



SNS COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
An Autonomous Institution
Coimbatore-35



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DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONICS & COMMUNICATION ENGINEERING

III YEAR/ VI SEMESTER

19HST105 ESSENCE OF INDIAN TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

UNIT I ANCIENT INDIA & STATE POLITY
Kingship



KINGSHIP



- The king was the most important figure in the *body politic*.
- In the *Saptānga* theory of the state, developed by Kautilya the king has been described as the head or the most important organ of the state.
- The king performed multi-dimensional functions. The king's functions involved the protection not only of his kingdom against external aggression, but also of life, property and traditional custom against internal foes. He protected the purity of class and caste by ensuring that those who challenged the system were excommunicated.
- He protected the family system by punishing adultery and ensuring the fair inheritance of family property.
- He protected widows and orphans by making them his wards.
- He protected the rich against the poor by suppressing robbery, and he protected the poor against the rich by punishing extortion and oppression.
- Religion was protected by liberal grants to learned brahmins and temples and frequently to heterodox sects also.
- The ideal set before the king was one of energetic beneficence.
- Ashoka was not the only king of India to proclaim that all men were his children, or to take pride in his ceaseless activity for the welfare of his subjects.



- The *Arthashastra*, despite its advocacy of every dishonest expedient for the acquisition and maintenance of power, puts forward the kingly duty in simple and forceful language, setting an ideal which few ancient civilizations can boast of. Comparing the king and the ascetic it says:

“In the happiness of his subjects lies the king’s happiness,
In the welfare of his subjects, his welfare.

The king’s good is not that which pleases him,
But that which pleases his subjects.”

- Elsewhere the *Arthashastra* suggests a time-table for the king’s day, which allows him only four and a half hours sleep and three hours for eating and recreation, the rest of the day being spent in state affairs of one kind or another.
- No doubt such a program was rarely kept in practice, but it at least shows the ideal at which the king was expected to aim.
- In all sources the king is told that he must be prompt in the administration of justice and always accessible
- to his people.
- The swarms of guards, ushers, and other officials who surrounded the king’s person must often have demanded bribes, and otherwise have obstructed the access of the subject to his sovereign.



- But the best of Indian kings at all times have made the public audience, or *darbār*, an important instrument of government.
- The ideal before the king in ancient India was that of being a *chakravartī* meaning a king who ruled over the united vast territory of the Indian sub-continent extending from Kashmir to Kanyakumari.
- With the Mauryas this possibility was substantially realised, and was incorporated into the Buddhist tradition and blended with later Vedic imperialist ideas, then taken over by orthodox Hinduism.
- Just as Buddha appears from time to time in the cosmic cycle, heralded by auspicious omens and endowed with favorable signs, to lead all living beings along the road to enlightenment, so do universal emperors appear to conquer all *Jambūdiva* (India) and rule prosperously and righteously.
- The concept of the universal emperor was also known to the Jainas, and in the epics numerous kings of legend, such as Yudhisthira and Rama, are said to have been *digvijayins* or conquerors of all the four quarters.
- According to Altekar the position, powers and privileges of the king have varied from age to age.
- During the prehistoric period, the king was only the senior-most member in the council of peers, when he often owed his position to an election, either real or formal, when there was a popular council (*samiti*) to actively supervise his administration, his position was often insecure and powers were limited.



- After 500 B.C.E. the office of king was elevated to new heights. During this period the king became the effective head of the executive administration and there was no popular assembly like samiti to check him.
- He controlled both the treasury and the military forces, though commander-in-chief and treasurer were under him.
- Ministers were selected by the king and held office at his pleasure. The king presided over the council of ministers and its decisions had to receive royal assent.



THANK YOU