Vali, Rama says that even Kiskindhya is included in the dominion of Iksvaku-race i.e. Kosala territory. He further refers Kosala as ‘desa’ which is encircled by an extensive rastra. These references give an idea of the state in the present context where the word rastra denotes a territorial unit. The inhabitants of janapada are called janapadah,’ ‘janapada-nivasi’, janapadavasi’ etc., while ‘paura- janapadah are those who reside in the pura and nagara jointly; puravasi or paura is used to denote those who live in pura only. A thorough study on Valmiki corroborates that the poet interchangeably uses janapada, desa and rastra for state as well as territory.

In the Valmiki-Ramayana, we find that it was customary in ancient India on the part of a hermit or a sage to ask the king about the welfare of his kingdom and subjects as well as the other elements of the
state and thus leave an intelligible hint on the importance of preserving, nurturing and fostering all these elements with due care. A deep contemplation of the epic represents a clear conception of the state in those days of yore composed of the king, ministers, territory and the people, allies, treasury, army and forts.

**Origin of the State:**

Ancient Indian treatises put forth interesting information regarding the ideas of states in our ancient science of polity. The question relating to the origin of state is beset of difficulties. The western scholars have put forward a number of theories regarding the origin of the state. Amongst these theories, the divine origin theory and the contract theory are much more worth-accepting in ancient Indian context. According to the theory of Divine origin, the state is a god-made social organisation which has been created for the common welfare and where either god himself is the rular or his representative rules over the people.

The mantrabhaga of the Vedas upholds that the Vedic seers, who were well-wishers of the universe and erudite in heavenly truth, having taken a vow, performed penance. As a result of that extra-ordinary penance the rastra, bala (strength) and ojas (energy, vitality) were generated. Here the word ‘penance’ is used in the sense of research. Again, the seers
emphasize that the scholars circumambulated the earth which was once under the water of the ocean, and having observed various features of the land and the people inhabiting it they denominated this land with its inhabitants as rastra and begged to the land to yield splendour as well as valour to the nation.\textsuperscript{34} Plenty of such evidences, which clarify the history of the origin of the rastra are scattered at many other places in Vedic literature. After a careful scrutiny of the relevant Vedic texts it can be said that the Vedic seers through a strenuous and long-drawn penance, evolved a set of moral values and educated the people on their utility and importance and on the basis of these life-values and devotion to the land of origin they brought the rastra into existance in order to integrate an extensive territory into one momentous socio-cultural entity.

However, in the Aitareya Bhrahmana, the king himself is regarded as the state.\textsuperscript{35} This means that at the Brahmanic age, kingship and the state (or kingdom) appear as inseperably associated. This Brahmanic view is also reflected in the Manu\textsuperscript{smrti}, written by the ancient scholar Manu. It is said that when the earth was without a king, all the inhabitants of this world remained panicky out of the fear of oppression. In order to protect all the mortal creatures and for ensuring rule of law, god created the king.\textsuperscript{36} Here Manu expresses the term king in the sense of ruler as well as the state.
The Santiparvan of the Mahabharata holds that in the age of krtayuga (golden age), there was neither any state nor any king, even there was no law (danda) and no dandikah i.e. one who inflicts punishment to others. Following the path of dharma (virtue), people used to protect each other. This means that the people used to live happily in the golden age. They could not think of harming or offending against other person. That’s why they enjoyed peace, order and prosperity. But, gradually they turned selfish and out of greed and cupidity they began to follow the policy of ‘might is right’. The condition of the anarchical state is shown in the Santiparvan of the Mahabharata, where it is stated that the stronger people used to oppress the weaker persons just as a bigger fish gulps a smaller one. The conception, that in the state of anarchy the stronger in the society torture the weaker one is also found in some other texts of the Mahabharata.

According to A. S. Altekar, there are some occasional speculation on the origin of the state in the Santiparvan of the Mahabharata and Digghanikaya. There are marked similarities of ideas in the two works, though they belong to different centuries and social backgrounds. In his famous book styled 'State and Government in ancient India', the scholar makes the following observation – “The Santiparvan goes on to narrate that society flourished without a king or law court for
a long time, but later somehow there was a moral degeneration. People fell from rectitude; greed, selfishness and cupidity began to sway their mind and the earthly paradise which they had been enjoying was soon covered into veritable hell. The law of the jungled began to prevail; the strong devoured the weak, as is the order of the day among the fish (matsyanyaya). Gods then became alarmed and decided to remedy the situation, when men went out in a deputation to pray for relief”. In consequence, Brahmadeva, the chief God, decided to introduce some regulating mechanism comprising of a lac of adhyayas (chapters) in the human society in order to ensure its survival. Further the God Narayana created a spiritual son Viraja by name from whose dynasty Prthu came as a king to uphold the regulations introduced by Brahmadeva, in the human society and people also agreed to abide by his command. Further, the Mahabharata relates that, when people came to Brahmadeva for help, the God created a king named Manu, empowered to govern the human society and protect them through execution of criminal and civil laws; and ultimately the people reconciled themselves with the emergence of the state and the king and began to obey the policies of governance, introduced by the king. Thus, the great epic also illustrates the concept of divine origin of the state.

The same concept is also reflected in the Manu Samhita.
where the condition of the state without a king has been described. Manu observes that had the king not employed sceptre against the offenders the stronger person would have devoured the weaker one just as a person roasts fishes upon an iron-spit. This means that the king and the state came into existence for the establishment of the rule of law in the society. Moreover, it is stated that danda and the king is equal and God established danda with a view to protect the people. This view is also reflected in Kamandakiya Nitisara where it is stated that if the danda is applied properly, matsyanyaya can be prevented.

But, the Santiparvan of the Mahabharata also depicts that when Manu, the king, after being selected by Brahma, hesitating to be the king of human beings, the subjects, came into a contract. They said that they would like to offer the king a particular share of their wealth as tax. Although the accounts in the Mahabharata display that the state was considered to be the fruit of divine intervention, an execution of mutual contract is found as the people persuaded the king to govern over them for which they would pay him 1/50th of their animal husbandry and wealth and 1/10th of their accumulated paddy so as to provide resources to the treasury of the state.

The resemblance of this speculation is also propounded in Kautiliya Arthasastra, a celebrated work on ancient Indian science of
polity. According to this work, during the period of anarchy, people being subjugated by matsyanyaya (the law prevailing over the fishes), selected Manu, the son of Vivasvata, as their king. They planned to give him 1/6th share of their agricultural product, 1/10th part of the merchandise and gold (as cash money) in the form of tax. In return, the king should ensure their appropriate protection as well as prosperity (Yoga-ksema). Sukra’s view on this point also coincides with this opinion. He says that the king, though appears to be the lord of his subjects, actually he is their servant since he is paid taxes as the price of the duties performed by him for their protection. The view of ‘Matsyanyaya’ is found in Kamandakiya Nitisara also.

The evidences of some Buddhist texts are also noteworthy in this context. According to Jataka, the state without government or king is even unable to exist. State is regarded as an organisation of great consequence necessary for maintaining law and order in the country as well as the society. The Digghanikaya says that in order to put an end to anarchy, people requested Mahajanasammata to be their king and they elected him as their king. Baudhayana Dharmasutra also records that the subjects agreed to pay him 16% share of their grain as the return of his service. Thus all these accounts exhibit that the state came in to exisstance on contractual basis.
The above mentioned discussion puts a hint towards the contract theory. Although, the modern contract theories of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, the western scholars, are more amply illustrated in comparison with the ancient Indian theory, still it can be supposed that the seed of this theory is hidden in this old theory of mutual contract put forth by Indian scholars. Whatever it may be, the state came into existence due to the desire of the people to put an end to anarchy and establish an efficient administration and work for the emergence of a welfare state as well as to keep every one within the jurisdiction of law and eternal code of duty.

Thus, the state came into existence through a process of continuous endeavours for a long time. As per the Vedic literature, in the very early part of the Vedic period, there were only some troup of human beings, which may be considered as the root of political organisations of later period. The people of that period lived as clansman with a desire to protect themselves. The most primitive unit or primary basis of the Vedic state was kula or griba (the family). Some families united by kingship formed a 'grama' or village. A number of well-integrated gramas constituted a 'vis' (district); jana was a united form of some visas occupying on extensive area which subsequently gave rise to a rastra or state. 'Jana' or tribe was ruled by a chief or king called 'rajan'. Thus, we may say that the
actual process of state formation came into existence from the vedic period. But the state, existing in that period was generally not so large as the state of later period. During the later part of Vedic period, the tribes began to spread in groups to different parts of the country. After that the concept of the formation of territorial units took place and state administration gradually developed.

Vedic seers throw light on the different types of state. Sages of the Vedic period mention some terms like samraj (the ruler of a samrajya), ekaraj (the ruler of a territorial unit having some states together) and adhiraja (king of a small province) etc. which suggests some variety of states. Aitareya Brahmana affords a list of different types of states. According to Aitareya Brahmana Samrajya, Bhaujya, Svarajya, Vairajya, Paramesthya, rajya, Maharajya, Adhipatyamaya-rajya Samantaparyayi, Sarvabhauma etc. are the different types of states. When some states owned allegiance to a powerful state and stayed as tributary states under its jurisdiction, that powerful state is called 'samrajya'. 'Bhoujya' meant the state where policy is 'to protect and govern'. 'Svarajya' meant that state where the king establishes his own administration. 'Vairajya' means a state having no king. 'Paramesthyarajya' indicates that kind of state where the king took his state as a God's grace. 'Rajya' means a comparatively small territory under the jurisdiction of an ordinary king.
'Maharajya' is a united form of some states. The state having overlordship is 'Adhipatyamaya rajya'. 'Samantaparyayi' means feudal state, whereas Sarvabhauma denotes an extensive state having the whole world under its jurisdiction. All these states had generally monarchical forms of government as monarchy was the primitive prevailing form of government. Aitareya Brahmana also emphasizes that the different varieties of states flourish in different parts of the country.\textsuperscript{61} Besides these, another kind of state viz. 'janarajya' is also mentioned in some samhitas which probably means a republican state.\textsuperscript{62}

The concept of the republican state or ‘janarajya’ is also found in some other treatises of ancient India. The word ‘Ganarajya’ occurs in the ‘Brhatsamhita’ of Varahamihira. The terms ‘Gana’\textsuperscript{63} and ‘Samgha’\textsuperscript{64} are used to mean ‘Ganarajya’ in ancient India. The chief of these Ganarajyas are called ‘Ganapati’, ‘Samgha-mukhya’ or ‘Jyesthaka’, Sometimes, they are called ‘Raja’ or ‘Rajan’. Kautiliya Arthasastra refers to some states as ‘Ganarajya’. This Ganarajya is divided into two categories as per the Kautiliya Arthasastra. The first species is ‘rajasabdopajivi’ and the states like Licchavik, Vrjika, Mallaka, Madraka, Kukura etc. fall under this category. The states like kuru, Pancala, Kamboja, Surastran etc. fall under the second category viz ‘Vartasastropajivi’.\textsuperscript{65}
that is, one should avoid entering such a country which has no king, or has a heir apparent of a king as an administrator or has two kings or has two fighting kings or has gana form of government. This shows that even in 300 B.C. their is gana or republican state. The Vairajya and svarajya as noted in the Aitareya Brahmana and Taittiriya Brahmana are also the examples of Ganarajya. Panini also mentions the names of some eastern states like Vrji, Bharga etc. and some western states like Vrka, Damani etc. as ganarajya in his Astadhyayi. The Mahabharata also supports the above mentioned concept about ganarajya by saying that –

In the age of yore i.e. in the initial stage of human civilization there was no king or government. The people ruled themselves only on the basis of virtue or eternal moral values. This means that Vairajya does not indicate anarchy. It rather, means a state of the people, for the people and by the people.

About the origin of the state Valmiki- Ramayana generally holds the same view as reflected in the treatises, noted above. The condition of a state without a king is vividly described in the Ramayana. The statement found in the epic—

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closely resemble the statement of Manu. Further, it is clearly said in the Ramayana\textsuperscript{70} that there was no king in the golden age. This view also appears to be akin to the concept, put forth in the Mahabharata.

Indeed the term ‘matsyanyaya’ occurs in some sanskrit texts to signify, through use of metaphor, the state in which the bigger fishes swallow the smaller one. This situation prevails at the state of an anarchy. It is stated in the Ramayana that when there is no king on the throne of Ayodhya after the death of king Dasaratha, the ministers wish to soon appoint a king to save the state from ruination. It is also said that when people go to Brahma to pray for a king in order to put an end to the anarchy, Brahma creates Ksupa as a king of human beings.\textsuperscript{71} Thus, under the administration of Ksupa, the first state of human beings comes into existence. Elsewhere in the same epic, the poet mentions that Ayodhya, the capital city of the state Kosala is made by Manu, the spiritual son of Brahma\textsuperscript{72}. Lanka the state of Ravana, the ogre king, situated on the top of Trikuta mountain in the sea is also made by the god Visvakarma\textsuperscript{73}. These expressions uphold the idea of divine origin of the state. On the other hand, it is also stated that the subjects should pay to the king one sixth of their earning as tax in exchange of king's service towards his subjects\textsuperscript{74}. Even an ascetic should pay one-fourth of the virtue, acquired by him by means of penance, as revenue as the king protects them also\textsuperscript{75}. 

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It is further stated in this connexion that if a king does not do his duty properly after taking tax from the subjects, he acquires great sin. This expression perhaps suggests the origin of the state, indicating that there is a pact between the subjects and the king at the initial stage.

Valmiki does not give any hint in the Ramayana regarding the division of the state. Some scholars uphold that the Ramarajya falls under Samantaparyayai type of state. Valmiki mentions the word *mithāṃśuḥ*, which shows that there are feudatory states in the province of Kosala country which are under the reign of the kings of Ikṣvaku Dynasty. This confirms that Ramarajya is not a feudatory state. On the other hand, there are feudatory states (under Kosala) owing allegiance and paying symbolic taxes to Dasaratha and his successors like Bharata and Rama. While narrating the coronation ceremony of Indra, the Aitareya Brahmana emphasizes that the eastern regional states (like Kasi, Kosala, Videha, Magadha etc.) are called Samrajya, western regional states are called Svarajya, the southern regional states are Bhoujya, whereas the northern regional states (Like Uttarakuru, Uttaramadra etc.) are Vairajya. The middle regional states (like Kuru, Pancala etc) fall under the variety of Rajya. Although the different types of states, mentioned above give a scope to think whether these terms actually mean the different ranks of monarchy or not, the relevant texts of the Aitareya Brahmana candidly
illustrates the position. Thus, in the light of these texts of this Brahmana we can say that different types of states are originally different regional states which have flourished in distinct provinces of a country. From this angle of vision, it can be said that Ramarajya or Kosaladesa and Videha fall under the variety of Samrajya. Thus Lanka is an example of Bhaujya, being a state of the southern region. The Sukhapradakhya vrtti of Aitareya Brahmana mentions that Bhaujya signifies enjoyment and prosperity. From this point of view, it can be said that Lanka falls under the category of Bhaujya as Lanka is known as Svarnalanka and all over this rajya, there are sufficient ingredients of enjoyment and prosperity.

Valmiki uses the term ‘rajya’ for all the states of Ramayanic age. But, it is clearly said in the Ramayana in connection with the counselling of Bharata with Rama about the performance of Asvamedha sacrifice instead of Rajasuya, that the whole world falls under the domain of Rama. This shows that the Kosala state actually falls in the category of Samrajya or Sarvabhauma.

**King :**

The Agni Purana opines that the state or rastra has the greatest elevation over all other constituents of the state. While, some ancient Indian scholars generally uphold that in the process of state formation
the role of the king is more important than other elements of the state. The king is the main element of the state which dominates all other elements of the state.

This concept is manifested scattered in various slokas of the Ramayana occurring in various books of the epic. King Dasaratha is narrated as the preserver and protector of his state and people. He encourages the subjects to nourish their own piety and governed them. It is also noted in another place that a king always establishes truth and virtue and attends on the welfare of his state. He, indeed, himself is the truth and virtue. He is just like the parent of the people of his state. He can supersede Yama, Kuvera, Indra and mighty Varuna through his noble works. Such expressions display that the king is the pioneer of all the state policies. Rama’s salutary advice towards Bharata is also pertinent in this context —

“...Here it is expressed that a king should take appropriate care of the saptavarga or the seven elements of a state, after a thorough and careful consideration. Thus it is found that the king occupies the most important place amongst the seven elements of the state. The Atharva Veda states that the king is the superior element and possess the highest place in the state.”
In Aitareya Brahmana, it is stated that "Gṛtṛhṛt m hṛt which undoubtedly expresses the prominence of the king over all the seven constituents of a state. This Veda further relates the following story. Once the Asuras assaulted the gods and the later were vanquished fully. The gods had no king at that time. They became morose and after a due perusal of facts came to the conclusion that the kinglessness was the root-cause of their subjugation. The gods explained to themselves the cause of their defeat thus — 'As we have no king, so they have conquered over us; we should choose a king'. All the gods agreed to this viewpoint and they elected Soma as their king. After the appointment of the king, the gods defeated all the enemies under the guidance of king Soma. In Taittiriya Brahmana it is stated that Indra was chosen as their king by the gods. Whatever it may be, this legend shows the supremacy of the king amongst all other elements of the state. The Satapatha Brahmana also observes that the king is the promoter of rastra (state) and the whole territory is fostered and defended by the king. Passages of some Puranas also exhibit this fact. For example –

Sukra, another eminent scholar of ancient Indian science of polity puts forth this fact in his own way. He says – the state is a tree and
the king is its root; the council of ministers is the trunk of this tree of state; The chiefs of the army are the branches and the soldiers are its leaves; all the subjects of the state are flowers’; the taxes earned from the land are its fruits and the seeds of this tree is the whole country. As the root of a tree is the most indispensable part of a tree in relation with other parts, so the king also is the root of the ‘saptanga-rajya’. Elsewhere in the Sukranitisara and also in the Kamandakiya Nitisara, it is stated that if the king does not have a good command over his subjects, then the people of that state, being without a protector, will be just like a rudderless ship in the sea and will be overtaken by calamities in every sphere of life. It indicates that the king is the chief among all the seven prakrtis or elements.

Kautilya also supports this view by saying that – which means that the king and his government are the sum-total of all the elements of the state. He assumes that the king is an emblem of the kingdom. All the seven elements are controlled by the king. As the king is the chief amongst the seven elements, so he is solely responsible for the sustenance or calamities of all the elements.

In the Santiparvan of the Mahabharata it has been alluded that the king is the one and only element of a state who should carefully protect himself and other elements of the state. This expression also
proves that in state-formation, the role of the king is most vital amongst all the elements of the state.

The word ‘raja’ or ‘raja’ is derived from the root ‘ranj’ i.e. to please the people. Scholar like M. Monier Williams expresses that the word probably has two roots; ‘ranj’ or ‘rinj’\textsuperscript{96} whatever it may be, the meaning of these words are to please the people or subjects. Valmiki upholds the same idea in his epic. After killing the ogre king Ravana, Rama gives some salutary advices to Vibhisana, the newly enthroned king of Lanka. Rama says that everybody likes to get rid of such a king who is devoid of quality and is not pleasing to the people.\textsuperscript{97} This expression confirms the aforesaid view i.e. a raja is so called because of his virtue of pleasing the people. This view is also supported in the second chapter of book II \textsuperscript{98} of Valmiki Ramayana, where it is stated that Rama is capable of pleasing the people just as the moon.

It is said in Atharva Vedas – \textit{İtu hfiq; \textbar; tu htsaatu sta;}\textsuperscript{99} i.e. because of pleasing his subjects, the king is known as ‘rajan’ or ‘rajanya’. The texts of the Puranas also support this view thus – “. . . . . ØstltbT häsI; T aj htsI;mt ;w vÇJl T l\textbar;ta”\textsuperscript{100} because of the quality of pleasing the subjects the kings are known as ‘rajanas’. Manu also upholds the same view when he says that a king should act fatherly towards his subjects\textsuperscript{101}. But according to Yaska's Nirukta\textsuperscript{102} the word ‘raja’ comes from ‘rajan’,
and this derivation afforded by yaska is postulated by some other scholars of the Arthasastra and Puranas.

Sukra says that a king is so-called because he gives pleasure to his subjects just as the moonbeam delights all the people.  

The Santiparvan of the Mahabharata also narrates that the king is termed as ‘raja’ because of the virtue of pleasing his subjects. It is further said in this epic that the king’s only duty is to please his subjects. A well-known expression of Kalidasa also manifests the same view—

Divine Origin of the King:

The Vedic literature upholds the divinity of the king. Rgveda declares that the Virat Purusa having thousands of heads, thousands of eyes, thousands of feet gave birth to the kings from his arms. Here the word arms has an expressive meaning which implies strength and valour. king is the strongest person in the society and is capable to rule over the people. To indicate this meaning it is said that the king took his birth from the arms of Virat-purusa. The Satapatha Brahmana comprehends that the chief God Prajapati takes an apparent form and becomes the king.

Similar viewpoint is reflected in the Ramayana also. Valmiki
supports the divine origin of the king through the expression that a king, who bears heroic quality, takes the form of Agni, Indra, Candra, Yama and Varuna.

This Idea is also reflected elsewhere in the Ramayana in a different way where it is stated that once upon a time there was no king amongst human beings in the golden age. Only Indra was the king of gods in the heaven. Then the people went to Brahma to urge for a king to be amongst themselves. Then Brahma summoned Indra and other Dikpalas (gods presiding over particular quarters of the globe) and asked them to give their spirit. They complied with Brahma's directive. Then Brahma sneezed and from this a king, Ksupa by name, was produced. Brahma puts a part of the spirit of Dikpalas in Ksupa and made him the king of human beings.\textsuperscript{111} Thus Valmiki approves the divine origin of the king. He also puts forth the idea that Brahma, the greater god is the first progenitor of Iksvaku dynasty because Marichi, the father of Kasyapa takes birth from Brahma, and Vivasvan, the son of Kasyapa is the father of Manu. Manu is the father of Iksvaku and this Iksvaku is the founder king of Ayodhya.\textsuperscript{112} Thus this Iksvaku dynasty has its origin from a divine source. Elsewhere in the Ramayana, it is stated that Manu is the first king, created by
The same idea is reflected in the Ramayana, where Bharata declares that a king is God. This opinion is also supported by the following epithets occurring in the Ramayana—

Sugriva, (the king of monkey), the son of the sun god, Vali, (the monkey king) the son of Indra.

The concept of divine origin of the king is found in a number of verses of the Ramayana. In the seventh book, we come across the statement where it is stated that the king is created from the parts of Soma (the moon) Surya (the Sun), Satakratu (Indra), Dhanada (Kubera) and Yama (the god of death). It is also mentioned that Rama himself is the allpervading God Narayana. He is an incarnation of Visnu.

This view of the divine origin of the king is put forth by the ancient political thinkers like Manu, Sukra, Kamandaka and also some of the puranas. They opine that the king is a compound figure of some gods. In this regard Manu mentions that various limbs of the king’s body are constituted with the essence of eight Dikpalas. They are Indra, Vayu, Yama, Surya, Agni, Varuna, Candra and Kubera. He further mentions that the king, even if he is a boy should not be disregarded by his subjects, since he, staying in the form of a human being, is a mighty god.

The same idea is also found in Sukranitisara, where it is observed that the king possesses the essence of eight dikpalas viz. Indra,
Vayu, Yama, Agni, Varuna, Candra and Kubera and becomes the king of the transitory and intransitory world.

The divine origin of the king is also upheld in the Santiparvan of the Mahabharata.\textsuperscript{123} Once the gods beseech to Visnu for a king of human beings. As a result, the king Viraja is said to have originated from the spirit of Prajapati Visnu. The Vayu Purana\textsuperscript{124} says that the authors of Purana literature hold that king Mandhata possesses the body of Visnu. Elsewhere in this treatise, the author opines that all the kings of the earth are born from the parts of the body of Visnu.\textsuperscript{125} This doctrine is also reflected in Agni Purana, where the proposition shows that a monarch, a prince, a sage or god, whether their names are enlisted as incarnation or not, are ‘Hari-incarnation’.\textsuperscript{126}

Although, the divine origin of the king is supported by the scholars of Arthasastras, still there is a hint of contract between the subjects and the ruler, regarding the appointment of the king. Valmiki exhibits that a king should protects his people as he takes the one-sixth part of their income as tax.\textsuperscript{127} The poet also mentions that if the king, who takes one-sixth of the earning of his subjects, does not protect them as his sons, he commits a great sin.\textsuperscript{128} Even a king earns one-fourth of the virtue of penance of the ascetics as tax in lieu of protecting them.\textsuperscript{129} These
expressions indicate the concept of contract between the king and his subjects existed at the age of Ramayana also.

Sings of mutual contract is also available in the Mahabharata, where the poet emphasizes that Manu agrees to be a king of human beings after the people make it known that they are willing to pay some tax to the king as his resource. Even, they wish to confer him beautiful marriageable daughters as gifts.

The information contained in the Sukranitisara also exhibits that the existence of the king is the fruit of a mutual contract between the people and the ruler. According to this book, the king is rather the menial of his subjects, although appearing as their master, because he is paid revenue as the price of his works. This shows the presence of a mutual contract behind the origin of the king.

Kautilya also does not support the theory of divine origin of the king. He says that the origin of the king is the result of a contract executed between the king and the people in order to escape from matsyanyaya.

Some Buddhist accounts also support the contract theory put forward by some scholars of Arthasastra. It will not be an exaggeration to say that the ancient Indian concept of mutual contract is the source of the origin of modern social contract theory.
Qualities of a King:

While speaking about the qualities of the king, Valmiki, emphasizes that the kings and the crown princes should be well-versed in the Vedas, Vedangas, science of polity etc.\textsuperscript{133} as well as in other sastras.\textsuperscript{134} Besides these, fourteen vidyas are also expected to be acquired by a king.\textsuperscript{135} It is also said in the Ramayana that Rama is well-versed in the four vedas, vedangas, art of warfare as well as science of archery. He also knows the substance and fundamental truth of sastra.\textsuperscript{136} Valmiki also admires Dasaratha's versatile genius in every sphere of his state affairs.\textsuperscript{137} He panegyrizes the knowledge and valour of Ravana, the ogre king, many times in his epic.\textsuperscript{138} About Sugriva, the monkey king, it is stated that he is a good politician\textsuperscript{139} and acquainted with the sastras.\textsuperscript{140}

Ancient Indian treatises like Manu Samhita, Kautiliya Arthasastra, Yajnavalkya Smrti, Kamandakiya Nitisara etc. opine that the king should be a man of learning and versatile genius. According to the followers of Manu, the king should learn Trayi, (the three Vedas), Varta (economics, particularly agriculture, animal husbandry and commerce) and dandaniti (the science of politics).\textsuperscript{141} But Brhaspati opines varta and dandaniti as wisdom.\textsuperscript{142} The followers of Usanas opine that dandaniti (science of politics) is the only important science for a king,\textsuperscript{143} while Sukra recommends Dandaniti and three others viz. Anviksiki
(metaphysics), Trayi and Varta. Kautilya and Yajnavalkya accept metaphysics, the three Vedas, science of polity and varta as knowledge.

From Kamandaka’s writing we know that the king should possess multifarious talent. Agni Purana emphasises that the king should be a skillful archer, expert charioteer, elephant rider, horseman and versed in sastras. Manu enumerates the three Vedas, dandaniti, logic, theology, agriculture, animal husbandry and commercial education as knowledge. Nitivakyamrta and Sukranitisara also support the same view.

**Hereditary Monarchy:**

In ancient India, the kingship was mostly hereditary. Monarchy was prevailing at that time and king was endowed with absolute power to govern the state. All the antique scholars of polity support the law of hereditary succession of the throne. Support for hereditary monarchy is found in the Vedic literature also. Satapatha Brahmana makes an indirect reference to hereditary monarchy by saying that the kingdom inherited through ten generations. However, in connection with the hereditary monarchy, the law of primogeniture was generally followed in ancient India.

This law is distinctly borne out in the Valmiki Ramayana. The poet puts forth his view through the speech of Bharata. Bharata earnestly declines the proposal for accepting the throne of Ayodhya,
through the subjects desire so. He says that the tradition of Iksvaku
dynasty is that only the eldest brother has the right to be the heir king.\textsuperscript{152} The same utterance is made by Vasistha, the priest of Iksvaku family too, when he requests Rama to enthrone Ayodhya even after the latter is exiled.\textsuperscript{153} The kiskindhya Kanda also exhibits the tradition of the law of primogeniture as is evident from the enthronement of Vali.\textsuperscript{154} Valmiki Ramayana furnishes a long list of Iksvaku race\textsuperscript{155} and the race of Janaka\textsuperscript{156} which proves the prevalence of hereditary monarchy in the age of the Ramayana.

Sukra also upholds the system of hereditary monarchy. Division of the kingdom amongst many successors has a very harmful effect. Sukra says that such division may cause the dreadful destruction of the kingdom\textsuperscript{157} He opines that the eldest son of the family should be the king.\textsuperscript{158} The Mahabharata also supports this view.\textsuperscript{159} But if the eldest brother is invalid, such as deaf and dumb, leprous, blind or eunuch then the younger brother or his son or nephew (the son of his brother) can succeed the outgoing monarch.\textsuperscript{160} The Mahabharata events also substantiate this position. In the Mahabharata it is found that Dhrtarastra, is not considered fit to ascend the throne of Hastinapura on account of his blindness and his younger brother Pandu sits on the throne as a king. But later on, after the death of Pandu and due to the minority of princes,
Dhrtarastra becomes the stop-gap king of Hastinapura. Devapi, the elder brother of Santanu, is also deprived under the similar circumstance. This epic supports the installation of hereditary successor on the royal throne.\(^{161}\)

While speaking about succession, Kamandaka opines that a king should install as a crown prince, one who is considered submissive amongst his sons.\(^{162}\)

Dr. U. N. Ghosal mentions in his famous book ‘A History of Hindu Public life’\(^{163}\), "...... we have concrete evidence of the general prevalence of hereditary monarchy as well as of the survival of dynastic govt.s during the present (i.e. later vedic) period, but of elective monarchy there is hardly any trace. In the latest vedic period the hereditary principle is sufficiently established to make succession by primogeniture the normal rule."

Although the example of hereditary monarchy is upheld by the ancient scholars, still they think that in the event of non-availability of a worthy heir, the throne should not be kept vacant. To avoid political confusion, an efficient person of the state can be installed as the crown prince. Some traditions show the practice of such a rule, which permits any person from the royal dynasty or from amongst the inhabitants of that country, other than the king’s heir, is made the king of that country.
The Valmiki Ramayana hints at the existence of such practice. After the death of king Dasaratha, the nobles and the priests held consultations on the desirability or otherwise of crowning any person from Ikṣvaku dynasty.\textsuperscript{164}

Atharva Veda\textsuperscript{165} opines that ‘Naksatras’ (No-ksatras) i.e. who are not kṣatryiyas by race, select Sakadhumā amongst themselves as their king. (Saka means capable and dhu means tremble; so ‘Sakadhumā’ means one who is capable of making the enemies tremble). It implies that some people, belonging to a powerful martial race; select the king from amongst themselves. This narration supports the appointment of non-hereditary king in Vedic age, of course under some special circumstances.

The Mahabharata\textsuperscript{166} depicts the splendiferous episode of Vena, which informs us that with a view to avoiding anarchy and establishing a good administration on the earth, God Narayana creates a spiritual son, Viraja by name. Being a pious man, he refuses to be the king of human beings and takes to asceticism. In course of time, Vena is selected from his dynasty to reign over the people. But, ultimately he becomes arbitrary and begins to oppress the people. Hence the Vedic sages kill him with kusa grasses sanctified with the mantras. Then the sages, desiring to find out a king, begin to churn the right arm of Vena
and from this churning, a beautiful man comes out. He is decorated with armour, sword, arrow (in his right hand), bow (in his left hand). He knows the Vedas and Vedangas, science of archery as well as law of administration. The name of this man is Prthu. He is not the natural progeny of Vena.

In this story, it is said that, after the death of king Vena, Prthu has come into existence through the churning of the arms of king Vena. This indicates that Prthu is not the heir-king. It is stated that the arms of the king’s body symbolizes the soldiers or the army of the state. Amongst the arms, the right arm is predominant. So, here the right arm indicates the chiefs of the army. From this interpretation, it becomes clear that the sages begin to search amongst the chiefs or officers of the army in order to find out an eligible person, who is worthy to be crowned the king. Further, it can be argued that after the birth of an infant, he/she can not become a grown up man immediately. But here Prthu appears as a man instead of a child. It proves that he is already a mature person. Moreover, in support of the view that he is an army chief, the description of the appearance of Prthu as made in the Mahabharata is sufficient, where it is stated that Prthu appears with armour, sword, arrow, bow etc. which are the ornaments of a soldier. His knowledge in the Vedas, Vedangas, science of archery, law of administration etc. are the known
qualities of a chief or officer of an army.

From the above discussion, it becomes clear that in the time of the Mahabharata also, the appointment of a non-hereditary king is in practice.

Although the divine origin of the king as well as the hereditary monarchy is generally considered an established fact in ancient India, still that some ancient texts also prove the presence of some sort of election system in those days of yore. Such texts are found in the Vedic literature, the Puranas and some other books on smrtis and science of polity as well as in the epics. This issue is no doubt a matter of dispute, but in the Vedic literature, especially in the RgVeda and Atharva Veda we come across the allusions about elected kingship. The specific term ‘visah’ is used in Atharva Veda in connection with the election of the king by the people. Some other references in the same treatise show that the king is elected by the king-makers, village headmen, nobles, Sutas, chariot-makers and expert metalists. In Aitareya Brahmana the word ‘raja-kartarah’ is used to mean the king-makers. Valuable information about election is also found in other hymns of Aitareya Brahmana. The Taittiriya Brahmana also mentions that the king is elected by a special class of people called ‘ratnin’ (an expert metalist). It is stated in the Satapatha Brahmana that a king can be enthroned only after obtaining
Valmiki in his epic the Ramayana refers to the election of king in many contexts. The epic describes that, Dasaratha, in his old age, desiring to enthrone Rama as a crown-prince summons all the citizens of the villages and towns and all the chief kings. He also calls the members of the assembly and discloses his intention in front of them. He seeks their approval on condition that they can approve the proposal if they deem it fit and proper; otherwise they can give their wise opinion against this proposal. All the members of the assembly approve the king’s proposal. This shows that although the kingship is hereditary in the age of the Ramayana, still a conventional approval of the citizens and others is necessary. After the death of king Dasaratha, the priests and sages of Ayodhya decide to choose a king from Iksvaku dynasty. Here also some how comes the idea of choosing. Further, it is clearly said elsewhere in the epic, that the approvers of king’s appointment are called ‘rajakartarah’ i.e. king-makers. These texts suggest that although the election system of the modern age was not prevalent, still an indirect election system in the form of approval of the representatives of different classes amongst the subjects and others seems to be existent at that time.

In the Mahabharata, it is found that after the death of king Pariksita, his son Janmejaya is elected as the king by all the citizens of the
capital Hastinapura. Kautilya mentions that being perturbed by the anarchy, people make Manu their king. From the above discussion, it is clear that the system of ascertaining the opinion of people's representatives before crowning someone as monarch seem to be present in India from a very distant past. It is not improper to say that the germ of present election system can be found in ancient Indian political system of respecting the opinion of the subjects, though indirectly.

A glimpse of the existence of oath-taking ceremony in connection with the coronation of a king seems to be present in primitive Indian politics. At the time of crowning, the newly nominated king has to take an oath. In the Satapatha Brahmana and the Taittiriya Brahmana, we come across references to oath-taking, whereas Aitareya Brahmana presents an exhaustive description of the oath-taking ceremony. While narrating the coronation of Indra, it is stated that the priest (Acarya) who consecrated the king by holy water, addresses him by saying that — ‘If you do anything detrimental to me, (i.e. the subjects) all of the merits of srauta and smarta rituals, attained by you from the night of your birth to the night of your demise as well as your pious deeds, your long life and progeny will be snatched by me.’ Then the king takes the oath courteously — ‘If I commit an act of treachery with you, you may destroy all of my pious deeds acquired from the night of my birth to the night of my demise,
all of my pious deeds, my position, other good deeds, life and my offspring.’ The Santiparvan of the Mahabharata furnishes the description of the oath-taking of Prthu, the son of Vena. The sages and gods request Prthu to take an oath to protect the subject as prescribed by the Vedas. They inform him that he should be pious as prescribed in the science of polity and should not be despotic. Further the Brahmins should not be punished physically by him, he should protect the people form cross-breed. King Prthu also takes the oath as desired by the sages and gods.

Although, three is no such clear evidence of oath-taking ceremony of the king in the Valmiki Ramayana, still something like a vow is taught to a king in the form of instruction given to him at the time of his crowning. Although, this cannot be termed as a vow directly, but it is found that the lessons of sacred duty of a king, imposed by the elders or priests are to be esteemed by him at any cost. In some places, it is found that the newly installed king has to abide by the rules instructed to him by the elders, for the well-being of his subjects. Although he does not reiterate this utterance verbally, but he accepts this as an oath and acts accordingly all through his tenure. We have found such instances on several occasions in this epic. In Ayodhya Kanda, it is stated that king Dasaratha delivers some salutary advice to Rama before his crowning ceremony just as the mighty sage Kasyapa has said to Indra, the king.
If the king does not perform his duty or cannot safeguard his subjects properly, he is liable to be punished by the priests or sages. So the king Nrga instructs his son Basu to protect his people, following the quality of a ksatriya. Thus though there is no formal oath-taking, kings mentioned in Valmiki Ramayana, act for the welfare of their countries and subjects.

**Ideality of a King:**

Regarding the essential qualities and duties of the king, Valmiki says that the king should possess high mark of excellences. Qualities and greatness of virtuous kings like Dasaratha, Janaka, Rama and others, sketched by the author, lay scattered in various chapters of the book. These royal personalities are described as self-controlled, wise, virtuous, conqueror upon enemies, impartial, truthful and versed in the use of weapons and arms. They are affectionate towards the subjects. Many other qualities and achievements of the kings are narrated in the epic. This shows that a king should be embellished with a high standard of ideality.

This idea is also depicted vividly in some other ancient literary works on politics. Manu emphasizes that the king should be a self-restrained person; he should be pious as well as a man of heroic qualities.
He should act in a manner that create fear in the mind of the wicked and protect good-natured people. The first and foremost duty of a king is to protect his subjects at any cost. Sukra says that a king should be endowed with the quality of forgiveness, because only this quality is construed to be the best amongst all the qualities possessed by a king.

Further, a king should possess the qualities of a father, mother, superior, brother, friend, Kuvera (the god of wealth) and yama (the god of death) in him. A king is said to be a king in the true sense of the term only if he endowed with these qualities.

Kautilya, in his renowned work on Arthasastra, apprises that the king should be self-restrained and controller of the six internal foes, wise, capable of ruling over his state and a well-wisher of his subjects. Whatever has been said by Kamandaka in this regard is also note-worthy. He says that a king should be affectionate towards his subjects; he should be a virtuous, impartial, courageous and farsighted person.

After a careful examination of the ideas, reflected in various classes of works that throw light on ancient Indian concept of the state and state-craft, we may conclude that a uniform pattern of thoughts on about the origin of state and kingship as well as the qualities and duties of
king is visible in all such books. The importance of the office of the king is also highlighted in all the ancient works beginning from the Vedic literature. The primary duty of the king is thought to be the welfare of all classes of people through appropriate administration of justice as per the provisions of law and without any sense of fear or favour. The views reflected in the Ramayana is also in harmony with this ancient Indian concept about the state and the king, although a few discords are noticed in one or two places. But, an overall uniformity of thoughts on these topics can be significantly found in all the books on ancient Indian science of polity.
Notes & References:

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5. S.Y.V. - 22.22
6. M.S. - 7.32; 7.109, 110; 7.157; 7.254
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12. S.N.S - 4.3.1
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15. K.A. - VI.1.1
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17. Y.S. - 1.353
18. Mbh. (S.P.) - 56.5; 58.51
19. Agn. Pu. - 225, 11; 223, 12 and 239, 1
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21. Vis.-Dh.-Su. - 3, 33; (as mentioned by G.P. Singh)
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VR-2906

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32. "atu=ubhātār"... A.V.-XX.127.7

33. Cīkṣāṣāv' | Mañcāsācyu

34. afōr'"mātāhārīνeT

dkbrtnaHāhālMā

dktr=mruduñhāT

mānuḥJātājākāvaṅgā
t. lmGrrAùMkòkhntxu="ctōh>>" A.V.-XII.18

35. Ḡt̄br mht̄ IbD A.B.-7.34.4.

36. vrtfsU respectful to the Panḍukāt

hḠ:dāmμcōchhtstllms;TCEW>M.S.-73

37. liHrākllhtsmeta=a=zl-brād≤>

'kuoliJēst mōt hGra; dām=hōhD>Mbh.(S.P.)-58.14

38. vrtfsU respectful to the Panḍukāt

vīraikGāṇāqubāt RJsōtuflUnlt>Mbh.(S.P.)-65.17

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46. ar=1p|αρτετ=άζκ=άτηνJařči
     NuberIorJ vidit=ômûlt=ômûrta>MS.-7.20
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61. Ibid - VIII. 3. 14 (38. 2)
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63. sūfrāṃnt. dk't. elta sūfrāśtst. elta Avadanasataka - II (as mentioned by
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66. Acharangasutra - 1.3.160
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74. Ibid - 2. 5.25 ; 3.6.11
75. Ibid - 3.6.14
76. Ibid - 1.5.14
77. A. B. - VIII 2.6 ; VIII 3. 13, 14
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