

## Śukra and Kautilya: The Radical and the Conservative

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A careful perusal of *nīti* (policy) and *Smṛti* (what was based on memory) sources of Indian antiquity shows that the two most important expounders of *Dandānīti* (science of politics or science relating to the use of coercive power of the state) are Śukracārya (Śukra for short) and Kautilya. In fact, one can see some underlying continuity of the tradition between the two. In this regard it needs to be noted that Kautilya, right in the beginning of his *magnum opus Arthaśāstra*,<sup>1</sup> offers salutation to Śukra which is followed by a clear confession that, 'this *Arthaśāstra* is made as a compendium of almost all the *Arthaśāstras*, which in view of acquisition and maintenance of earth (kingdom?) have been composed by ancient teachers'.<sup>1</sup> This salutation and confession by Kautilya is enough to demonstrate that for many of the ideas expressed in the *Arthaśāstra*, Kautilya owes an intellectual debt to Śukra (along with Brahaspati and other seers). This contention is further strengthened by the fact that Śukra and his school (Ausanasa) are quoted by Kautilya at least seven times in the course of his discussion on organs of the state and administration of its civil and criminal laws. In this sense Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* emerges essentially as a practical science, its main objective being to teach the ruler how to govern is kingdom. Since it deals mainly with art of governance, there is very little by way of political speculation. Moreover, the fact that Śukra is quoted so profusely by Kautilya makes it obvious that when he compiled his *Arthaśāstra*, Śukra's views on polity and *Dandānīti* must have been quite popular and he seems to be fully conversant with them. Śukra's popularity is also obvious from the fact that he is quoted reverentially in several post—Kautilyan works including Kamandaka's *Kamandakiyanitisara*, Somadeva's *Nitivakyamṛta*, Dandin's *Daskumarchairta*, Viṣṇu Śarma's *Pancatantra*, Visakhadatta's *Mudrārakaṣasa*, Ved Vyāsa's *Mahābhārata*, Bana's *Kādambari* and Valmiki's *Ramayana*. Passages which are quite identical with *Arthaśāstra* are also found in *Kamasūtra* of Vātasayana and in some parts of

*Mahābhārata*. There are also resemblances of Kautilya's views with *Jātakas* as well as in the prescription of Ashoka's edicts, in Yajñavalkya and in Manu. In the second verse of *Pancatantra*, Viṣṇu Śarma salutes five expounders of science of politics—Śukra, Kautilya, Vacaspati, Parāsara and Vyāsa. In the 47<sup>th</sup> verse of book II, three kinds of *nītis* are mentioned—Śukra, Brahaspati and Kautilya. In the light of all these facts it would be academically rewarding to compare the views of Śukra and Kautilya as expressed in former's *Śukranīti* (or the essence of Śukra's policy—*Śukranitisara* as it is sometimes called) and latter's *Arthaśāstra*, which are undoubtedly the two most important sources on the science of politics in India during the remote antiquity.

Such a comparison is also prompted by some epistemological and methodological considerations, the first and the foremost being the fact that although Śukra is repeatedly mentioned (either by this popular name or as Usana or Kavi or Kāvya or Bhṛgu or Bhārgava) in several ancient Indian literary sources mentioned above for his profound *nīti*, yet, surprisingly enough, he has been 'least studied and researched'. In fact, there has hardly been any systematic study of his science of politics except some very sketchy and sporadic general statements about him and his work here and there. In this respect the situation in the case of Kautilya is quite different. Of all the political thinkers of ancient India, he has been undoubtedly the 'most studied and researched one'. This is so despite the fact that the Śukra and Kautilya were similarly placed in many ways. Both were Aryan Brahmins, professionally both were preceptors and advisors at the courts of kings of their times and both played their respective stellar roles in that capacity: Śukra was preceptor and advisor at the court of several non-Aryans kings starting with Hiranyakasipu to Prahlāda to Andhaka to Virochana to Bali and Vrishparva and consistently helped them in their intermittent wars with the expansionist Aryans.<sup>2</sup> He was instrumental in

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winning many a battle for them. For a while he was also the priest of at least two Aryan kings—Danda of the solar dynasty and Yayati of the lunar race. Similarly, Kautilya was preceptor of Candragupta Maurya and in that capacity he was instrumental in dethroning king Dhanananda of the Nanda dynasty from the throne of Magadha and installing Candragupta in his place. He stayed at the royal court till the Mauryan rule was secure. This parallel between the two is quite striking. To top it all, both were political thinkers and each expounded his own rich science of politics. However, despite these similarities there is a sharp difference in terms of attention that the two have received from the scholars. By conservative estimate one can say that the amount of scholarly attention that Śukra's *Śukranīti* has received is not even one-tenth of what Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* has got. This is quite amazing because if laudatory references to him are to be believed, Śukra's science of politics was in no way less profound than that of Kautilya. If anything, it was far richer in scope, more radical (and even revolutionary) in its intent and in a way epoch-making than that of any other political thinker of ancient India including Kautilya. This over-sight on the part of Indologists is a puzzle, which needs to be explained.

The present note is an attempt, even if somewhat inadequate, to explain this puzzle. For one thing, what probably accounts for this lack of scholarly interest in Śukra's science of politics is the three-fold intense controversy about the *authenticity* of the extant *Śukranīti* text, as also about the *date* of its composition and about its *authorship*. In fact, questioning the *authenticity* of an ancient text and/or the *date* of its composition, and/or its *authorship* are effective means to 'kill' it. Least that such a controversy instantly does is to divert the attention of scholars from the study of 'substantive issues' of politics dealt in the said text or associated with the said author to joining the debate about 'peripheral issues' like the authenticity and historicity of the text which can be seldom settled satisfactorily because of lack of any incontrovertible evidence—literary, anthropological or any other—either to prove or disprove a contention.

In this respect *Śukranīti* is a very relevant case in point. Right from the moment the extant text was discovered around 1880 AD, there has been an intense but inconclusive debate which has remained circumscribed till date to ascertaining the genuineness of the text, hence at least by implication, its authorship and the date of its composition. It is this controversy which has resulted in stillbirth of the *Śukranīti* text as the following account would show.

G Oppert who was the first to publish the English version of *Śukranīti* in 1882 assigned it to the period of

*Smyrtis* (100 BC to 800 AD) but there were hardly any buyers of his argument; rather the extant text was considered to be a work of much later period ranging from 4<sup>th</sup> century AD to 16<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>3</sup> The British Museum catalogue mentioned 1875 AD as the probable date of its publication but suffixed it with a question mark. Joining issue with Oppert, most of the historians and Ideologists started assigning more recent but different dates to this text. While KP Jayaswal opined that it was a work of eighth century AD, UN Ghoshal and RC Majumdar assigned it to eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>4</sup> Pursuing this trail Kane and Derrett extended the date of its composition to fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>5</sup> Thereafter, came KAN Sastri, V Raghavan and Lallanji Gopal, each of whom advanced numerous arguments to assert that the extant text was a work of nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> In fact, Gopal not only contested the date of composition of the extant *Śukranīti* but, with the help of massive evidence, tried to show that it was a spurious text rather than being the genuine work of great seer of antiquity—Śukracārya.<sup>7</sup> So much so that he went to the extent of endorsing the view that it was created by some enthusiastic Pandit merely to please some white sahib. Obviously, this whole controversy has marred the scholarly interest in the study of Śukra's science of politics.

Incidentally, the initial treatment meted out to Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* was no different. There was a similar controversy about the date of its composition, its authorship and about the genuineness of the text. It may be recalled that soon after its discovery by Shamastry during the first decade of the twentieth century, he articulated the view that it was work of fourth century BC. His argument was that since Kautilya who authored the *Arthaśāstra* was preceptor of Candragupta Maurya who ruled over Magadha during the fourth century BC, hence this work belongs to that period. Initially, this view was also accepted by some western scholars including JF Fleet, H Jacobi, JJ Meyer, B Breloer and FW Thomas. However, several Indian scholars including K Nag, Pran Nath, KP Jayaswal, NN Law, DR Bhandarkar, PV Kane, KA Nilakantha Sastri, VR Ramchandra Dikshitar and DD Kosambi had reservations in accepting this date. The fourth century BC as the date authorship of *Arthaśāstra* was, however, strongly questioned by several western scholars including Junius Jolly, AB Keith, M Winternitz and O Stein. Their whole contestation was woven around three distinct yet interrelated arguments: first, that a person named Kautilya never really existed; second, that if at all there was any person of this name, the *Arthaśāstra* was not written by him; and third, that whoever wrote it did not write it during the reign of Candragupta Maurya

but much later.<sup>8</sup> Actually even if some scholars contested only the date of its composition, by implication their contestation tantamount to questioning its authorship as well. It was Jolly who was the first to express doubts in 1914 about the genuineness of this work as also about 'its date'. This was followed by Keith who in an article two years later in the *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* argued that *Arthaśāstra* was not a work of fourth century BC but of third century AD. This date was later on accepted by several other scholars including Jolly, Stein and Winternitz.<sup>9</sup> By and large, the contestation of these scholars is based on what Mital calls *argumentum ex silentio*, which is to say that since neither Kautilya nor his *Arthaśāstra* is mentioned in some of the contemporary sources of that time, obviously the text does not belong to that period. To be more precise, the argument goes like this: because Megasthenes who visited India at that time does not mention either Kautilya or *Arthaśāstra* it is not certain that he existed and compiled this work during the Mauryan rule. In other words, in his historical narrative the silence of Megasthenes about Kautilya and his *Arthaśāstra* shows that neither the author nor his work existed at that time. So the fact that Megasthenes has not mentioned Kautilya and his *Arthaśāstra* makes it evident that the author and his work belong to a later date. Pursuing the same trail Bhandarkar argued that although Patānjali has mentioned the Mauryas and the Sabhā of Candragupta in his *Mahābhāṣya*, there is no mention of Kautilya by him which raises a doubt whether he actually lived during Candragupta Maurya's time. Winternitz's arguments are slightly different. He argues that *Arthaśāstra* is a work not of a statesman but of a Pandit and could not have been composed by the Prime Minister of Candragupta. His second argument is based on internal evidence from *Arthaśāstra* itself. According to him since the core part of *Arthaśāstra* does not say anything about the Nandas, the Mauryas or king Candragupta Maurya or Patliputra, hence the date of its composition could not have been 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. To further substantiate his contention, Winternitz refuses to accept the evidence contained, in *Mudrarākṣasa* on the plea that it is only a play, it is not a historical account of his times. He further says that one also cannot rely on the evidence about Kautilya and his *Arthaśāstra* contained in *Pancatantra* and *Kathāsaritasāgara* because these are only story books, hence such works of fiction cannot be treated as historical documents.

Partly, these issues arose because like Śukra, Kautilya is also addressed by several names. In addition to this popular name, he is also called Canakya and Viṣṇugupta. What lends further complexity to the whole controversy is the fact that in different literary accounts covering the

twin events of ouster of ninth Nanda king, Dhanananda and installation of Candragupta Maurya in his place, are associated with Canakya, while various references relating to the authorship of *Arthaśāstra* are associated with Kautilya.

Notwithstanding this view of some scholars one does find considerable internal evidence in the text itself indicating Kautilya's authorship of the work. The most incontrovertible proof about Kautilya being the author of *Arthaśāstra* is the fact that at the end of each one of the 150 chapters the text states, 'thus ends chapter' so and so 'of the Book' so and so 'concerning' so and so 'of the *Arthaśāstra* of Kautilya'. The text of *Arthaśāstra* finally ends with the following declaration: 'This śāstra has been made by him who from intolerance (of misrule of Dhanananda?), quickly rescued the scriptures and the science of weapons and the earth which had passed to the Nanda kings.' It concludes by saying, 'this is the one hundred and fiftieth chapter from the first chapter of the entire work. The fifteenth book, "Plan of Treatise of *Arthaśāstra* of Kautilya" is thus brought to close' (Italics mine). So far so good but this declaration is followed by a sentence which (strangely enough) says, 'having seen discrepancies in many ways on the part of the (earlier) writers of commentaries on the *Śāstra*, Viṣṇugupta himself has made (this) *Sūtra* and commentary'.<sup>10</sup> So finally the name 'Kautilya' gives way to 'Viṣṇugupta'! This has naturally led the scholars to ask the question whether the three names—Kautilya, Canakya and Viṣṇugupta—refer to the same person or different persons. Other literary sources also do not help much in clearing the confusion. For example, the Buddhist source *Mahāvamsa* states, 'Brahmana Canakya, after having killed, in fierce anger, the ninth (Nanda) Dhanananda, he anointed him, born in the dynasty of the Ksatriya Mauryas (and) possessed of royal splendour, known as Candragupta, on the kingdom of the whole of Jambudvīpa'.<sup>11</sup> A reference in *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is more helpful in clearing the confusion to some extent when it states, 'The Brahmana Kautilya shall exterminate these nine Nandas (Dhanananda was ninth and last king of the Nanda dynasty). After their annihilation. . . Kautilya shall anoint Candragupta (born in the family of the Mauryas) on the kingdom'.<sup>12</sup> This evidence in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* would show that Kautilya and Canakya are the two names of the same person. Dandin's *Dasakumāracarita* further helps in clearing the confusion when it mentions Viṣṇugupta's work on *Dandanīti*, the reference obviously being to Kautilya. In fact, various Buddhist Jātakas and Jaina literary sources, while describing the dethroning of Nandas and crowning of Candragupta Maurya, use the name Canakya; but in narrating the same event *Purāṇas*

use the name Kautilya. On the other hand, in *Mudrarākṣha* Canakya is equated with Viṣṇugupta. The hero of the play is Canakya but while saluting Rakṣha he introduces himself as Viṣṇugupta.<sup>13</sup> Thus, there is no doubt that Kautilya, Canakya and Viṣṇugupta are names of the same person who was the author of *Arthaśāstra* and who overthrew the Nanda king and installed Candragupta Maurya in his place. If this be so then there is not much room for any dispute with regard to the date of composition of *Arthaśāstra* because it is an established historical fact that Candragupta Maurya ruled during the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. Since Kautilya was his preceptor and he lived during that period it is he who must have composed it during this period. Considering all these arguments the view that Kautilya is the author of the *Arthaśāstra* seems to have been generally accepted by Kamandaka and Dandin.

Thus, despite the initial disputations about the authorship, authenticity and date of composition of *Arthaśāstra* it is now, more or less, settled that it is a work authored by Kautilya alias Canakya alias Viṣṇugupta and it belongs to 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. The dust having thus settled down the attention of the scholars has now shifted to the study of 'substantive' issues of the science of politics discussed in Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* rather than the debate on 'peripheral' issues. However, the situation in the case of Śukra continues to be very different. The initial controversy about the genuineness of the extant *Śukranīti* text is still as strong and alive as ever and so also the controversy about its date and its authorship. So one can say *Śukranīti* and *Arthaśāstra* stand today at very different pedestals as works on the science of politics. The ambiguity about the 'authenticity' of *Śukranīti* and the time of its composition continues to not only haunt but even dissuade the scholars from taking up the study of Śukra's science of politics. This is so mainly because Śukra who was radiant as sun, combined in himself the qualities of a seer, a thinker, philosopher, an ascetic, a master of yogic practices, a royal priest, a preceptor, a minister, a law-giver, a strategist and an advisor to the kings of his times, and is addressed by several names like Kavi, Uṣṇa, Kāvya etc. in different ancient Indian literary sources including the *Rgveda*. This multiplicity of names gives a convenient handle to the critics to question whether all these names refer to the same person or to different persons. The opinion on this question continues to be sharply divided and unanimity still eludes the scholars. G Oppert after comparing certain references to the views of Uṣṇa in the early literary texts with those in the extant text of *Śukranīti* came to the conclusion that in none of these works there is any mention of this work (*argumentum ex silentio* again). The earliest reference to

Śukra's *nīti* and his *rājanīti* (politics) is found in a quotation in *Rājñīratnākara* of Candēśvera but surprisingly enough, this quotations is not found in the present text of *Śukranīti*.<sup>14</sup> B P Mazumdar has further pointed out in this regard that some verses of *Rājñīratnākara* are ascribed to Bhārgava, while some others are ascribed to Uṣṇa which tends to show that the two are different persons.<sup>15</sup> *Rgveda*, the earliest literary source in India, does not mention Śukra at all; rather there are numerous references to his other names.<sup>16</sup> What has complicated the matter further is the fact that at several places Uṣṇa and Brahaspati is joined together; as contemporaneous; while at other places it is Śukra and Brahaspati. This provides a convenient handle to western scholars to assert that the two may be different persons. Actually, with regard to these multiple names of Śukra and Kautilya if one takes a broad look at several ancient Indian literary sources, particularly the epics, one finds that it was a literary style to address the same person by numerous laudatory names some which were more of adjectives. All Indologists, Indian and western, need to recognize this fact. One needs to notice, for example, that Arjuna, the Pāndava hero of *Mahābhārata*, and Lord Kṛṣṇa, his conscience keeper and several other characters including Kunti and Draupadi are addressed by scores of names. It would, therefore, be appropriate to see the different names by which Śukra and Kautilya are addressed in the light of this literary practice of that time.<sup>17</sup> In any case, even today it is very difficult to determine the exact date of the composition of original *Śukranīti* but it can hardly be disputed by any serious scholar that Śukra lived during the pre-Christian era and that too before the *Rgvedic* times and the contours of his *nīti* must have been compiled, if not during his lifetime, soon thereafter. Since Śukra lived much before Kautilya and his *nīti* is repeatedly mentioned by Kautilya, it is reasonable to infer that his *nīti* was composed much before the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. In fact, it must have been the most popular work on politics as revealed by the fact of Kautilya's first salutation is to him and only second to Brahaspati. It is further substantiated by numerous references to the profundity of his *nīti* in *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*.

In the context of this whole disputation about the authenticity of *Śukranīti* and *Arthaśāstra*, there is a subtle difference which needs to be noted and which has some very significant implications. While doubts about the authorship, authenticity and date of *Arthaśāstra* were expressed more by western scholars—Junius Jolly, AB Keith, M Winternitz and O Stein etc. than Indian scholars and most of the defence came from them; in the case of *Śukranīti* most of the doubts about the authenticity and

date of the text have been expressed by Indian Indologists, Sankriticists and historians—Jayaswal, Ghoshal, Majumdar, Kane, K A N Sastri, V Raghavan and last but not the least Lallanji Gopal. Why should this be so? It is very difficult to explain this phenomenon. Could it be because Śukra was professionally associated 'primarily' with the non-Aryans who after their initial encounters with the Aryans were relegated to a subordinate position, if not altogether vanquished. On the other hand, Kautilya lived at a time when the Aryan-non-Aryan battles had come to an end, at least relatively speaking, and the Aryans had decisively established their dominance over their adversaries after a series of battles. In this changed scenario, Kautilya took quite the opposite stand and his whole theory of politics was aimed at perpetuating and maximizing the Aryan dominance.

It needs to be realized that in 'essence' Śukra and Kautilya fought for causes which seemed apparently similar but which were in many ways diametrically opposite. While Śukra tried, at one level, to defend the sovereignty and political power of the non-Aryan king Bali (and several of his previous generations) for whom he managed to capture the whole kingdom of high caste and high profile Aryan war hero of Rgvedic fame, Indra and bestowed it on Bali; at another level, he enabled non-Aryan king, Vṛṣparva, and his progenies—Puru, Yadu, Turvasu, Druhyu and Anu—to capture the most powerful Aryan kingdom of Yayati of the lunar case, who ruled over Pratiṣṭhāna and who had earned for himself the title of *Cakravartin* (emperor). For the sake of non-Aryan community he went to Śiva and asked for means of protecting them. Kautilya, on the other hand, evolved a grand strategy to overthrow the *low-caste* ruling dynasty of the Nandas by his magic lore and installed a high (or middle) caste Kṣhatriya—Candragupta Maurya on the throne of Magadha.<sup>18</sup> For the fact that Kautilya was the central figure of whole political intrigue involving the destruction of Nanda dynasty, Kamandaka offers salutation 'to him who shone like a thunder-bolt whose witch-craft the rich mountain-like Nandas fell down, root and branch, who alone with the power of diplomacy, like Indra with thunder-bolt, bestowed the earth on Candragupta, the moon among men, who churned the nectar of science of polity from the ocean of political sciences—to him, the wise and Brahma-like Viṣṇugupta we make salutation'. While he must be credited for his powerful diplomatic manoeuvres, one must not forget that Kautilya's whole campaign to overthrow the Nandas was rooted in 'personal animosity' and anger. It is a different matter that in the process of overthrow of Nandas the whole community or a major segment of it may have benefitted in the bargain. In sharp contrast to

this, Śukra's whole campaign to defend the non-Aryans had a 'social dimension'. He had no personal axe to grind and no personal score to settle. In fact, he placed his social obligation above his personal honour. On one occasion, when king Andhaka, the son of Hiranyakasipu insulted him by refusing to recognize him when he had returned after obtaining the boon of invincibility for the non-Aryans, he decided to leave his court but when Andhaka apologized for his foolish act he relented and agreed to stay at his court for the sake of protection of honour and dignity of the non-Aryan community. On another occasion, when king Bali refused to accept his advice not to grant the request of Vaman Brahmin, who he knew was Viṣṇu in the garb of a dwarf, and who had come to snatch the kingdom of Bali and bestow it on Indra, he left in a huff. On both occasions, he just cursed the erring kings but nursed no enmity or grudge. Thus Śukra and Kautilya, in terms of their personality traits are a study in contrast. To put it in class terms, Śukra all along championed the cause of those who had been pushed to the status of lower caste whom the upper caste Kṣhatriyas sought to enslave and colonize; while Kautilya tried and succeeded in doing just the opposite.<sup>19</sup>

There is another sharp contrast between Śukra and Kautilya which needs to be emphasized. Once Śukra agreed to become the preceptor of non-Aryan kings and *purohit* (priest) of the whole population of their kingdom, he left no stone unturned to ensure their progress and prosperity. As already stated for the sake of his *yajamānas* he tried to devise means of protecting them from their adversaries and was arguably often successful in his mission. There was no personal interest involved in this whole exercise. It was merely out of a feeling of service to the community. For the fulfillment of this objective he underwent severest possible penances. So much so that in this process even his mother was killed by Viṣṇu. It is also mentioned that all his sons were killed but even this did not distract him from his duty to the non-Aryan race. He intelligently trapped the Aryan king Yayati into matrimonial alliance with his own daughter, Devayāni. Being conscious of Yayati's amorous nature he managed to plant Vṛṣparava's daughter Sarmiṣṭha in his palace in the guise of Devayāni's maid. So he was fighting for a social cause. In sharp contrast to this, Kautilya's whole tirade against the Nanda king was more out of personal insult heaped on him rather than due to any larger cause or concern for the community. It is a different matter though that in this whole process, Nanda's subjects were redeemed from the cruelty and avariousness of the Nanda kings.

Actually the comparison between Śukra and Kautilya cannot be carried very far because Śukra is a sage and a

seer in addition to being a preceptor; while Kautilya is merely a preceptor and a strategist who composed a *dandanīti* to serve as a manual of administration for the guidance of the Mauryan rulers.

To be fair to Śukra, it must also be said that his task was quite uphill insofar as he was defending a class or a community which was in every respect, particularly in terms of weapons, 'inferior' (or which had been relegated to that position); as compared to its adversaries; while Kautilya was promoting the cause of a class which was in every sense of the term 'dominant' in a rigid and hierarchically structured *varna* society. In fact, Kautilya's whole mission symbolizes upper class and upper caste (Kṣhtriya-Brahmin) alliance directed against the lower classes and lower castes (artisans and dalits in the present day vocabulary); while Śukra in spite of being a Brahmin of high pedigree (being the progeny of the great sage (Bhṛgu) was aligning with the lower classes and lower castes. Thus, Śukra's whole strategy has a radical, nay even revolutionary tinge attached to it; while that of Kautilya is devoid of it. At best, Kautilya's whole approach was conservative. Isn't it amazing that all the other Brāhmin priests and preceptors who were contemporaries of Śukra—Angīras, Bṛhaspati, Kasyapa, Gautama, Vaśiṣṭha, Agasteya Parasara, Bhardwāja helped the Indo-Aryans, who were initially a nomadic tribe, in their battles with the non-Aryans. All the seven sages became their priests, guides and preceptors. In caste terms they aligned with the Kṣhtriya rulers of either solar or lunar race. Thus, Śukra was the lone preceptor of the non-Aryans and he was swimming against the current rather than with it (and that too with reasonable degree of success). It is remarkable that despite being placed in a position of one to seven or one to nine he did not allow the Aryans to have a decisive victory of the non-Aryans. Would it be fair to conjecture that probably it is for this reason that he does not find a place among the *saptaṛṣhis* (seven prominent sages).<sup>20</sup> That also probably explains, even if inadequately, why his *nīti* which is otherwise referred to in several literary sources of antiquity is not available in its original form? It is but natural that his science of politics did not find favour with the Aryans because due to his policy they could not have a walkover over their adversaries. The *Vedas* are the most ancient books of the Aryans and their preservation through the ravages of his history marked by influx of numerous invaders is nothing short of a marvel but there is a still greater marvel which is the destruction of all such *nīti* literature of antiquity which ran counter to the interest of the victors. Doesn't it demonstrate that there is a whole sociology of knowledge and only that knowledge survives or flourishes which suits the powers of the day?

Why Śukra and Kautilya have not been studied from this power-politics angle is proof enough of bias in our very conception of knowledge.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Kautilya's Arthaśāstra* tr. by R. Shamasastri Bangalore: Government Press, 1915, p. 1. In fact, Kangle has calculated that in Kautilya's *Arthaśāstras*, there are 112 references to earlier works; out of which maximum references are to Ausanasa school.
2. In fact, the Aryans took to themselves the honorific title of *devas*. The word *deva* in Sanskrit means bright but gradually it acquired a divine connotation. The *devas* as gods are constantly invoked in the Vedic hymns for grant of food, cattle wealth, large families and a long life. Their encounter with the non-Aryans seems to be for possession of Indo-Gangetic plains. On the other hand the non-Aryans were called by various pejorative names ranging from Nishads (who lived on hunting), Kiratas (wood dwellers), indigenous barbarians, *dāsas* (slaves), *dasyūs* (thieves), *dānavas*, *daityas*, *rakṣhasas* and *asuras* (demons).
3. In his, *On the Weapons, Army Organisation and Political Maxims of the Ancient Hindus*, Madras, 1880, Oppert referred to *Śukranītisāra* having been published only a few years ago.
4. See, K.P. Jayaswal's, "Review" of Ramanathan's, *Criminal Justice in Ancient India* in *Modern Review*, February 1916. Also see A.S. Altekar (1985), *State and Government in Ancient India*, Delhi: Motilal Banarasisidass, p. 196; U.N. Ghoshal (1959), *A History of Indian Political Ideas*, Madras: Oxford University Press, p. 494; B.P. Mazumdar, *Socio-Economic History of Northern India, 1130-1194 AD*, Preface, pp. x-ix, and R.C. Majumdar, *The Struggle for Empire*.
5. See, P.V. Kane (1968), *History of DharmaŚāstra*, vol. I, Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, p. 116; and J.D.M. Derrett (1962), *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, vol. XI, no. 1, p. 267, n.I.
6. K.A.N. Sastri's "Review" of B.P. Mazumdar's, *Socio-Economic History of India* in *Journal of Indian History*, vol. 39 (1), 1961, p. 197; V. Raghavan, *Address of the General President to the Twenty first All-India Oriental Conference*, Srinagar, 1961; and Lallanji Gopal, "The *Śukranīti*: A Nineteenth Century Text", *Bulletin of School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. XXV (part 3), 1962, pp. 524-556.
7. In fact, Gopal's SOAS article got a lot of instant publicity and consequently the gist of his argument was published in a couple of Indian Journals. See, Lallanji Gopal, "The Date of *Śukranīti*", *Modern Review*, May 1963, pp. 404-408 and June 1963, pp. 473-483. The summary of Gopal's article was also carried in Maha-Pandita Rahula Sankṛtyayana Memorial Volume of *Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, vol. 47, parts, I-IV, January-December, 1961, pp. 214-233. Full version of the original article along with a post-script was later on published in the form of a booklet. See, Lallanji Gopal (1978), *The Śukranīti-A Nineteenth Century Text*, Varanasi: Bharati Prakashan.
8. For a summary of this whole debate see, Surendra Nath Mital

- (2000), *Kautilya's Arthaśāstra Revisited*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, pp. 1-68. For further contribution to the debate about the date of *Arthaśāstra* see, I.W. Mabbett, "The Date of *Arthaśāstra*", *Journal of American Oriental Society*, vol. 84, pp. 162-169.; D.R. Bhandarkar, "Date of Kautilya", *Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, vol. 8, pp. 65-84; Ch. Banerjee, "Kautilya *Arthaśāstra*: The Question of Date Re-examined", *Modern Review*, vol. 109, pp. 30-34. For debate about the authenticity of text see, A.B. Keith, "The Authenticity of *Arthaśāstra*," *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 1916, pp. 130-137. For a comprehensive list of various works of Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra*, see, Ludwick, Sternbach, "Bibliography on the Works on Kautilya *Arthaśāstra*", *Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal*, vol. XI, 1973. Also see, J. Jolly's Introduction to the Punjab edition of the text; M. Winternitz, *Geschichte der Indischen Litterature*, vol. III; O. Stein, *Megasthenes Und Kautilya*, (AOR).
9. See A.B. Keith (1928), *History of Sanskrit Literature*, London: Oxford University Press, p. 459; M. Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, tr. Subhadra Jha, vol. III, part II, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1963, p. 589; and Junius Jolly (ed.) (1923), *Arthaśāstra*, Lahore: Motilal Banarasidass, Introduction, quoted in Mital, p. 15.
  10. See, *Kautilya's Arthaśāstra*, p. 520.
  11. For detailed discussion of this argument see. Mital, pp. 16 ff.
  12. Quoted in Mital, p. 2. References to Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* are also found in *Vāyu Purāṇa* and *Matsya Purāṇa*.
  13. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.
  14. See, Gopal, p. 550.
  15. Gopal, p. 551.
  16. See, *The Hymns of Rgveda*, Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Studies, 1953, vol. I.
  17. It will not be altogether out of place to surmise that if *Mahābhārata* or *Srimad Bhagwat Gita* had been exclusively works of science of politics there would have been controversy whether Arjuna, Partha, Dhananjya etc. are the names of the same person or of different persons. Same for Lord Kṛṣṇa, Bhiṣma and other characters.
  18. There is a lot of confusion about the exact caste of the Nandas. According to one account Mahapadma Nanda, the founder of Nanda dynasty, was a Śūdra because he was born of a Śūdra woman. There is some confusion about the exact caste of Candragupta Maurya. In fact the accounts of Brāhmins and Buddhists are widely at variance as to the origin of the Mauryan family. In Visakhadatta's *Mudraraksasa* the central figure of the play, *Mudraraksasa* says that Candragupta was related to Mahapadma Nanda; while the commentator of *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* says that he was son of Nanda born to a low-caste woman named Mura who was an attendant of the Nanda ruler but this account does not reconcile with explanation that low-caste of Nandas was the cause of their deposition by Kautilya. The Buddhist sources contend that the Mauryas belonged to the same family as Gautama Buddha who belonged to the royal family of Sakyas.
  19. This is evident from the fact that *Rgveda* mentions Yadu and Turvasu who were Śukra's grand children being born to his daughter Devayāni who was married to most powerful king of his times—Yayati, son of Nahusha. It is the same Nahusha who maltreated Agasteya and was consequently penalized by Śukra's father, Bhṛgu.
  20. There is no unanimity about who all are included in the list of *Saptris* (seven sages). According to *Satapatha Brāhmana* they are Gotama, Bharadwaja, Viswamitra, Jamadagni, Kasyapa and Arti (which are only six). According to *Mahābhārata*, they are Marichi, Atri, Angiras, Pulaha, Kratu, Pulastya and Vasistha. The *Vāyu Purāṇa* also adds the name of Bhṛgu; while *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* adds Bhṛgu and Daksha, thus taking the number to nine.

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