MANEKSHAW PAPER No. 38, 2013

The Kautilya Arthaśāstra
A Military Perspective

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KW Publishers Pvt Ltd
New Delhi

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www.kwpub.com

Published in India by

Kalpana Shukla
KW Publishers Pvt Ltd
4676/21, First Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110002
Phone: +91 11 23263498 / 43528107 email: knowledgeworld@vsnl.net • www.kwpub.com

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Introduction

The central idea of Kautilya's doctrine, as enunciated in the *Arthaśāstra*, was the prosperity of King and country, and the King's quest for victory against rival neighbouring states. The King had to try to defeat his enemies one after another. Kautilya identified seven factors of power, which reinforced his ability to do so. These were the qualities of the King, then of his Ministers, his provinces, his city, his treasury, his Army, and his allies. The aim of the *Arthaśāstra* was to instruct the King on how to improve the qualities of these factors and undermine those of his enemies. He showed great understanding of the weakness of human nature while enunciating his doctrine.

Ancient Indian tradition describes Kautilya (also known as Chanakya) as a native of Taxila (near Peshawar, in modern Pakistan) who had journeyed to Pataliputra (Patna), capital of the Nanda Empire, in search of recognition of his learning. There, he was insulted by Dhana Nanda, the last of the Nanda rulers, and the irascible Brahmin swore vengeance. Pursued by Nanda soldiers, Kautilya escaped into the forests, where he met the young Chandragupta Maurya. Kautilya took Chandragupta to Taxila and schooled him under his tutelage. This was the time when Alexander's legions were invading northwest India. Alexander retreated from the Punjab in 325 B.C., and soon thereafter, Chandragupta worked his dynastic revolution, killing Dhana Nanda and becoming the ruler. Indian tradition asserts that Kautilya had masterminded this revolution and continued as Chandragupta's counsellor.

Whatever the nature of accounts of his life, Kautilya was a historical figure and he was responsible for the compilation of a work on polity, which has exerted a profound influence on the development of political ideas in traditional India. The *Arthaśāstra* was believed to have been lost and was

known only through references to it and quotations from it in subsequent works in Sanskrit. It was discovered and published in the 1920s and immediately provoked extensive discussion on the nature of its contents and their implications for understanding the traditional Indian polity.

The *Arthaśāstra* is a manual of instruction on the administration of a state and ways to meet challenges to it. Kautilya was a consummate political realist and often gives the impression of being amoral. He viewed the state as a seven-limbed organism which grows in war and whose purpose is to destroy its enemies and extend territory under its control by all means, including aggression against, and subversion of, its opponents.

The *Arthaśāstra* deals with the many facets of governmental administration and pays special attention to war, preparation for it, and its triumphant execution. The King is the central point of this political structure, and Kautilya's exhortation to him is to be on guard at all times. Machiavelli's 'Prince' is often compared to Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra*, with which it shares many philosophical and practical views. In its spirit of *realpolitik*, the *Arthaśāstra* deals with a system of politics or principles based on practical rather than moral or ideological considerations. In its elucidation of *machtpolitik*, the *Arthaśāstra* is vociferous in the use of power by a political state in the attainment of its objectives. It, thus, reveals an altogether surprising aspect of Indian civilisation.

Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* contains 15 *adhikaranas* or books. The first five deal with '*tantra*' i.e. internal administration of the state. The next eight deal with '*avapa*' or its relations with neighbouring states and the last two are miscellaneous in character. The eighth *adhikarna* is concerned with *vyasanas*, i.e., the calamities, shortcomings or weaknesses affecting the various *prakritis*. The ninth *adhikarna* deals with preparation for war and describe the kinds of troops that should be mobilised for an expedition, the proper seasons for starting an expedition, the precautions to be taken and the dangers to be guarded against before starting, and so on. The tenth *adhikarna* deals with fighting, and describes the camping of the Army, its marching on a campaign, various modes of fighting, types of battle arrays and other related topics.

Kautilya lived in a period of constant warfare and realised the importance of studying war as an important aspect of statecraft. Both major Indian epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* deal with wars and treat rivalries as

natural and normal. However, it is the *Arthaśāstra* which forms the foundation of intrinsic Indian strategic thought. Its basic advantage is that it is a written text as opposed to oral tradition in India. This monograph covers its military aspects.

In Kautilyan terms, a nation needs to skilfully employ its strengths against an enemy weakness. The asymmetric approach to conquest was understood and approved, and it fits into contemporary pragmatic Indian culture. In this context, the Indian policy of non-alignment was directly Kautilyan—a means of enhancing security by a low-risk strategy of playing one superpower off against another until India could gain sufficient strength to protect its own security. The ideas propounded by Kautilya are still alive in the political scene of India which is proof of his great political acumen. He was successful in developing the science of politics, as he had aspired to do, and we see his principles being used by political scientists and defence analysts today.

Overview

Shaurya (heroism) was a greatly valued virtue of a warrior in Indian thinking but to this was always added the concept of *neeti* (ethical principles) in the conduct of warfare. The belief has always been that without *neeti*, war is merely a display of the baser instincts of mankind. For a victory based on principles (*dharmavijaya*), the King and the warriors had to observe certain codes in warfare.

These codes were incorporated in the *Dharmashastras* (Books of Law) handed down from the ancient past. Warfare carried out according to the codes was also called *prakashayudha* (open warfare). There was nothing secret about it. Preparations for such a war were made openly in the full knowledge of the adversary. There was no element of surprise and there were strict rules about seasons of warfare, the duration of combat was restricted to daylight hours and rigid codes about close combat between warriors were observed. There was little room for strategy or tactics; only the numbers of warriors, their skills and the quality of weaponry counted. But, at the same time, diplomacy played an important role in building alliances for war and in making decisions about whether or not to go to war.

Alongside, a strong school of *realpolitik* also existed in India. Ancient Indian thinkers produced two schools of war, diplomacy and inter-state relations; the

dharmayuddha (ethical warfare) school; and the *kutayuddha* (devious warfare) school. These two schools were not mutually exclusive. The practitioners of each school were influenced by the principles and methods of the other and practised them. The best example of this is the *Mahabharata* war in which both schools of thought were in operation; and victory went to the practitioners of *kutayuddha*, although the war itself has always been described as *dharmayuddha*. In the other epic war, the *Ramayana*, although both streams of thought were at work, victory went to the *dharmayuddha* (righteous/ethical) school. At the level of rhetoric, the concept of *dharmayuddha* always reigned supreme, but in practice, *kutayuddha* was often the norm. The defeat of Indian Kings at the hands of foreign conquerors has been attributed by many to the loss of the traditions of war-making, particularly that of *kutayuddha*.

Only *kutayuddha* could produce victories aimed at self-aggrandisement. Although the form was repeatedly denounced by ancient sages, it was nevertheless practised with increasing frequency, and came to be accepted as a norm. From practice, codification of devious warfare was only a short step. But a comprehensive codification was undertaken by Kautilya in the *Arthaśāstra* . The term *kuta*, in the context of hunting, was used for a trap or snare. Consequently, in the context of warfare, it came to mean ensnaring or trapping the enemy. This included the use of magic spells and such other occult methods. And when it came to weaponry prevalent in those days, it included the use of poisoned arrows, fire arrows and such other weapons which could bring about destruction of men and property on a large scale. Other methods included poisoning of the enemy's water sources, attack by stealth, enticing the enemy into an unfavourable position, bribery, assassinations and attacks at night.

The most important person in a Kingdom, according to Kautilya, was the ruler. A King possessed of good character, and having the best elements of sovereignty, was the fountain of policy. He is termed the *vijigisu* (conqueror). Statecraft was a key factor in conquest and Kautilya framed the *vijigisu's* problem as a *mandala* — a ring of concentric circles. The *vijigisu* himself was at the centre. Next to him was likely to be an enemy plotting his destruction. Next to that enemy was that enemy's enemy, and the enemy of one's enemy was a friend. Of course, once the extant enemy was disposed of, the problem was reframed because the former ally became a probable enemy. In this ever-

threatening situation, peace was preferable to war only insofar as it bought time to recover from a weak position. It was a temporary expedient, and conquest was to be resumed as soon as it was practical, whether by open warfare, preemptive surprise strikes, or secret sabotage. Such an aggressive foreign policy was always justified. Kautilya stated, "Any King whose Kingdom shares a common border with the conqueror is an antagonist." This assumption is Clausewitzian strategy turned on its head — instead of all warfare being an instrument of policy, all policy is a means to prosecute war.

Kautilya based his *mandala* on the contention that there are twelve primary Kings:

- A King ruling contiguous to the conqueror's territory is an enemy *(ari)*.
- A King contiguous to the enemy but separated from the conqueror only by the enemy, is an ally (*mitra)* of the conqueror. A neighbouring foe of considerable power is styled an enemy; and when he is involved in calamities, he becomes assailable; and when he has little or no help, he becomes destructible; he deserves to be harassed or reduced.
- In front of the conqueror and close to his enemy, would be situated Kings such as the conqueror's ally. Next to him, the enemy's ally (*arimitra)*, and next to the last, the conqueror's ally's ally (*mitramitra)*, and next, the enemy's ally's ally (*arimitramitra)*.
- In the rear of the conqueror, there would be situated a rearward enemy (*pârshnigráha*), a rearward ally (*ákranda*), an ally of the rearward enemy (*pârshnigráhásárá),* and an ally of the rearward ally (*ákrandására).*
- That foe who occupies a territory close to that of the conqueror is a natural enemy; while he who is merely antagonistic and creates enemies for the conqueror is a factitious enemy.
- He who is situated close to the territory of the immediate enemy of the conqueror is a natural ally; while he whose friendship is courted for self-maintenance is an acquired ally.
- A King who occupies a territory close to both the conqueror and his immediate enemy in front and who is capable of helping both the Kings, whether united or not, or of resisting either of them individually is termed a *madhyama* (mediatory) King.
- He who is situated beyond the territory of any of the above Kings and who is very powerful and capable of helping the enemy, the conqueror,

and the *madhyama* King together or individually, or of resisting any of them individually, is a neutral King (*udásína*).

All the advice in the *Arthaśāstra is* directed to the would-be conqueror (*vijigisu*). The underlying assumption is that neighbours always turn hostile. Another assumption is that a common enemy creates allies. But the categories of enemy and ally are not fixed. Under certain conditions, allies can become friends and vice-versa. The 12 types classified by the *Arthaśāstra* are possible combinations; they are not to be taken as the permanently existing situation in a *mandala*. Kautilya assumes that except for the neutral and 'indifferent' Kings/states, all others in the *mandala* are of equal strength. Therefore, in a concrete situation, the *mandala* gets divided into two more or less equal blocs, with one bloc's leader seeking to establish hegemony over all the others. The strengths of blocs being equal, diplomacy, strategy and tactics assume great importance in attaining hegemony.

Kautilya further stated that the 'circle of states' (*mandala)* is the source of the six forms of state policy. These are:

1. Peace (*sandhi*).
2. War (*vigraha*).
3. Observance of neutrality (*ásana*).
4. Marching (*yána*).
5. Alliance (*samsraya*).
6. Making peace with one and waging war with another (*dvaidhíbháva*).

Though there are two primary forms of policy, peace and war, Kautilya held that as their conditions differ, there are six forms of policy. He explained that:

- An agreement with pledges is peace;
- An offensive operation is war;
- Indifference is neutrality;
- Making preparations is marching;
- Seeking the protection of another is an alliance; and
- Making peace with one and waging war with another is a dual policy.

Kautilya further distinguished among the six major approaches to foreign policy. The first is a policy of maintaining peace with another state, based on a treaty detailing the terms and conditions. The second is the policy of hostility which should be followed if one is stronger than the enemy. The third approach is one of inaction, which is most suitable when states are of equal strength. The fourth is outright invasion but this policy is recommended for the very strong. For the very weak is prescribed a fifth approach, i.e., seeking shelter with another King and waiting for better days, The sixth and the last approach recommends a policy of peace with one King/state while maintaining hostility towards another; such a dual policy is possible if help is available from another state to fight the enemy.

A wise ruler should observe that form of policy which enables him to work for the progress of his state, and, at the same time, to harass similar aims of his enemy. Thus, a ruler who thinks that he is growing in power more rapidly, both in quality and quantity (than his enemy), may neglect his enemy's progress for the time-being. If any two Kings hostile to each other find the progress of their respective works to be equal, they shall make peace with each other. No King shall follow that form of policy which causes him loss of profit from his own ventures, but which entails no such loss on the enemy.

The *Arthaśāstra* emphasises the role of diplomacy but shows no preference for it over war. This is simply because one important component of the society of his time was the warrior group whose very existence was tied to fighting. Diplomacy, according to Kautilya, was for winning allies, delaying war if one was vulnerable, and for making post-war arrangements for a new order.

The *Arthaśāstra* naturally realises that one may become the object of such policies by another King/state and the enemy may force peace by a treaty. If that happens, Kautilya advises that one should drag one's feet in fulfilling treaty obligations and wait for an opportunity to overthrow the enemy. If the treaty demands a hostage, for example, one should offer an inferior person. But if the enemy demands one's son as a hostage, the King should offer himself so that the son can plan to overthrow the enemy and rescue the father.

The *Arthaśāstra* describes many kinds of treaties, with or without various stipulations, temporary and long-term ones, sincere and dishonest ones. The

aim is always to outsmart the adversary. It also discusses in great detail not only the six broad approaches outlined but also their combinations. Even the necessity of surrender is not overlooked but it is always for buying time.

War-making is only one among the means to attain one's objective of hegemony. The other means are friendship or bribery against weak Kings. Two other means which could be employed against the strong are splitting the enemy's strength and alliances, and coercion (which includes war). The difference between the means and approaches/policies is that the means can be employed against domestic as well as foreign opponents whereas policies can apply only to other Kings/states.

By way of broad strategy, the *Arthaśāstra* recommends that the would-be conqueror should first proceed against the hostile neighbour and, with the newly-acquired power, tackle the neutral King/state. If he succeeds, he should proceed against the most powerful or 'indifferent' King. That would complete his hegemony over the *mandala* as a whole, for the rest would fall in line. If there are no neutral or 'indifferent' Kings, the conqueror should first tackle his enemies and then secure the allegiance of an enemy's allies. In the event there are only two other states, one hostile and the other friendly, the would-be conqueror should crush the neighbouring state regardless of whether it is hostile or friendly and then proceed against the other. Finally, if there is a number of neighbouring states, they should be tackled one by one, gaining strength in the process.

Defence of a Kingdom

The *Arthaśāstra recommends* that a state should base its defences on the fort (*durg*); and the Army. Of the two, he regards the fort to be more important since it allows the King to survive a siege and conduct his diplomacy from that base. The Army is, of course, important in defence matters but, in his view, it can be completely lost on the battlefield, leaving the King without any protection.

The Fort

For the defence of the state against enemies, the *Arthaśāstra* prescribes at least four bases, one in each cardinal direction. Kautilya classified forts under four principal types, viz. *parvata* (hill fort), *audaka* (water fort), *dhanvana*

(desert fort) and *vanadurga* (forest fort). A hill fort is one which is either perched on a rocky precipice (*prastaram*) or built in a valley in the midst of an encircling range of hills (*guha*). A water fort, he says, may be situated on an island in the midst of a river (*entardvipam*), or on a plain surrounded by low ground or swamps in which water is stagnated (*nimnavaruddham sthalam*). Similarly, a forest fort is encompassed by marshes, interspersed with trees and bushes (*khajanodakam*), or surrounded by thickly-set tall trees with undergrowth (*stambagaham*). Finally, a desert fort is one which is located either in the centre of a wild tract devoid of water, or even of thickets (*nirudaka-stambam*), or in a region sterilised by desert salt (*irina*).

But in the state capital, a man-made fort is essential. It should have moats, ramparts and parapets for soldiers to engage the enemy. Wooden walls are ruled out on account of their being a fire hazard. In the approaches to the fort, traps should be laid for the enemy. Inside, it should be guarded by four types of formations comprising elephants, chariots, cavalry and infantry, each led by several Commanders so that the loss of one or more to the enemy does not leave the formations leaderless. The fort should, of course, be well-stocked to withstand a siege but should have secret escape routes if the situation became desperate.

On a site declared to be the best according to the science of buildings, the leader (*náyaka*), the carpenter (*vardhaki*), and the astrologer (*mauhúrtika*) should measure a circular, rectangular, or square spot for the camp which should, in accordance with the available space, consist of four gates, six roads, and nine divisions.

Provided with ditches, parapets, walls, doors, and watch towers for defence, the quarters of the King, 1,000 bows long and half as broad, should be situated in one of the nine divisions to the north from the centre, to the west of it his harem, and at its extremity, the Army of the harem is to be situated. In his front, the temples; to his right, the departments of finance and accounts; and to his left, the quarters of elephants and horses of the King himself.

Outside this and at a distance of 100 bows from each other, there should be fixed four cart-poles (*sakatamedhi*) pillars and walls. In the first (of these four divisions), the Prime Minister and the priest should have their quarters; to its right the store-house and the kitchen; to its left, the store

of raw products and weapons; in the second division, the quarters of the Army and of horses and chariots; outside this, hunters and keepers of dogs with their trumpets; also spies and sentinels. To prevent an enemy attack, wells, mounds and thorns should be arranged. The 18 divisions of sentinels employed for securing the safety of the King should change their timings for watch in turn. In order to ascertain the movements of spies, a timetable of business should also be prepared. Disputes, drinking, social gatherings, and gambling should be prohibited. A system of passports was also observed. The officer in charge of the boundary (of the camp) was to supervise the conduct of the Commander-in-Chief and the observance of the instructions given to the Army.

Nowhere perhaps are the ancient Hindu ideas on fortification better delineated than in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kautilya, who considered the fort as one of the seven constituent elements of the state. Doubtless it was not the most important, but it was more important than the treasury, the ally and the Army itself. "For it is in the fort that the treasury and the Army are safely kept, and it is from the fort that secret war (intrigue), control over one's partisans, the upkeep of the Army, the reception of allies and the driving out of enemies are successfully practised." Elsewhere he says that "the haven of the King and of his Army is a strong fort."

In the *Arthaśāstra* , while describing the various devices by which an enemy fort could be captured, Kautilya remarks that a besieging King "may assail the rampart and parapets by making use of underground tunnels and iron rods." But it does not seem that mining ever came into general vogue. It is probable that, as most of the Indian fortresses were built on high ground or upon a foundation of solid rock, mining was considered entirely useless as a tool of siegecraft. But the word *surunga* with its military implication continued to be known, and ultimately passed over into Hindi vocabulary.

Organisation of the Army

Chandragupta Maurya maintained a large standing Army and an efficient war office supervised it. The Army was divided into four arms i.e. *patti* or *padati* (infantry), *asva* (cavalry), *ratha* (chariots) and *hast* (elephants). These four components were called the *chaturangabala*, or the four-limbed Army, headed by their respective *adyakshas* or Superintendents.

War Elephants. Kautilya stressed that elephants were a battle-winning component of the Army. They were the premium arm and great reliance was placed on their strength and shock effect to rout an enemy on the battlefield. They could be employed to march in the vanguard, make new roads; protect the flanks; assist in crossing water obstacles; break up enemy's ranks by trampling them and causing terror; capturing battle positions; and destroying ramparts, gates, and towers.

Cavalry. The cavalry being the most mobile arm was used to influence a battle. Its tasks included reconnoitring battle grounds, camping sites and forests; securing level grounds and sources of water supply; destroying the enemy; protecting own supplies and reinforcements; conducting raids; assaulting an enemy's battle formation by attacking from the rear and cutting off his line of supplies; or isolating an enemy strong point. The cavalry could also feign retreat so as to lull the enemy to pursue, and once the enemy lost its cohesion, the cavalry was to turn around and rout him. The cavalry could also be used to restore a situation by plugging gaps in own defences made by the enemy's assault; or carry out the initial attack to penetrate enemy defences; or breakthrough in pursuit of a defeated enemy. Kautilya also advocated that the cavalry could be employed for rallying the troops.

Chariots. The Mauryan Army retained war chariots as an independent arm; and they had an offensive role of launching a charge against infantry and a near-static defensive role. Chariots had the propensity to lose their effectiveness against well-trained cavalry as they lacked versatility and could be inhibited by terrain. Thus, chariots were to act as the mainstay of the formation in offensive and defensive roles. Their main function was to break up the opponent's battle formation during offensive operations and repulse the enemy assault on own formations and recapture lost ground by counter attack.

Infantry. There were primarily two types of infantry in the Mauryan times, archers and spearmen, and both were employed together. Archers performed the role of close support as well as artillery and spearmen conducted close combat. The latter carried large shields for protection. Infantry was the main fighting arm as it had the ability to fight over all types of terrain and during all seasons; by day and night. It was also used to protect captured ground.

Command and Administrative Structure

Kautilya organised a hierarchal system for administration of the Army headed by a Commander-in-Chief (*senapati*). He had under him the Chief Commanders of the respective corps i.e. elephants, cavalry, chariots and infantry. Under the Chief Commanders, there were Divisional Commanders. The Chief Commanders were also enjoined to report to the King on the state of readiness of the troops.

There were other officers such as Camp Superintendents who were given specific functions during battle. The constituents of the Army were designated after the names of trumpet sounds, flags and ensigns. Signals were used for conveying success in deployment, in gathering the forces, in camping, in marching, in turning back, and in attacking, depending upon the place and time of action. Secret agents, prostitutes, artists and artisans, and retired military officers kept track of the loyalty or otherwise of soldiers.

Kautilya mentions that for every ten members of each of the constituents of the Army, there must be one Commander, called *padika*; ten *padikas* under a *senapati*; ten *senapatis* under a *nayaka*. He also delineated the responsibilities of Commanders at each level for maintaining discipline, training and equipping as well as arranging the disposition of forces in battle formations, according to the envisaged tactics.

Other designated Commanders were:

- **Commander of the King's Guard** (*antarvamsika*). Usually directly in line for promotion to *senapati*, his importance accrued from his responsibility for the security of the King and other members of the royal family in the palace.
- **Commander of the Marches** (*antapala*). He was responsible for guarding the borders of the state. For this purpose, border posts were established; their primary purpose was a check on the entry of enemy agents and undesirable elements, for the collection of customs duties and control over the entry of foreigners.
- **Commandant of a Fort (***durgapala).* He commanded detachments of regular troops which were garrisoned in the forts.

The *Arthaśāstra* prescribes a detailed hierarchy of officers. The *senapati*, being the highest ranking officer, had his position at the rear. The lower

Commanders (*nayakas*) led the troops in battle. Daily rigorous training was the norm. Frequent inspections were undertaken to keep the troops fighting fit. As for weapons, there was a special office for acquiring them and storing them safely. Each weapon was marked with the King's insignia and strict inventories maintained to guard against loss.

Three main types of weapons were prescribed and maintained in ordnance depots. The first category was battlefield weapons such as bows and arrows, spears, swords, daggers, shields, etc. The second type comprised weaponry for defence of the fort such as stones and catapults, and bows and arrows. The third type included scaling equipment as well as flaming arrows and other incendiary weapons for attacking enemy fortifications. The *Arthaśāstra* also put a great deal of faith in magical practices such as casting spells.

Composition of the Army

Kautilya mentions six types of troops which could be available to a King and examines their relative merits. These are *maula* (standing army), *bhrta* (local volunteers/ auxiliaries), *sreni* (organised mercenaries), *mitra* (troops of an ally), *amrta* (enemy deserters) and *atavi* (tribal levies).

Maula. These comprised the standing Army, composed of soldiers who may have served the King's family for several generations. They were residents of the state and their interests coincided with those of the King. Their loyalty was assured, their weapons, equipment and animals were the best the state could provide and their motivation and state of training was high. It is, however, only prudent that a proportion of this force be left behind for the security of the state. Kautilya recommends that around one-fourth of the *maula* troops be left in the capital when moving out on a campaign. *Maula* troops formed a large part of an expeditionary force if the enemy's troops were well trained; the campaign was expected to be difficult and hard; other available troops were considered unreliable; and surplus *maula* troops were available, after fully meeting the requirements of the capital and the rest of the state.

Bhrta. These were locally raised volunteers engaged for the duration of a campaign. They could be veterans or first time volunteers, usually trained in the handling of personal weapons. By profession they were either farmers or small traders who decided to take part in a campaign. As natives, they

had a stake in the security and welfare of the state. Such troops reverted to their professions after the campaign. Their employment was recommended if the enemy was weak and a large number of volunteers was available; the campaign was expected to be easy with little actual fighting; and success was more or less assured by the use of other means like covert operations or diplomatic efforts.

Sreni. These were trained, equipped and organised bodies of mercenaries under their own leaders who were available for hire to fight for a specified period of time. Their employment was recommended when the opposing forces consisted primarily of mercenaries; hard fighting was not anticipated; and they were available in adequate numbers for the campaign as well as for the defence of the capital.

Mitra. These were troops loaned for a campaign by an ally. Their utilisation was advocated if they were available in large numbers, a short campaign was anticipated because of good chances of early success of diplomatic moves underway; to oblige an ally; and if it was proposed to deal first with the irregular part of the enemy's Army, with his allies and his population centres, prior to attacking his main forces.

Amrta. These comprised enemy deserters and prisoners of war. They were not to be trusted but their employment was recommended if the eventual outcome of battle was of little consequence.

Atavi. These were bands of tribesmen from the jungle who joined the King under the command of their own chiefs with the primary purpose of collecting loot. They were considered unreliable and as dangerous as a snake. They could be employed if they were available in large numbers to attack the enemy's cities and irregular troops; it was planned to delay the employment of the main force; or it was politically expedient to get rid of them because their loyalty was suspect. They could be employed as guides or to counter the use of similar levies by the enemy.

Kautilya observed that an Army composed of units recruited from diverse sources and ready to fight for plunder may be an energetic Army. On the other hand, an Army whose soldiers belong to the same region, caste or profession is a mighty Army; it will continue to fight even if its pay is in arrears and there is shortage of food. It shows bravery even in adverse conditions and its loyalty cannot be subverted. Kautilya advised the King

to make efforts to obstruct the mobilisation of his opponent. His potential recruits should be intercepted and, if necessary, recruited into one's own Army. Such personnel should, however, be discharged at the right time but well before the commencement of actual operations.

Kautilya averred that the troops should, naturally, be from the warrior castes as far as possible. Lower *varnas* were acceptable but the highest *varna*, the Brahmins, were ruled out because of the Indian social system. Kautilya stated that the enemy can put Brahmin troops out of action simply by prostrating before them, since prostrating persons, by law, could not be killed.

The lower classes of society - the *Vaisyas* and *Sudras* – were not excluded from military service. On the contrary, they constituted the rank and file of the Army, in spite of the formal law that men followed the profession of a lower caste, if they could not sustain themselves by what appertained to their own, but must never follow the profession of a higher caste. Casteless forest tribes were often employed by Hindu Kings for military purposes. They fought when necessity called them into the field. Kautilya approved of the employment of *Vaisya* and *Sudra* troops in the Army.

The infantry could be a standing force or it could be raised specifically for a war. But other branches, e.g., elephants, cavalry, etc., were standing formations, led and trained by specialists. The Army of an ally could be used but captured enemy soldiers were to be used only with caution.

Qualitatively, troops were considered as falling under four classes: viz. *saram* (best), *anusaram* (second best), *trtiyasaram* (third in rank), and *phalgu* (weak troops). Kautilya laid down that, in drawing up a formation, the General should place the weaker troops (*phalgu*) in the forefront of each division. Then should be deployed the *trtiyasaram*, and then the best. The second best (*anusaram*) were to be placed in the rear. The reason offered for this arrangement is typically illustrative of the intensely practical nature of Kautilyan military precepts. If the weakest troops were placed in the front line, he argued, the first shock of the enemy charge would fall upon them, and not a single soldier of the better type would perish. When the enemy is, thus, engaged in an encounter with the riff-raff of the Army (*phalgu-bala*), the General could manoeuvre his best troops, swoop down upon the enemy and annihilate him. Elsewhere, he

advocated that the best troops should be in the vanguard, and weaker troops in the rear.

Combat

Kautilya mentions that favourable positions for infantry, cavalry, chariots and elephants are desirable for both war and the camp. For men who are trained to fight in desert tracts, forests, valleys, or plains, and for those who are trained to fight from ditches or heights; during the day or night; and for elephants which are bred in countries with rivers, mountains, marshes or lakes as well as for horses, such battlefields as they should find suitable are to be selected. It is evident that, according to Kautilya, the primary consideration which should weigh with a General in selecting a position must be the character and composition of his forces. It was universally recognised that the different arms required different terrains for the proper discharge of their functions. A Commander was expected to keep this fact persistently in view, and dispose troops in harmony with the ground on which they were to conduct operations.

Though the existence of Navy has not been mentioned in the *Arthaśāstra*, fighting in water has been indicated. The Superintendent mentioned in the text was not an Admiral of the fleet with military duties, as his principal duties were to control ferrying across rivers, regulate shipping at ports, collect ferry charges as well as hire boats for state use, and control riverine trade. In addition, he was vested with police duties on all waterways. It is possible that on occasions he was also required to do military duties whenever called upon to do so, such as destruction of enemy vessels, or carrying troops, ordnance, etc.

Conduct of a Campaign

Kautilya recognised that an Army is dependent on strong finance for its upkeep. He averred that finance is necessary to undertake any state endeavour and is the chief means for both *dharma* (righteous duty) and *kama* (enjoyment).

Kautilya attached great importance to the necessity for regular and liberal scales of pay for the Army. According to him, an Army must feel that it enjoyed an honourable place in society otherwise its morale would

suffer and it could not remain efficient. It was the duty of *nayakas* to ensure that the men were paid regularly and that correct scales of rations for the men and fodder for the animals were being drawn and correctly utilised. The actual disbursement of dues was carried out under the supervision of *senapatis*. Men and animals were issued 32 days rations every month in order to make up minor shortfalls and give *senapatis* a little reserve to be used at their discretion for extra issues when and where needed. Kautilya laid down various scales of pay for officials in the state according to their rank and grade.

Kautilya enunciated four forms of strategic means against enemies, in order of usage:

- Conciliation (*sama*).
- Gifts (*dana*).
- Dissension (*bhed*).
- Coercion (*danda*).

Before starting on a campaign, the King was to satisfy himself that he was superior in all essential factors to the enemy against whom he proposed to march. These included energy, bravery and personal drive of the King himself, material resources consisting of the treasury and Army and good counsel and diplomacy, besides knowledge about the terrain and topography of the enemy territory and the season. At the same time, the King was advised to take great precautions to ensure that, in his absence, no insurrection occurred. The overwhelming factor for the consideration of the King for any invasion was the benefit or gain that would accrue from the expedition and the possible losses. He should also ensure that in his absence, the appointed Regent should be able to safeguard the Kingdom.

Planning a Campaign

Warfare implies the conduct of systematic military operations. It is distinguished above all by one identifying characteristic – organisation. Kautilya's most striking doctrine is his discussion of planning a campaign. He describes the factors to be considered before the King decides that it is in the state's interest to commence the campaign. These include:

(a) Relative strengths of power, place and time;

(b) Seasons for marching on a campaign;
(c) Employment of troops;
(d) Revolts and possibility of a rebellion in the rear;
(e) Calculation of losses, expenses;
(f) Likely dangers of treachery;
(g) Assessment of dangers; and
(h) Overcoming of dangers.

March of the Camp and Protection of the Army

Having prepared a list of the villages and forests situated on the route with reference to their capacity to supply grass, firewood and water, the march of the Army was regulated according to a schedule of short and long halts. Forage and provisions were to be carried in double the quantity to cover any emergency. In the absence of separate means to carry rations, the Army itself was entrusted with carrying them; or they could be stored in a central place.

The order of march should be: in front, the leader (*náyaka*); in the centre, the harem and the master (the King); on the sides, horses and bodyguards (*báhútsára*); at the extremity, the marching troops were to adopt a circular-array. The commissariat, the Army of an ally, and his followers should select their own road as Armies that have secured suitable positions will prove superior in fighting.

The Army of the lowest quality can march a *yojana* (8 kilometre a day); that of the middle quality a *yojana* and a half, and the best Army, two *yojanas*. Hence, it is easy to ascertain the rate of advance.

In case of any obstruction, the Army should march in crocodile array in the front, in cart-like array behind, on the sides in diamond-like array, and in a compact array overall. When marching on a constricted path, it should adopt a pin-like array.

When peace is made with one and war is to be waged with another, steps should be taken to protect the allies who are bringing help against enemies, such as an enemy in the rear, his ally, a *madhyama* King, or a neutral King. Roads with obstructions should be examined and cleared. Finance, the strength of the Armies of allies, enemies, and wild tribes, the prospect of rains, and the seasons should be analysed.

When the protective power of fortifications and stores (of the enemies) is on its decay; when it is thought that distress of the hired Army or of an ally's Army (of the enemy) is impending; when intriguers are not for a quick march; or when the enemy is likely to come to terms (with the invader), a slow advance should be undertaken; otherwise a rapid march should be made.

Combat

He who is possessed of a strong Army, who has succeeded in his intrigues, and who has applied remedies against dangers, may undertake an open fight, if he has secured a position favourable to himself; otherwise he should engage in a treacherous fight.

He should strike the enemy when the latter's Army is facing troubles. He who has secured a favourable position may strike the enemy entangled in an unfavourable position. He who possesses control over the elements of his own state may, through the aid of the enemy's traitors, enemies and inimical wild tribes, make a false impression of his own defeat on the mind of the enemy who is entrenched in a favourable position, and having, thus, dragged the enemy into an unfavourable position, he may strike the latter.

When an enemy's Army is compact, he should break it by use of his elephants. When the enemy has moved from his favourable position, following the false impression of the invader's defeat, the invader may turn back and strike the enemy's Army, broken or unbroken. Having struck the front of the enemy's Army, he may strike it again by means of his elephants and horses when it has shown its back and is retreating. When an attack on one side is unfavourable, he should strike it on the other.

The beginning of an attack is the time for treacherous fights. As to an open or fair fight, a virtuous King should call his Army together, and, specifying the place and time of battle, address them. His Minister and priest should encourage the Army.

The Army should be arrayed on a favourable ground, facing other than the south, with its back turned to the sun. If the array is made on an unfavourable ground, horses should charge. If the Army is arrayed on an unfavourable position or is confined or is made to withdraw (by the enemy), it will be subjugated. The nature of the ground in the front, sides and rear should be

examined. On even ground, the staff-like or circular array should be made; and on an uneven ground, arrays of compact movement or of detached bodies should be made.

Having defeated the Army (of the enemy), the invader should seek peace. If the Armies are of equal strength, he should make peace when requested for it. If the enemy's Army is inferior, he should attempt to destroy it, but not that which has secured a favourable position and is reckless of life.

The Role of Infantry, Cavalry, Chariots, and Elephants

Favourable positions for infantry, cavalry, chariots, and elephants are desirable for both combat and camping. For men who are trained to fight in desert tracts, forests, valleys, or plains, and for those who are trained to fight from ditches or heights, during the day or night, and for elephants which are bred in countries with rivers, mountains, marshy lands, or lakes, as well as for horses, such battlefields as they would find suitable are to be secured.

Ground which is even, firm, free from mounds and pits made by wheels and footprints of beasts, not offering obstructions to the axle, free from trees, plants, creepers and trunks of trees, dry, and free from pits, ant-hills, sand, and thorns is the ground for chariots. Also, ground which affords space for turning is excellent for chariots.

Ground which contains small stones, trees and pits that can be jumped over and which is almost free from thorns, is expansive, free from mud, water and roots of trees, and which is devoid of piercing gravel is suitable for horses.

Ground, which is free from thorns, is not very uneven, but very expansive with big stones, with dry or green trees and ant-hills is suitable ground for the infantry.

Ground which is uneven with assailable hills and valleys, which has trees that can be pulled down and plants that can be torn, and which is full of muddy soil free from thorns is suitable for elephants. Also, ground which has dust, muddy soil, water, grass and weeds, and which is free from thorns (known as dog's teeth) and obstructions from the branches of big trees is excellent for elephants.

The tasks of the cavalry include destruction or protection of the commissariat and of troops arriving afresh; supervision of the discipline of

the Army; protecting the flanks of the Army; first attack; dispersion of the enemy's Army; carrying the treasury and the Princes; falling against the rear of the enemy; chasing the timid; pursuit; and concentration.

The tasks of the elephants include marching in the vanguard; preparing roads, camping grounds and paths; protecting flanks; forcing entrance into impregnable places; the subjugation of one of the four constituents of the Army; breaking a compact Army; protection against dangers; trampling down the enemy's Army; destruction of walls, gates and towers; and carrying the treasury.

The tasks of chariots include protection of the Army; repelling attacks; seizing positions during battle; gathering a dispersed Army; breaking the compact array of the enemy's Army; and frightening it by its magnificence and fearful noise.

The tasks of infantry are the carrying of weapons, and fighting.

Battle Formations

Having fortified a camp at a distance of 500 bows, the Commander-in-Chief (*senapati)* should begin the fight. Having detached a strong reserve and kept it on a favourable position, not visible to the enemy, the Commander-in-Chief should deploy the rest of the Army. The infantry should be deployed such that the space between any two men is a *sama* (14 *angulas* or one foot); cavalry with three *samas*; chariots with four *samas;* and elephants with two or three times the space as between any two chariots. With such an array free to move and having no confusion, one should fight.

A bow means five *aratnis* (5 x 54 = 120 *angulas*). Archers should be stationed at the distance of five bows from one line to another; the cavalry at the distance of three bows; and chariots or elephants at the distance of five bows.

The intervening space (*aníkasandhi*) between wings, flanks and front of the Army should be five bows. There must be three men to oppose a horse (*pratiyoddha*); 15 men or five horses to oppose a chariot or an elephant; and as many as 15 servants (*pádagopa)* for a horse, a chariot and an elephant should be maintained.

Three groups (*aníka*) of three chariots each should be stationed in front; the same number on the two flanks and the two wings. Thus, in deploying

chariots, the number of chariots amounts to 45, 225 horses, 675 men, and as many servants to attend upon the horses, chariots and elephants — this is called an even array of troops. The number of chariots in this array (of three groups of three chariots each) may be increased by two and two till the increased number amounts to 21. Thus, this array of odd numbers of chariots gives rise to ten odd varieties. The surplus of the Army may, therefore, be distributed in this manner. Two-thirds of the surplus chariots may be added to the flanks and the wings, the rest being put in front. Thus, the added surplus of chariots should be one-third less than the number added to the flanks and wings. As many horses, chariots, and elephants may be added without having occasion to cause confusion in fighting.

Deployment of elephants, chariots, and horses mixed together may also be made at the extremities of the circle (array). The array in which the front is occupied by elephants, the flanks by chariots, and the wings by horses can break the centre of the enemy's Army; the reverse of this can harass the extremities of the enemy's Army. An array of elephants may also be made: the front by such elephants as are trained for war; the flanks by such as are trained for riding; and the wings by rogue elephants.

In deploying horses, the front horses must have mail armour; with the flanks and wings horses without armour. In an array of infantry, men dressed in mail armour must be in front, archers in the rear, and men without armour on the wings; or horses on the wings, elephants on the flanks, and chariots in front; other changes may also be made so as to oppose the enemy's Army successfully.

The best Army is that which consists of a strong infantry and of such elephants and horses as are noted for their breed, birth, strength, energy, youth, capacity to charge, fury, skill, firmness, obedience, and good habits.

One-third of the best of infantry, cavalry and elephants should be kept in front; two-thirds on both the flanks and wings; the array of the Army according to the strength of its constituents is in the direct order; that which is arrayed mixing one-third of strong and weak troops is in the reverse order. Thus, one should know all the varieties of forming the array.

Weak troops at the extremities could be pliable to the force of the enemy's onslaught. Having stationed the strength of the Army in front, one should make the wings equally strong. One-third of the best should be kept

in the rear, and weak troops in the centre — this array is able to resist the enemy. Having made an array, one should strike the enemy with one or two of the divisions on the wings, flanks, and front, and capture the enemy by means of the rest of the troops.

When the enemy's force is weak, with few horses and elephants, and is contaminated with the intrigue of treacherous Ministers, the conqueror should strike it with his best troops. He should increase the numerical strength of that constituent of the Army which is physically weak. He should array his troops on that side on which the enemy is weak or from which danger is apprehended.

Running against; running around; running beyond; running back; disturbing the enemy's halt; gathering the troops; curving, circling, miscellaneous operations; removal of the rear; pursuit of the line from the front, flanks and rear; protection of the broken Army; and falling upon the broken Army – these are the forms of waging war with horses.

Destruction of the four constituents of the Army, either singly or combined; the dispersion of the flanks, wings and front by trampling on them; and attacking the Army when it is asleep — these are the varieties of waging war with elephants.

The same varieties with the exception of disturbing the enemy's halt; running against; running back; and fighting from where it stands on its own ground are the varieties of waging war with chariots.

Striking in all places and at all times and striking by surprise is the manner of waging war with infantry.

The Commander-in-Chief should make odd or even arrays, keeping the strength of the four constituents of the Army equal. Having gone to a distance of 200 bows, the King should take up his position together with the reserve of his Army. He should never attempt to fight without a reserve force, for it is by the reserve force that dispersed troops are collected together.

The Arrays of the Army Against an Enemy

The principal formations (arrays) of the Army are:

- Positioning the Army to stand abreast is a staff-like array (*danda*). It has equal strength on its wings, flanks and front. The same array is called *pradara* (breaking the enemy's array) when its flanks are made to project

in front. It is called *dridhaka* (firm) when its wings and flanks are stretched back and *asahya* (irresistible) when its wings are lengthened. Having formed the wings, if the front is made to bulge out, it is called an eagle-like array. The same four varieties are called "a bow," "the centre of a bow," "a hold," and "a stronghold," when they are arranged in a reverse form. If the wings are arrayed like a bow, it is called *sanjaya* (victory). The same with a projected front is called *vijaya* (conqueror); that which has its flanks and wings formed like a staff is called *sthúlakarna* (big ear); the same with its front made twice as strong as the conqueror is called *visálavijaya* (vast victory); that which has its wings stretched forward is called *chamúmukha* (face of the army); and the same is called *ghashásya* (face of the fish) when it is arrayed in the reverse form.

- Stationing the Army in a line is a snake-like array (*bhoga*). When the wings, flanks and front are of unequal depth it is called *sarpasári* (serpentine movement), or *gomútrika* (the course of a cow's urine). When it consists of two lines in front and has its wings arranged as in the staff-like array, it is called a cart-like array; the reverse of this is the crocodile-like array; the cart-like array which consists of elephants, horses and chariots is called *váripatantaka*.
- Stationing the Army to face all the directions is a circle array (*mandala*). The circle-like array in which the distinction of wings, flanks and front is lost is called *sarvatomukha* (facing all directions), or *sarvatobhadra* (all auspicious), *ashtáníka* (one of eight divisions), or *vijaya* (victory).
- When the Army is divided into small bodies so as to enable each to act independently, it is termed an array in detached order (*asamhata*). When five divisions of the Army are arranged in detached order, it is called *vajra* (diamond), or *godha* (alligator); when there are four divisions, it is called *udyánaka* (park), or *kákapadi* (crow's foot); with three divisions, it is called a*rdhachandrika* (half-moon).

Battle Tactics

It may appear that while much ingenuity was expended on the formation of battle arrays, it did not have a decisive influence on the conduct of battles. A general impression is that, after the first engagement, there was little order maintained on the battlefield and that it was a combat of duels and

push. However, in the *Arthaśāstra* , there is a clear enunciation of some fundamental principles of tactics, which show that Commanders of Armies followed some definite plan in conducting a campaign. For instance, it is laid down that when an Army is drawn up in battle order, the General must not move it *en masse* against the enemy but should rather assail the latter with one or two divisions, and when the enemy is thrown into confusion, should follow up the first onset with the remaining divisions. A second principle enunciated is that a Commander must begin a battle by striking that portion of the hostile Army which is occupied by weak and treacherous troops. Third, it is emphasised that he should make a rear attack on the enemy, when a frontal attack is considered disadvantageous. Similarly, when an attack on one wing or flank is deemed unwise, the other wing or flank may be assailed. Having struck the front of the hostile Army, the Commander should follow it up by an attack from the rear. He may also strike at the enemy's rear, and then, when it has wheeled around, he must attack it from the front. Finally, it lays down that a Commander must not press hard a weak but desperate foe, secure in a strong position; for, "when a broken Army, reckless of life, resumes its attack, its fury becomes irresistible."

Highlighting the importance of time and place, Kautilya mentions: "In daytime, the crow kills the owl. At night, the owl kills the crow". Thus, the time of fight is important. Similarly, "A dog on land, drags a crocodile; and a crocodile in water, drags a dog" to emphasise that the place of the fight is important.

Contemporary Military Relevance of the *Arthaśāstra*

Modern warfare is differentiated from its earlier forms by the expansion of technology.

War is a constituent element of the history of mankind. Resort to violence has been widespread and very nearly universal, with little relationship of its frequency and severity to the characteristics of peoples and their geographic locations. Control of armed forces rests with the state as the sovereign territorial group. The state also has effective control within its territory and is able to limit the use of the armed forces, when it controls violence. The margin of superiority is generally assumed to determine the degree to which violence can be limited. It is also generally accepted that when a

margin of superiority is predominant, the less is the likelihood of it being challenged through war. Also, if there is a challenge, the greater the margin of superiority, the more quickly can the challenge, in theory, be suppressed and the less sustained the violence. The rationale for having strong armed forces is, thus, axiomatic. Kautilya understood this and enunciated many military strategies in the *Arthaśāstra*. He does not make much distinction between military strategy and statecraft. He believed that warfare is an extension and an integral part of statecraft. He has covered an array of strategies over a vast canvas from actual fighting and planning, to training and deceit. Some of these will be discussed in a contemporary context.

Military strategy is the manoeuvring of military forces to support political assertions and demands. It involves both the threat and the use of military force. The essence of strategy is the relationship between the two. This relationship is not a simple one, because of the reciprocal nature of the threat of force in battle. The problem of supporting political demands or goals through threats or implied use of force is complicated greatly by the implied use of force to resist the demand. When this occurs, the political problem is immediately complemented by a military problem which may, or may not, become paramount, depending upon the nature of the resistance. In any case, the mutual threat of force adds a military dimension, beyond the purely political aspects. It is the task of strategy to overcome the military threat, and, at the same time, establish the foundations for a political solution.

In an increasingly complex world, the missions of the armed forces are correspondingly more diverse and complex than ever before. In times of peace and tension, the armed forces are a powerful instrument of the nation's foreign policy. In times of crisis and conflict, they are the foremost expression of the nation's will and intent. Thus, the expectations of a nation from its military are diverse and wide-ranging. Modern warfare encompasses military, political, economic and diplomatic aspects.

According to Kautilya, the most important factor in planning and decision-making for conducting a military campaign is power. This includes an analysis of the military and economic strength of the adversary, as well as his intellectual power. He stressed on the ability of the Army to carry out an objective analysis and not to be swayed by emotion. He even lists out the order of the three constituents of power — intellectual power, military

strength, and morale — in decreasing order of importance. Kautilya advised that, though the mightier King may have a better Army, the power of good analysis and judgement (which include intelligence and the knowledge of politics — the two eyes of the King) are superior to sheer military strength. Force in present-day warfare encompasses tangible (personnel, weapons, mobility, firepower and logistics) and intangible elements (leadership, morale, discipline, training, doctrine and motivation). The easiest aspects of military affairs to quantify are weapons and their effects. Weapons have well-known and easily measurable physical characteristics; they obey the standard laws of physics. It is the variables of combat which bring the intangible elements into play. The human element is given the highest importance by Kautilya. The intangible human elements are difficult to quantify and tend to tilt the balance if not correctly assessed. Hence, to compare two opponents, as emphasised in the *Arthaśāstra*, their power in all aspects needs to be compared.

Operational factors in modern warfare give serious consideration to calculation and consideration of time, i.e. preparation time, warning time, reaction time, decision-cycle time, etc. The duration of a campaign and the interval between two consecutive operations should be kept short for maintaining a high tempo. This is brought out by Kautilya when he recommends that "whenever the King is superior, he shall not waste any time and should proceed against the enemy whenever by doing so the enemy can be weakened or crushed". If the military solution in war depends ultimately upon decisive victory, the optimum strategy is one which brings about a decisive battle under favourable conditions, with a minimum of delay. Due to the advent of new technologies, the pace of warfare is increasing and new technologies are enlarging the area of combat. Consequently, the time factor is being compressed. The critical evaluation of time, and weather parameters and advice for planning a long, medium and short war, as given in the *Arthaśāstra,* remain relevant even today.

Kautilya believed that offensive action is based on defensive power. His insistence on internal security clearly underlined the fact that before forces are committed to the main task, all own vital and vulnerable targets should be secured. In case of a threat of revolt, Kautilya advises the King to remain behind in the capital and allow his *senapati* to lead a campaign. This, coupled with the fact that he attached great importance to controlling the Army,

highlights that internal security must be the sound foundation for a successful campaign.

Although the *Arthaśāstra* emphasises devious warfare (*kutayuddha*), it prescribes that if a King has a clearly superior force and other factors are favourable, he should engage in open and rule-bound warfare (*prakashayudha*). Obviously, in Kautilya's mind, a certain amount of odium continued to be associated with devious warfare.

Whatever the form of warfare, the *Arthaśāstra* is scrupulous about one principle: not to cause harm to the subjects of the enemy King. Thus, when laying a siege to the fort, the people inside must be assured of safety and allowed to leave the fort, after it is captured. If territory must be annexed — it was usually not annexed — only the King was forced to become an ally or a vassal, while the people were to be won over by other means. Their customs must be respected and their gods must be revered. After the war, carrying away loot is forbidden. If the King was reduced to vassalage, he was still permitted to retain control of his territory and Army.

The *Arthaśāstra* is not only concerned about making conquests. It also discusses the strategies and tactics for the prevention of conquest by others. Thus, a large portion of the book is devoted to statecraft and administration of the state. But whether in conquering others or in preventing conquest, the *Arthaśāstra* takes a conflictual relationship between states as the norm. Therefore, management of these occupies an important place in Kautilya's thinking. Kautilya does not indulge in any theory of a good society, good actions, etc. This is why to the modern mind, he comes across as a totally amoral and cynical practitioner of strategies for war.

Despite the great similarities between the ideas of Sun Tzu and Kautilya, there remains one major difference which has to do with the different social systems of India and China. Sun Tzu's thinking was: "The greatest victory is one where the enemy is subdued without fighting". Such a doctrine would have been inconceivable for Kautilya because that would have devalued the entire hereditary warrior *varna*. For this class, it was a disgrace to die anywhere except on the battlefield. A world without war was even theoretically inconceivable to Kautilya.

Kautilya argued that national interest should override moral principles inasmuch the moral order depends upon the continued existence of the

state. Yet, Kautilya never advocated the conquest of lands outside of South Asia. This line of thought is still visible in modern Indian foreign policy. India has never taken the initiative to invade a foreign country, and it has never shown interest in areas beyond South Asia.

Kautilya warns against calamities which adversely affect the functioning of the Army which include not giving due honour, insufficient salaries and emoluments, low morale, etc. He makes an incisive observation that an unhonoured Army, an unpaid Army, or an exhausted Army will fight if honoured, paid and allowed to relax but a dishonoured Army with resentment in its heart will not do so. As to leadership, he avers that an Army repulsed will fight if rallied by heroic men unlike an Army abandoned by its chief. A prerequisite for an effective leader is to keep in mind two fundamental elements: the mission and the people.

The secret service (*gudapurusha*) had three principal strategic objectives. It kept the ruler informed of developments within and outside the empire. Second, it conducted covert operations aimed at undermining both internal and external enemies. Third, it was mandated with the maintenance of the internal discipline and loyalty of the bureaucracy and military. A major operational principle that was not to be violated, except in cases of extreme emergency, was that intelligence reports from three different sources were needed for the state to authorise action.

An analysis of most insurgencies in the world shows that Kautilya was accurate in his belief that the greatest cause of insurgencies was societal discontent and he advocates that the state attach great importance to the well-being of the people—"if they become impoverished, they become greedy and rebellious". He also averred that "an internal rebellion is more dangerous than an external threat because it is like nurturing a viper in one's bosom". Rebellions (insurgencies) were classified based on the affected region and who their sponsors were. The similarities in the methods used today and those espoused by Kautilya are striking. Kautilya proposed the use of four instruments of state power — Conciliation (Diplomatic), Dissension (Informational), Force (Military) and Gifts (Economic), which are the instruments used by states even today (DIME).

A well-governed state will have less to fear from subversion and revolt and will be in a better position to disrupt the domestic stability of its

adversaries. It would also be able to move with greater surety toward the execution of tasks that necessitate the large-scale mobilisation of economic and military power. A state that neglects the quality of the administrative elite and institutions upon which the execution of policy depends does so at the greatest possible peril to itself.

Conclusion

The *Arthaśāstra* is the key text on Indian strategic culture, based entirely on the role of power. For Kautilya, power was the means and not the end. "Strength is power, and happiness is the end. […] Hence, a King shall always endeavour to augment his own power and elevate his happiness". For the augmentation of power, the general rule is that "whoever is inferior to another shall make peace with him; whoever is superior in power, shall wage war." Thus, power was the basis for the acquisition of more power.

In today's world, the challenges of global security are no different from those that vexed the Mauryan Empire in 300 BC. A cogent and dispassionate analysis of the *Arthaśāstra* reveals stark similarities between the problems faced by Kautilya's ideal state and the modern scourge of terrorism and insurgencies. Present-day warfare adheres to ancient patterns. The truism that 'those who forget the lessons of history are condemned to repeat it', applies in military affairs.

Kautilya regarded the period before the actual fighting began as critical to the outcome. It was vital that the ruler and his advisors be able and willing to undertake a dispassionate and rational appreciation of the total assets of their state in relation to the enemy (or enemies), modified by the contributions of allies. Thus, geography, timing, seasonal variations, mobilisation schedules, preparing for internal rebellions and discontent, estimating material losses in relation to strategic gains, and the risks involved to the stability of the dynasty all had to be carefully weighed. There was no point in attacking a more powerful state without first consulting one's allies. Similarly, committing troops to a limited engagement without factoring the possibility of escalation and the likely losses was to be avoided. While the military was trained and drilled into believing in itself, for the ruler and his advisers, optimism was a dangerous and potentially catastrophic luxury. Indeed, for Kautilya, the power of perspicacious advice was greater than military strength, and by combining

superior intelligence and comprehension of politics, the conqueror could prevail against militarily more powerful adversaries.

It is because of Kautilya's endeavour to imagine and provide for all possible situations which a state may have to face in its relations with foreign states that we sometimes find details that might appear to be of little significance. To regard this as an indication of his pedantry is, however, to misunderstand the nature and scope of this work. It is not a treatise on general principles, but a work concerned with recommending practicable policies in any conceivable situation that may arise in actual political life. Visualisation of such situations and the courses that are open to a state is characterised by a realism that is altogether unique. It has not lost its relevance in these matters even today.

The *Arthaśāstra* is testimony to the constant and unchanging nature of war. Studies of military history show that certain features of conflict and warfare constantly recur; that relationships between type of action and success often remain the same; that certain circumstances and moments have time and time again, proved decisive. The past being a prologue underscores the relevance and significance of studies of military history such as propagated by the *Arthaśāstra*.

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