

Kautilya

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.

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 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. 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. Commanders (nayakas) led the troops in battle.

Training and Arms

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. Kautilya recommends that around one-fourth of the maula troops be left in the capital when moving out on a campaign.

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.

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.

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.

Qualitatively, troops were considered as falling under four classes: viz. saram (best), anusaram (second best), trtiyasaram (third in rank), and phalgu (weak troops).

Kautilya, in fact, categorized wars into the following three types:

1. Open Fight:

Where the place and time indicated.

2. Concealed Fighting:

Involving the use of tactics on the battlefield.

3. The Silent Fight:

By using secret agents and killing the officials of the enemy. Kautilya, however, was very clear that a king cannot always keep waging wars and conquering territories. In fact, no state can afford to live in a state of continuous war. Kautilya was of the opinion that when a particular issue can solve the problem from peace and war, one should prefer the former. Peace must be according to the circumstances and in the interests of the state.

IAS Next

Kautilya's Views on Foreign Relations

In order to determine the kind of policy to be adopted in each case, foreign rulers were classified by Kautilya under four heads, namely,

enemies (Ari),

friends (Mitra),

mediators (Madhyama),

and neutrals (Udasma).

Inimical and friendly rulers, again, were each divided into two kinds, *natural and artificial*.

A king and his immediate neighbour were, according to Kautilya, natural enemies to each other, Abul Fazl, describing the Hindu system of public administration said; "The Prince whose territory adjoined to his, although he might be friendly in appearance, yet ought not to be trusted ; he was always be prepared to oppose any sudden attack from that quarter.

A king who attempted to give trouble to another king without reasonable cause was an artificial enemy of that king.

The ruler whose territory was separated from that of another ruler by the territory of an enemy, and whose friendship had come down from father and grand-father was a natural friend. The best kind of friend, according to Kautilya, was he who was constant, noble, straightforward, and whose friendship had been inherited from father and grandfather.

A ruler whose friendship was courted for the sake of the protection of life and property was an acquired friend.

The ruler whose territory was situated close to that of a king and his wicked enemy, and who was capable of helping both the kings or of resisting either of them, was a **mediatory king**.

The ruler whose territory was situated between the territories of two rival kings, and who was powerful enough to help or resist either of them or a mediatory king, was **neutral**.

The distinction between a neutral and a mediatory King was not at all clear.

Perhaps, the term Udasina ' (neutral) was applied to a King who remained passive in regard to both the contending parties, while the 'Madhyama King was one who exerted his influence to bring about a reconciliation.

Kautilya on Diplomacy

Kautilya believed that nations acted in their political, economic and military self-interest.

He thought that foreign policy or diplomacy will be practised as long as the self-interest of the State was served because every State acts in a way to maximize the power and self interest.

He thought that the world was in such a state that a kingdom was either at war or was preparing for a war and diplomacy was yet another weapon used in this constant warfare.

He believed that diplomacy is a series of actions taken by a kingdom such that it gains strength and eventually conquers the nation with which diplomatic ties were created.

He also believed that treaties should be made in such a way that King benefits and serves the self-interest of the Kingdom.

He did talk about violating treaties and creating dissension between states so that his kingdom might benefit which directly is similar to Bismarck's strategies of treaties.

In fact Kautilya could be compared to Bismarck that both of them thought of extremely complex network of treaties and relationships without any successor in either case. In his words he defined diplomacy as, "A King who rule the whole world". To understand his concept of diplomacy it was important to understand the Mandala concept, six types of foreign policy.

Here , mandala concept would be explained which is quite apt in today's context.

Six forms of Diplomacy

Kautilya elaborated on strategies for not only the strong king and the aggressor but also explained the strategies a weak king had to follow to defend himself and protect the state.

His forms of diplomacy also depended on the type of the king whether the policy was directed toward the superior, inferior or equal. He defined superiority or inferiority primarily on three dimensions: military power, economic power and geographical size.

The six types of foreign policy that he advocated are:

1.Sandhi : This meant accommodation, which meant that kings sought to accommodate each other and did not resolve to hostile means.

These Sandhis could be temporary or permanent and it depended on the environment and relative powers of the kings. Sandhi could be of five types.

Mitrasandhi: With an ally on definite terms,

Hiranyasandhi: Agreement based on transfer of wealth,

Bhoomisandhi: Agreement based on transfer of land or territory,

Karmasandhi: Agreement for exchange of military and

Anavasitasandhi: Agreement to help colonize an unoccupied place.

The various sub-forms in this sandhi had been practiced by statesmen later. **Bismarck had used Karmasandhi with Austria and now Britain's foreign policy had been to maintain Anavasitasandhi with the United States.**

2. Vighraha: This meant hostility shown to neighbour or a state. Kautilya strongly believed that the States were always at war and sought power hence it was necessary to have hostile foreign policy towards few States which were either equal in power or subordinate in power.

3. Asana: This meant indifference and he chose this policy for States which were neutral in his mandala concept of nations. He also believed that an indifferent foreign policy worked well in the case of equal power. One might not agree on this point as we had seen in case of equal powers in history, there had been always tension which either led to a war or an alliance. Germany viewed Britain as an equal power and could not be indifferent, neither could US be indifferent to Russia during the cold war.

4. Dvaidhibhava: This meant double policy which was very well practiced by Bismarck. Kautilya advocated this foreign policy for States which are superior militarily. Kissinger followed this strategy where he made alliance with China so that at no time Russia and China could become closer in ties than US and China. Kautilya advocated the same concept within his Mandala framework.

5. Samsarya: This policy of protection is followed where a stronger state intervenes and shelters a weak state. Kautilya advocated this policy when a stronger state needs a shield to protect itself from an equal power it was good to use this policy of protection for a third state and used this alliance to defend against the potential enemy. In one sense the colonization was followed where European powers started controlling weak nations in Africa and Asia and thus strengthening their position against one another.

6. Yana: This policy was to attack. Kautilya did mention that peace and stability in a state made the state even powerful but never shy away from attacking the weak and unjust king. He thought that an unjust king kept the society unhappy which made that state a potential target as it was weak due to social unrest. Who knows may George W. Bush read Kautilya before pursuing the Yana policy on Iraq!

Thus Kautilya's foreign policy was formed by his strong belief in King and the state's continuous thirst for power and wealth. His diplomacy tactics were also influenced by Hindu religion and the social structure which shaped his thinking in terms of types of foreign policies and their application.

Kautilya's quality to manage war and diplomacy can greatly be admired. His six diplomacy tools and mandala concept is still applicable.

On War

Kautilya thought there was a "science" of warfare, presumably part of a larger science of politics.

The Commandant of the Army, he suggested, had to be trained in the science of all kinds of fights and weapons, and renowned for riding on elephants, horses or in chariots. Just as Machiavelli advised his prince to attend to matters of warfare constantly, so did Kautilya advised the king not to leave military matters entirely to others: "Infantry, cavalry, chariots and elephants should carry out practice in the arts outside the city at sun-rise. . . . The king had constantly to attend to that, and should frequently inspected their arts. Just as the king's agents spied on officials in the state bureaucracy, so too must the king had spies to assess the loyalty of soldiers What greater threat is there to a king than having a military coup remove him from power?

Kautilya recommended that "secret agents, prostitutes, artisans and actors as well as elders of the army should ascertain with diligence, the loyalty or disloyalty of soldiers."

