BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

THE IDEAS OF SOVEREIGNTY AND STATE IN INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

K. M. Panikkar

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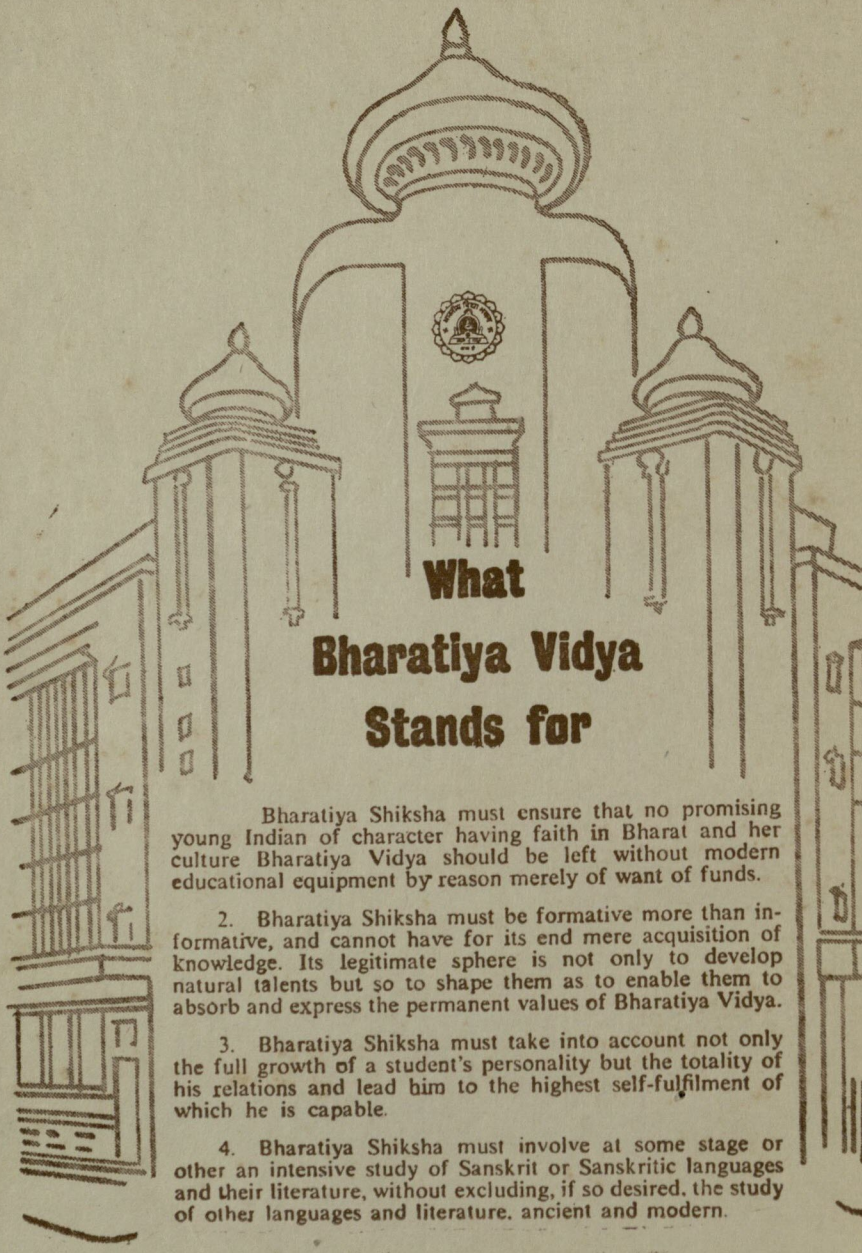

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(ii) a spirit of inquiry,

(iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharat and Bharatiya Vidya.

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आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side
—Rigveda, I. 89. i

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulsions of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs. 2.50.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral

Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it; the *Gita* by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature

in itself, containing a code of life; a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita*, which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD,
NEW DELHI.
3rd October 1951

K. M. MUNSHI

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Chapter I.

INTRODUCTORY

Until a few years ago, it was the accepted view not only among European scholars but also among educated Indians that politics did not form a subject of serious study among the Hindus; that the fundamental questions of political organisation such as the theory of sovereignty, the principle of obedience, the structure of the state and society were not the subject of enquiry by a people presumed to have been steeped in metaphysical speculation. Political theory, it was confidently claimed, was the special contribution of Greece. The state as a realised ethical idea, with a philosophical conception in justification of its existence and activities was said to have been unknown in India. All oriental monarchies were ex-hypothesis, despotic, and the varieties of political experience on which alone a comprehensive theory of state and sovereignty could be developed, were presumed not to have existed in India.

The reason for such a general misconception was that the only state organisation in the East known to the early writers on politics was the Persian Empire. The Greek and Roman historians had familiarised the scholars of Europe with the theory and organisation of the Persian monarchy and the idea persisted through ages that undiluted despotism was the only form of State known to the East. The despotism of the Byzantine Empire was itself considered to have been a reflection of its orientalism, and the idea prevailed and received general acceptance that in India also

there could have been no social or political theory worthy of consideration.

Further, it should be remembered that Western scholars who devoted themselves to the study of Indian civilisation were not generally students of history or politics. Sanskrit scholarship began with literature and philosophy and after Max Müller, it came to have definitely a philological bias. Oriental scholars who devote themselves to subjects relating to ancient India therefore fall roughly into three classes; those who are students of the classical literature of Sanskrit, Pali or Prakrit; those interested in religion, philosophy and metaphysics; and those interested in philology. Indian civilisation as a whole was never seriously studied by them. Even in regard to Indian history, their work, though of supreme importance, has been mainly directed to the deciphering of inscriptions and coins, to the technical aspects of research rather than to interpretation. So far as practical and material sciences are concerned, the idea of Western Scholars has, until recently, been that India had contributed nothing worth examination or study. The political weakness of the Hindu community, extending over many centuries, gave colour to the idea that at least so far as the science of politics was concerned, Indian thinkers had made no contribution which deserved the serious consideration of the political thinkers of Europe.

The discovery and publication of Kautalya's **Arthasastra** gave the first shock to this complacent ignorance in which both Western and Eastern scholarship had buried itself. The orientalists again busied themselves with the question of its authorship, the

probable date of its composition, whether it was to be ascribed to Kautalya himself or to one of his disciples and such other matters so dear to the heart of professional scholars. But even the bewildering mass of literature produced on such matters could not conceal the significance of the book. Whoever wrote the treatise, it was clear that the science of politics as such had been a matter of enquiry and study in ancient India; that thinkers had long busied themselves with explanations of the nature and character of sovereignty of the organisation and functions of the State and its relations to individuals and all the other problems of corporate social life. Kautalya himself quotes and criticises teachers representing at least eight different schools. Evidently long before Kautalya wrote, the science of politics had been recognised as a serious subject of study on which authoritative treatises had been composed by scholars and students of affairs. Though the authorities alluded to by Kautalya have not yet come to light, later day abstracts of treatises, presumably belonging to schools alluded to by him, like **Sukra Nitisara** and **Kamandaka,** have now been made available. Kautalya, it is clear, was by no means the pioneer of a new science. Examined in the light of the now available scientific treatises on politics, scholars soon recognised that the raja dharma chapters in the **Santi parvan** of Mahabharata were more than pious advice given to rulers. These chapters in fact constitute an encyclopaedic treatment of the whole subject with critical analysis of the views of different schools, and a consistent theory of rights and obligations.

In the result, during the last half a century, there has been a growing volume of literature dealing with the political theories and governmental organisation of Hindus. The pioneer in this line of enquiry was undoubtedly the late Mr. K. P. Jayaswal whose remarkable book on Hindu polity revealed for the first time not only the wealth of Hindu political ideas, but the development of indigenous political institutions in India. Every student of Hindu political thought owes a deep debt of gratitude to Jayaswal whose interpretations of many obscure points helped to elucidate different problems relating to the subject. Though inclined to give too modern an interpretation to old ideas and thereby cast a shadow of unreality on his ideas, Jayaswal showed that Indian political thought was dynamic in its day and further it was related to actual practice over long periods. Much of his thought has passed into the current coin of Indian history. As he himself has with justifiable pride said: "The author has had the satisfaction of seeing his results quoted and reiterated with or without acknowledgment almost every year; the subject has become popular; the truth has been recognised, accepted and adopted; it has rightly ceased to be his."*

It was the custom of ancient Hindu writers on political science to begin their treatises with an invocation to Sukra and Brihaspati, the traditional founders of their science. An invocation to the names of Shamasastri and Jayaswal is equally due from the modern students, to the first for discovering and editing Kautalya and to the other for the rediscovery of the

* Preface to Hindu Polity (Revised edition).

science itself. Other notable contributions to the subject are "The State in India", and "The Theory of Government in Ancient India" by Beni Prasad, and "History of Indian Political Ideas" by Dr. Upendra Nath Ghoshal.

The present lectures deal with but a part of the subject. The purpose of the writer is to examine the idea of sovereignty and state in Indian political theory: the origin of kingship, its nature as representing the accepted norm of sovereignty as understood by the Hindus, the duties enjoined on sovereigns, and the relations between them and their people. The Hindu political writers never wholly identified the king with the state. The king was merely one of the seven **prakritis** of the state; and the state itself was conceived, as will be shown later, as an integral organisation, which included not only the territory, the people and the sovereign, but the ministry and the services.

In Europe, apart from the early speculations of Greece, no clear distinction between the king and the state existed, at least in medieval times. As Professor Pasquale Villari in his "Life and Times of Machiavelli" says, "The Middle Ages were ignorant of the political organism known to us as the state, which unites and co-ordinates social forces according to precise rules. Instead, society was then divided into fiefs and subfiefs, into great and little communes and the commune was only a truss of minor associations badly bound together."[1]

In India, on the other hand, the state covered the entire activity of organised secular community.

[1] Villari, Life and Times of Machiavelli, page 3.

The activities of the state, as we see described not only in **Kautalya** but in the **Mahabharata** itself, make it clear that the Hindus conceived it as being the complex of all social activity. As one writer puts it, "The theory of **Santiparvan** makes it (the sphere of activity) co-terminous with the state itself. The state should ceaselessly foster righteousness, guide, control and correct the moral life of the people, make the world habitable and comfortable for men. It is possible that the theorist had some basis of practice for his counsel when he wanted the government to reclaim land for cultivation, to excavate tanks and lakes and thus make agriculture independent of the caprices of rains, to make loans of seed grain to cultivators in time of need."[2] The late Prof. K. V. Rangaswamy Aiyangar in his interesting series of lectures entitled "Indian Cameralism" has pointed out that the scope of state activity in India was paralleled only by the "Cameralist" activities of the German states in the 18th century which constituted the first major departure in political thinking, leading directly to the administering state of the 19th century and the welfare state of the 20th.

The state described in Kautalya's **Arthasastra** is even more elaborate and seeks to control every aspect of national activity. Social life, trade, finance, civic activities, cultivation, in fact almost every part of man's organised life was considered by Kautalya to be within the legitimate sphere of administration. Nor was this mere theory, as we can see from the detailed description of the numerous departments and of their

[2] Beni Prasad : State in Ancient India, page 98.

functions. A major consequence of this growth of administration as the characteristic of the Indian state was the fact that the monarch was looked upon as only a part, no doubt a very major part, of the whole conception of the state.

While it is true that monarchy was considered the normal political organisation, Hindu theorists recognised the existence of republican, oligarchical, tribal governments and their conception of the state in its widest sense included all these forms. The republican tradition was a persistent factor in Indian history and was represented through ages not only by confederacies like Vrishni-Andhaka-Bhojas, but also by powerful states like those of the Lichhavis and the Yaudheyas. Thus during all the time that political thinking was a living factor in India—till the end of the Gupta period—the existence of vigorous republican communities rendered a purely monarchical view of the state unreal.

In any attempt to restate the theory of sovereignty and to trace its evolution and examine it from the modern point of view, it is inevitable that emphasis should be laid more on the literature dealing with the subject than on epigraphical and other records. Professor Beni Prasad has very rightly pointed out that in dealing with state organisations, epigraphic and other evidence of actual conditions should be given primary importance and that to draw conclusions from stray texts which were perhaps only speculative would lead to no profitable results. This is undoubtedly the correct attitude towards the study of institutions, but in dealing with the origin and evolution of ideas the proper method is to depend on the treatises of thinkers.

and to test from other available evidence how far the theories elaborated in the treatises were understood and practised. But here again there are two dangers that beset scholars. The political writings of the Hindus are spread over many centuries, and while the authority of **Sukranitisara** could legitimately be used in support of a statement in Kautalya to show the persistence of a particular idea or its evolution, the fact should not be forgotten that ideas have different meanings in different ages, and though sometimes the same terminology is used, the meaning intended to be conveyed may be entirely different. A further difficulty which has beset scholars is the unconscious attempt to see modern conceptions in old theories. Ideas are always related to the life of the community and cannot be isolated from social facts. As a result of historical circumstances many ideas developed in Europe which though stated in universal terms are local in their application and circumscribed in their meaning. Doctrines like "A free church within a free state," "The three estates constituting the realm," "The city of God and the city of man," etc., fall in this category. To project these ideas into ancient Hindu conceptions is to fall a victim to the fallacy that the similarity of a general idea involves an identity of implications. We shall in the course of our study try to draw attention to a few fallacies of this nature. Here it is sufficient to point out a single instance which would indicate the general nature of this difficulty. It has been argued by some scholars that in ancient India kingship approximated more or less to the constitutional monarchy as known in Western Europe. Now the theory of a constitutional monarchy is that the

monarch's powers are absolute unless defined to convention, statute, or institutions. The essence of the theory is the original unlimited character of the king's powers which comes to be limited in law, whether through conventions and usage as in England or through written constitutions as, say, in Belgium. But in every case, it is a limitation on the presumed absolute sovereignty of the king. In India, on the other hand, kingship never involved plenary sovereignty. It was, by its nature limited by dharma, by a social organisation alleged to be of divine origin, by the denial of the right to legislate. For example the king could not, in law, modify varnasrama dharma or change the sacred laws. To see in Hindu kingship a constitutional monarchy is to import into ancient institutions conceptions which are totally alien to their very nature. While, therefore, we are entitled to compare, to draw distinctions and to emphasise similarities, it would be both unhistorical and wrong to discuss Indian political theories and institutions in terms of Western thought.

A word may also be said in respect of the limitation of the subject of this work to the ideas of kingship and the state as distinct from the theory of politics in general. The theory of politics covers much wider ground and deals not merely with the conceptions embodied in sovereignty but also with the institutions through which sovereignty is exercised and the functions which are of importance to social growth. Politics in fact covers the whole range of social activity so far as it affects the relationship of people living together in organised communities. Sovereignty is only one aspect and the state in its basic theory is its expression.

The material available for the study of our subject is extensive. The rajadharma chapters in the Santi Parvan of the Mahabharata are perhaps the most important of the canonical texts and deserve very careful examination by all students interested in Hindu political theories. Dr. Bhandarkar has pointed out that the chapters dealing with political theory in the Mahabharata incorporate many texts from earlier writers on nitisastras. There is no doubt in any case that the theories found in the dialogues which are interspersed in the text of the epic are from other schools. A critical edition of the rajadharma chapters of the Mahabharata from this point of view is therefore a great desideratum. Apart from the Mahabharata, the theory of kingship is dealt with by Manu in his Institutes (The Manavadharma Sastra) by Yajnavalkya and other law-givers and this is extremely important as this treatment of the subject is from the point of view of the king being the executive arm of law. Following the great law-givers, their authoritative commentators and **nibandha** writers have dealt with the subject mainly from the secular point of view.

All the Puranas deal with the subject but there is little that is original as the Puranic writers are content to follow what the acharyas of Arthasastra had laid down before them or to summarise the views of Manu. The Puranas, however, are important in another way. They deal with kings and dynasties and a careful study would yield results which are interesting from the point of view of how far the theories had a basis in fact and were realised in practice. There are again the purely literary sources, the kavyas, natakas and stories.

These deal in a large measure with kings and their courts and represent the prevalent view about many questions which are only discussed theoretically by professional writers on politics. Thus most of Kalidasa's works deal with kings. Sakuntalam, Malavikagnimitram and Raghuvamsam are invaluable in understanding the ordinary Hindu view of politics. In fact, perhaps the best definition of the ideal of kingship is contained in the Raghuvamsam where the great poet tells his readers the ideals of the kings whose glory he was about to describe—

".... He held the path
That Manu traced, no hair's breadth strayed his folk
From that pure model. Save to guard the realm,
No tax was taken so the Sun derives
From earth that moisture which a thousandfold
He soon gives back in rain ....
And for protection looked his folk to him,
Their parents gave life only. So the king
Repressed the sinful, held the world up-right."

Dramas like **Mudraraksasa** and **Mrichakatika** and the many plays and stories based on the life of King Udayana introduce us into a world where kingship was a living fact. The importance of this source should not be underestimated. The dramatists and poets who dealt with kings and their courts were not theorists. They were giving a picture of the actual life as lived before them. For example the trial scene in **Mrichakatika** and the action of the police in regard to the fisherman in **Sakuntalam** throw more light on actual

administration of justice in India than the many ethically impressive statements in the Mahabharata.

There are then a few books which have come down to us dealing with the history of special kings and kingdoms among which Bana's **Harsha charitra,** the **Rajatarangini** of Kalhana and the **Manjusrimula kalpa** are the most important. Bana was not only a great scholar but the friend, courtier and biographer of Harsha, the last Hindu emperor of Arya Varta. The **Rajatarangini** was the production of a poet who was himself connected with administration and whose knowledge of ancient political theory was profound. The **Manjusrimula kalpa** is a history of India from the Buddhist point of view. All these from their different angles are important for an understanding of the Indian view of politics.

Also there are many ancient treatises which deal directly with politics. The **Arthasastra** of Kautalya has been the subject of many learned disquisitions. **Sukranitisara,** which as we have indicated is a medieval abridgement of a fuller treatise, belongs to the Ausanas school alluded to in the Mahabharata. It is therefore specially significant as showing a definitely radical tendency, breaking away from the ethical and religious associations of earlier writers in a greater degree than even Kautalya. **Kamandaka Nitisara** though a medieval production was widely accepted as authoritative and gained popularity even in Java and other areas outside India.

Three main streams of political thought can be traced in ancient Hindu literature, first that of artha and niti sastras, purely secular, discussing the subject from the point of view of artha, the second aspect of

the **purusharthas** or objects of life, considering society as an end in itself. Secondly, there is the large literature of canonical texts, with emphasis on ethics, of which the classic example is the section of the Mahabharata dealing with political doctrines: the puranic disquisitions are the continuations of this school. Thirdly, there is the legal school represented by Manu, Yajnavalkya and the other law-givers. This school was continued by the great commentators Medhatithi, Vijnaneswara and others late into the period of Muslim authority in North India.

Modern writers on the subject fall into three categories. The first, the scholars who are interested in pure theory like Ghoshal, Bhandarkar, and Rangaswamy Aiyangar. Their contributions have undoubtedly been valuable especially as they have succeeded in bringing together and collating a great deal of material lying scattered in the vast realm of Sanskrit and Pali literature. Secondly, there are writers like Jayaswal and Benoy Kumar Sirkar who combine scholarship with imagination and whose works are mainly directed towards co-ordination and interpretation. The third group whose work is also of great importance deals with governmental and administrative institutions based on epigraphical and other records. Professor P. N. Bannerji and Dr. Beni Prasad are the best representatives of this school. Professor Bannerji's "Public Administration in Ancient India," and Dr. Beni Prasad's "The state in Ancient India," and the same author's "Theories of Government in Ancient India" are of immense value to scholars as these are based on historical evidence, and not on literary texts.

The present writer does not claim in any way to have broken new ground or to have discovered new material. Nor does he claim to have done any original research on the subject. His purpose has been to examine the known theories of sovereignty and the state in the light of modern thought, and to show how and in what manner the Hindu theory is distinctive and how it is being modified by the impact of other ideas.

There is a further aspect of Hindu thought on this question of politics and history which deserves to be emphasised here. The Hindu **aitihasikas** (authors on semi-historical themes) and writers on politics had a conception of social evolution different from that of Greek and Roman historians. While it is true that Cleo was not one of the muses of India and history was no aspect of Saraswati's attributes, a discussion of social and political theory was an essential part of Puranas and Itihasas. Great importance was attached to the popularisation of those ideas while books dealing solely with the activities of kings like the Rajatarangini, Harsha Charita or Manjusri Mulakalpa are only ranked as **Kavyas.** While history itself was neglected, historical and political tradition had in fact a great place in Indian literature.

Chapter II

ORIGIN OF SOVEREIGNTY

The earliest allusion to kingship in Hindu literature is in the Vedas. The researches of scholars have established that Vedic kingship was generally elective in character and was for the purpose of ensuring leadership in the fight of the Aryan communities against the local people.

From the Vedas we also know that the pre-Aryan population was also organised on a monarchical basis. Many powerful kings, some of them lords of a thousand forts, are mentioned in the Vedas as offering resistance to the forward march of the Aryans. We have also the case of Bheda the non-Aryan monarch who took part in the great battle of the Ten Kings. Nor is this surprising. The Aryans when they entered India were only groups of nomadic tribes. Territorial monarchy is everywhere the result of settled life. The great agricultural and urban communities which existed in India at the time of the Aryan invasion were, therefore, organised under powerful monarchies. They were gradually overcome by the Aryans through the use of horse and iron weapons. But the great Dasyu kings are significant figures of Vedic history, and it is not an unreasonable conclusion to draw, that the Usanas (Sukra) tradition in Indian politics which comes down to medieval times represented the pre-Aryan element as Usanas was at all times associated with the non-Aryan monarchs and was recognised as the political guru of the **daityas.**

Chapter III

THE NATURE AND DUTIES OF KINGS

What is the nature of the sovereignty according to the Hindu theorists ? We have pointed out that in its essential conception it was secular and involved no priestly or religious ideas. We have already discussed the so-called divine origin of kings which has been found to be one without any justification in Hindu theory. We may now examine what some writers have called the divine nature of Hindu kingship.

The divinity of kings was an Egyptian belief which was accepted also by the Roman Emperors who had temples built for themselves. The identification of dead kings with divinities seem to have been prevalent in Further India, but at no time was there a claim put forward that Hindu monarchs had a divine status. In the whole range of puranas and itihasas there is only one example of a king who claimed divinity and that is Hiranya who proudly declared that there was no God but himself. But his own son refused to accept this claim and divine wrath fell on the offending monarch. The puranas do not fail to emphasise the moral. In fact, it is the essence of the Hindu theory that the king is a servant of the community, getting his one-sixth share as salary. We have noticed that Bhishma's justification of kingship in the Mahabharata is social usefulness as the protector of society from anarchy. Mahabharata goes on to say that in an anarchical state even a usurper should be accepted. "Indrāya sa pranamaté namate yo baliyasé." Sukra who was a

Chapter IV

THE NATURE AND DUTIES OF KINGS (Continued)

The fundamental obligation placed in kings according to Hindu theories is: to protect the people, to give them security of life, property and to maintain social stability in order to enable virtue to flourish.

"The happiness of the people, the upholding of truth and maintenance of social order—these are the unchanging functions of raja dharma," declares the Mahabharata.*

The purpose of kingship being "protection" in the wider sense, all other duties are subordinate to it. Thus Mahabharata says in one place that the Raja who gives proper protection to his people equals in merit one who performs a thousand **asvamedhas.** In the Rajarshi Vritta already quoted, Kautalya in describing the qualities which make a Rajarshi mentions all the aspects of protection. In fact, the importance of his Arthasastra is that the duties of kingship are therein visualised entirely in terms of security for the State and protection for the people. Neither Kautalya nor Sukra nor any of the other writers on Rajaniti attach more than verbal importance to the ethical aspect of rulership and deal with the problem of government almost wholly in terms of the material good of the state.

For the purpose of protection, and for that only, the king was given almost absolute power. He could

* "Lokaranjanamevātra rājnodharmah sanātanah: satyasya rakshanam chaiva-vyavahārasya chārjavam." Mahabharata.

Chapter V

THE KING AND THE PEOPLE

The theory epitomised in Louis XIV's famous statement, "I am the state", never found support either with the writers of nitisastras or with the kings themselves in India.* In fact their idea of the state was as we have seen that it was constituted of seven "prakritis' or constituent elements. "The State," says Kautalya, "is an organism of seven limbs, the 'Swami' (or the sovereign), the officialdom, the territory, the fort, the kosa (treasury), the army and the ally." Every writer develops this doctrine of prakritis. It is accepted in all political theory that a state must have a sovereign, a recognised territory, and an officialdom. Amatya or officialdom as a limb of the State is one of the special contributions of Hindu political thought. The executive machinery of government is an organic

* While it is true that the Indian conception of the State was an integral one and therefore gave no countenance to the theory which is expressed in the term, "I am the state", there is a statement in Kautalya which has been interpreted by scholars to mean that the king and the State are one and the same.

Kautalya says that "Rājā rājyamiti prakriti samkshepah" which means that in brief, the constituent elements (the seven constituent elements discussed) can all be resolved into the king.

There is a vital difference between this point of view and the statement of the king and the state being the same. It is important first of all to note in this connection that Kautalya has already discussed in detail the seven constituent elements. He attaches value to all of them and emphasises their position in the body politic, and the statement (Rājā rājyam iti prakriti samkshepah), therefore, could be only interpreted to mean that the other constituents of the state are all included in the term "Sovereign."

Chapter VI

KINGSHIP, EMPIRE AND AUTOCRACY

"A ruler has been made by Brahma a servant of the people, getting his revenue as his remuneration. His sovereignty is only for protection." Sukra, p. 20.

Originally the Aryan kings were only leaders, **neta,** though, as we have indicated, the non-aryan peoples had earlier evolved a system of stable hereditary monarchies. Even among the Aryans, in Vedic times, that is after their contact with indigenous peoples and the transformation from nomadic to settled societies, the idea of **samrat** and **chakravartin,** the king who subdues others and holds imperial sway begins to appear. It was however only with the geographical expansion of the Aryan peoples that a real change came about in the conception of kingship. When the invading tribes had spread over the immense plains of the Gangetic valley, the vague ideas of samratship of rulers who, through their power, were able to subdue other kings and to bring other states under their control, became realised facts. Thus gradually conception of imperial power became a part of Hindu political tradition. When the political organisation covered, first Aryavarta and later the whole of India, the imperial idea became defined as that of an overlordship which extended either to the whole of Hindustan north of Vindhyas or later to the whole of India from the Himalayas to Rameswaram.

Mere military conquest does not make an emperor. Such a ruler may become a great king, a Maharaja, but not a Samrat. It was only after the

CONCLUSION

What value has Indian political thought today? Has it any influence on Indian thinking or political life and does it contribute in any significant manner to the organisation of Indian society or to the shape of the ideals of community life or political action? On the face of it the answer would be in the negative. True, the ancient doctrine of the seven **prakritis** or kinds of state and the ideals of paripālana or protection, external or internal, seem as valid today as at any previous time. But the new Indian State in these respects is based no more on the doctrine of Bhishma, Kautalya and Sukra, than the new Hindu law is erected on the doctrines of Manu, Yajnavalkya and Narada. While it is undoubtedly true that the purely Indian monarchies of later times like the Vijayanagar empire and the Mahratta state were founded on Hindu theories as modified to some extent by Muslim political practice, the new Republic of India takes its forms no less than its ideals from the political thought and experience of Western nations. The federal structure, the parliamentary form, the cabinet system, the fundamental rights, the determination of constitutional validity by an independent judiciary—in fact all the major aspects of our political life—are borrowed from the West. If modern India legislates out of existence Manu, Yajnavalkya and other dharma sastra writers and provides the Hindu with a new system of laws, its justification is not based on the doctrine of Raja being **kalasya karanam,** or the monarch being the maker of the age. In the terms of India's political life today no justification in fact is needed for this kind of

revolutionary legislation, as the state we have founded represents the omnipotent western conception of a political community, fully armed with plenary legislative and executive authority. Whatever limitation it has placed on its own executive and legislative functions is not based on the inviolability of dharma or the incompetence of the sovereign to legislate in respect of society or religion, but voluntarily imposed and liable to be changed by a definite expression of national will. In its political and constitutional aspects New India does not clearly owe anything to ancient Indian political ideas.

Why is it that, with a living tradition of original political thought, our present-day political experience is based on foreign sources? The reason is simple. Indian political thought ceased to grow after the 13th century as it did not have new political experience to guide it. Consequently what the commentators and the authors of nibandhas wrote was merely a repetition of what the earlier acharyas had laid down. It has also to be remembered that in Europe also the leap forward in political thinking was after the period of Enlightenment, when the bases of both church and the monarchy were being questioned by the revolutionary thinkers of the 18th century. It is the experience of the two Revolutions, the American and the French—also to a much lesser degree the so-called Whig Revolution of 1688—that provided the foundation for new political thinking and brought about the breach with the conception of the Middle Ages. Indian political thought was almost on parallel lines with the doctrines of the middle ages: perhaps a

little more radical and secular than the dominant doctrines of pre-Lockian European thought. But the situation became different after Rousseau and his revolutionary theory of the General Will.

The Hegelian state clothed with the legalism of Austin is essentially a feature of the 19th century, though the French Revolutionary government had already claimed in fact the totality of powers and the plenitude of legislative authority. To have endowed it not only with legal respectability but broadly speaking with a political universality, was the work of the legistic school. It is not necessary for our purpose to go into the later development of European political theory, for it is obvious enough that what India has borrowed is the conception of the State not only as endowed with the plentitude of legal and executive power but as reflecting or at least claiming to control the totality of social activity.

Nor do the centres of countervailing power in the new Indian State, public opinion, trade unions and other labour organisations, feeling of communal rights, the press, etc. trace their origin or relate themselves in theory to the **paura janapadas** of old, or to professional organisations like **srenis** and **ganas** and the caste society of the past. Public opinion today is based on the doctrine of the people's right to decide, and not on the wise man's right to advise. The **pauras** and **janapadas** who had the right to be consulted under Hindu theory were the spokesmen of castes and groups and may be said to have representative status. Today's public opinion as a part of political life is the conscious creation of feeling in regard to policies and developments. The **srenis** and **ganas** were no doubt powerful

and they were to a large extent self-governing, exercising even the right of judicial decision in certain matters. They were in a sense the fore-runners of our trade unions and employers' associations. But they represented a handicraft society and, while they developed interests and were powerful within their spheres, they had no effective part in politics. That again is a development following the growth of capitalist industrial organisation which originated in the West.

No doubt the caste-society is still powerful—though in a diminishing degree—and to the extent it is powerful the old Hindu social organisation still counts. But the theory of the new Indian State denies caste in all its forms. Not only is democracy based on adult franchise, a total denial of caste-power and gradations, but the doctrines of equality before law equal opportunities in public service, the right of all to share in public power, on which the new state is founded are against the very basic conceptions of caste-society and of that **dharma** which the Hindu state was originally meant to uphold.

If the form and organisation of the state, the relation of public powers and the centres of countervailing power in the state in modern India all have their origin in the West, what is there in Hindu political thought or practice which is of value to us today, or which is alive in our institutions and in our ways of thinking? It is unreasonable to expect a system of thought which had dominated a people's ideas so long would disappear as a result of the acceptance and adaptation of new ideas from abroad. There are obvious and important survivals of ancient Indian political think-

ing and experience in independent India. The most notable and the most obvious is the administering state, with a nation-wide bureaucracy as an integral part of it. This enormous civil service which not only collects revenue and maintains law and order, but supervises every aspect of life, manages industrial plants, undertakes economic developments, constructs and regulates irrigation works, goes in for mining, state trading and other kinds of activity, is directly descended from the Kautalyan State. The traditional Indian administrative system was inherited by the Muslims from their predecessors and was taken over with changes of nomenclature by the East India Company.

Though the British systematised these services, providing for their recruitment by competitive examinations, developed special procedures of training and drew up elaborate codes and manuals to standardise the work, essentially the administrative structure was something built on Indian traditions natural to the soil and not imported from Europe. Its universal acceptance as one of the features of government comes from the Indian tradition of the seven **prakritis** or constituents of the State.

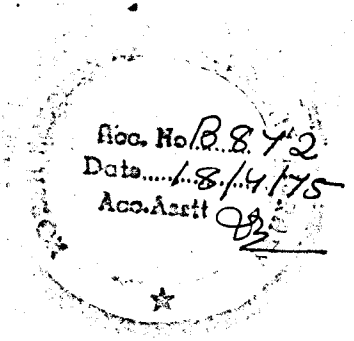
It is not only the civil services that the new Indian state has inherited from the past political theory. The comprehensive economic activity of the government in India has a dual origin, Indian and European. The Indian tradition in this matter has been uninterrupted and can be traced at least so far back as the Mauryan state and is embodied in the teaching of the **Niti Sastra** writers. Its European character, which is equally obvious, traces its origin both to Marxian thought and to the conception of the

welfare state. The control of all economic forces by the state, is one of the basic conceptions of Marxian Socialism and the socialist oriented state in India has borrowed it as well as its machinery of planning from socialist experiments in Europe. The difference is that, while in communist countries the machinery for the execution of policies is controlled by the party and inspired by party ideology, India follows its inherited tradition of a nationally organised administrative service.

Another aspect of Indian political thought which may be said to have its roots in India's own experience is the new system of **panchayatiraj**, or democratic decentralisation. India's political structure even under the largest empires was based on villages and village groups (gramas and janapadas) which the centralised administration of the British had greatly undermined. The new constitution, though federal in structure and based on state units, had originally no direct relation to the villages and rural units, and therefore had a tendency to degenerate into a formal democracy with the administration in the country firmly in the hands of the civil services. The **panchayati raj** which gives effective power to elected bodies at lower levels seeks to take democracy to the rural areas and this may well be considered a new and significant experiment based on India's own political thought and experience.

There has been no independent thinking on the science of politics in India during the British period. After the discovery of Kautalya's Arthasastra, Indian scholarship showed an interest in research and inter-

pretation, in studying the ancient texts and in trying to understand what the ancients had thought about these problems. But political thought was dominated by Western ideas and had no relation to actual experience. That is probably the explanation for the total barrenness of modern India's contribution on this subject. A new and original chapter in Indian political thinking will open when, as a result of direct political experience in an independent political community, our thinkers bring their minds to bear on our problems.



THE AUTHOR

Scholar, statesman and diplomat, Kavalam Madhava Panikkar was educated at Madras and Oxford. A scholar of Christ's Church and Bar-at-Law (Middle Temple) he became a Professor and strayed into the ranks of journalism for a while until he joined the Chamber of Princes as Secretary to the Chancellor. This was the first step in his rise from one position to another in the service of Princely India.

A past master of statecraft, Panikkar's great ability was recognised by the Government of India which used his vast experience in the integration of Indian States in the Indian Union and posted him as the Ambassador for India to Peking and later on to Cairo and Paris. Later he was on the States Reorganization Commission. Now he is the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Mysore.

A distinguished writer and historian, Panikkar has produced as many as twenty-four books in English on politics, sociology and history. In Malayalam, his mother tongue, he has written eleven volumes of poetry, five novels and five dramas together with other miscellaneous works. His book *Asia and Western Dominance* has been translated into several European languages.