

Administrative Circle of Kings as observed in Panchatantra and its Implication in the Present Day

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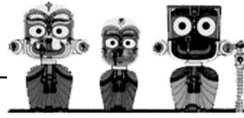
Panchatantra is a remarkable work in the domain of Sanskrit Fable and Niti literature. Though it was written in 2nd century B.C. (Hertel) its popularity is so wide throughout the globe that it has been translated into fifty languages, three-fourth of these being non-Indian languages. Two hundred versions of these works are still available. Visnuserman, the author of Panchatantra, was a Brahmin, a teacher and after all was an erudite scholar. No doubt he has followed his predecessors like Manu, Brihaspati, Sukracharya, Parasara, Vyasa so far the collection of Niti verse are concerned but his fables are the product of his pure imagination. Absorbing into its frame the elements of fable and of the tale, the Panchatantra is apparently a creation of the great artist who reveals himself as a master of narrative as well as the perfect man of the world. Panchatantra is a Niti-sastra text itself (Kathamukha v.7A) and shows its connection with important branches of study which deal with action in practical politics and the conduct of the ordinary affairs of everyday life. Panchatantra has a definite influence of Dharma Sastra, the code of morals. The characters in the fables depict cleverness and political wisdom but the principal aim is to establish a principle of morality. In the present paper an effort has been made to analyse the political and administrative circle of the then

kings which have a close resemblance to modern administrative setup after a gap of twenty centuries.

Out of the five tantras the first tantra i.e. Mitrabheda (separation of friends) handles the administrative circle of the kings inclusively. It arrests the attention of readers in most complex administrative situations and reaches at a most covetable conclusion. Mitrabheda throws sufficient light through instructive tales on kings and administration which have ample and valuable references to the present day scenario.

Visnuserman has minutely observed the royal surrounding. He studied the inborn tendencies, strengths, and weaknesses of human beings who used to encircle the king in the form of ministers, counselors and other servants.

Kingship may be inherited as it was the practice in ancient and medieval India or so called different chief executives may be appointed in a democratic form of Government with a group of employees to manage the day to day affairs of the State. But more or less the primary objective i.e. management of citizens and State affairs remains the same. The administrators are empowered to rule that means they are entrusted



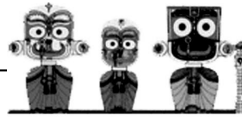
with the important and noble responsibility of looking after the welfare of the people. That is why they are basically called public servants. Most of the times the administration is found handicapped due to the undemocratic and egocentric attitude of the administrators giving scope to arousal of discontentment among the employees and subjects. So, much of emphasis is being given to value based management. At the very outset Visnuserman proclaims : the administrators who smoothly manage the people and their affairs get glory. Through beautiful similes he states : a king desirous of protecting the people and his own benefit should act like a gardener. He should with special efforts look after the growth of his subjects with the water of gifts of honour. He should take care to see that his subjects are in a prosperous condition and kept well pleased with the bestowal of gifts and honour just as a gardener, wishing for fruit, tends the young saplings with special care by pruning them by keeping them in good order and by supplying them with water. In a similar manner a king is expected to rear up the citizens like a cowherd man, and also act like a lamp. A manager having no quality himself cannot expect quality from others or extract quality work. Most of the administrators are found deprived of any special qualities but they seem to claim service from their subordinates. At such paradox, observation of Visnuserman is quite worth mentioning : a king acting the part of a lamp, although drawing up oil in the shape of wealth from his subjects is not observed to do so by anyone by reason of his intrinsic bright qualities (like bright light). Under no circumstances a king wishing his own welfare should not neglect and insult the servants who are devoted, able and born of high family. Rather a king should bring them up as his own sons. Paternalism as a management style is a dire need of the time.

But one sensible observer is greatly shocked and disappointed to see the present administrative circle. Efforts are being made to bring reforms in the administrative systems but very little have been achieved in this regard and reformative principles and ideals have not yet reached and touched majority of the institution-heads. Visnuserman finds the kings wanting in affection.

Today's executives and managers are found indifferent towards well and owe of employees working under their administrative control. The love and affection of the managers are the basic necessities and act like boosters for generating mutual trust, cooperation and good understanding. These are the antidotes to different problematic issues and strikes. Otherwise like hair grown on head turns grey without oil the servants also lose their enthuse and dynamism in the absence of expected personal touch and fellow-feeling. Gradually they are alienated if not treated with affection.

Visnuserman observes that dedicated and sincere ministers very often find themselves in dilemma. The Minister, who attends to the good of the king, incurs the dislike of the people, while one who acts for the good of the people is abandoned by the kings. When there is thus great opposition between two modes of behaviour equal on both sides, it is difficult to find one who works (equally) in the interest of the king and of the countrymen.

Normally the kings are encircled by Ministers and other servants of different categories. If the executives are not expert and strong, taking the advantage of inefficiency and other weaknesses of their kings and masters, the Ministers and counselors gradually collect strength and become the backbone of administration. They



try to keep the king as nominal administrator but themselves as real. Hence in order to get their evil intention fulfilled they wish that let the kings always be put to adverse situation and be in an endangered state. A king without any problem never asks his ministers as a man in good health never consults a doctor.

People do not feel affection for a king whose ministers are corrupt or dishonest. A king though of the form (nature) of a vulture is fit to be served by councilors of the form of (resembling) swans; but the king though of the form of a swan is not fit to be served when encircled by councilors of the form of (resembling) vultures.

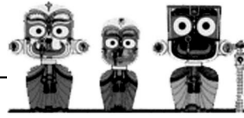
A king or executive can not live and manage all the affairs of the government or organisation all by himself. He needs the company of some other person or persons for discussion and deliberation. Some cunning persons waiting for the opportunity and coming to know of the psychological need and mindset of the king offer themselves voluntarily and start giving sermons to the king on different trying situations. The king does not feel the need to study the mind of those ignoble persons, on the contrary the person may be uneducated, not high born or unrefined but the king clings to him who stands near him. In this context Visnuserman quotes a universal fact that generally the kings, women and creeping plants cling to that what stands in immediate proximity.

In the company of disturbing elements the abode of the kings appears like a house in which cobra is lurking or like a forest infested with wild animals or like a lake beautiful with beds of lively lotuses but abounding in alligators. The royal palace is found as the resort of villains of various kinds, habitual liars and rogues. It seems like a sea approached by men but with pain and with a mind full of misgivings.

With the access of such unwanted persons into administrative arena problems get multiplied. they circumambulate the executive and desire close attendance of the administrator by virtue of which he can do a service to his friend or disservice to a foe. In tune to the situation they start praising their friends and supporters but criticizing their prejudiced colleagues. Such behaviour of some of the employees gives rise to groupism. But in order to take stock of the situation Visnuserman provides some clues to the administrator. Generally in this world the low-borns calumniate the high-born, the unfortunate the son of fortune, misers a donor, the dishonest the honest, the moneyless those possessed of riches, the deformed those having a lovely body, the impious the pious and foolish men those who are well-versed in the various Sastras.

The quality of the people serving the king influences and contaminates the later. Through the fault of the associating persons the disposition of the honest people also changes and they go astray. Coming into contact of Duryodhana Bhishma was engaged in seizing the cows of king Virata by force.

In this context Visnuserman observes the world and its daily happenings: the snake on the body of Siva, oppressed with hunger, wishes to eat Ganapati's mouse; him (snake) Kartikeya's peacock wishes to devour, while Parvati's lion (her vehicle) desires to make a meal of the elephant (mouthed to Ganapati-mistaken for an elephant). Visnuserman expressed that when such is the constitution of Siva's household even, how can such a State of things be not found in the rest of the world. So it is concluded that strife and self interest characterizes the whole world. The person who is empowered to manage and take care of the servants should make himself acquainted with the go of the world. If otherwise, being poisoned



by bad company the king discards his own well wishers and admits the strangers the fatal consequences of which he meets at the end like Kakudruma. Affected by the poison of the ear what will a foolish man not do ? He may even be a Buddhist mendicant or be a Kapalika and drink wine in a human skull. Generally we observe when a snake bites a person the person dies. But contrary to that of the world is the way of killing of snake in the shape of a wicked person. He comes in close contact with the year of the king but the life of some other person is taken away.

In course of time the sycophants and the 'yes men' surrounding the king begin to overwhelm and overpower him. The master loses his originality and his intelligence and conscience are perturbed. In the Panchatantra it is observed : kings are served with difficulty like a mountain because they are surrounded by rogues, hard to penetrate, hard-hearted and served with difficulty. The words used here are selected with much consideration. Each word has double connotation. So far the mountain is concerned means haunted by wild animals, means having rough uneven surface, means hard to touch and means resorted to with pain. In a like manner kings are described as serpents. They are, given to enjoyments like snakes possessing of hoods; they are clad in armor like snakes covered with sloughs; they are of crooked policy like snakes going in a zigzag way; they are of cruel deeds like snakes acting ferociously; they are easily prejudiced like snakes extremely wicked; they are won over by counsel like snakes tamed down by spells.

In different recension some more examples are given. The kings are changing their words like snakes having double-tongues and they are apt to take advantage of one's weak points like snakes moving towards holes. One is astonished to observe the coincidence in nature

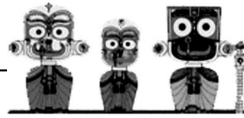
of modern managers and that of mountains and serpents.

Visnuserman observes that wicked persons only know to spoil and ruin another's business but not to accomplish it or lead it to success. A mouse is able to throw down a rice-plate but unable to lift it up. Being under full control of the shrewd and biased by him his insight becomes illusioned. He starts considering the fit as unfit and vice versa. Jem is fit to be set in gold ornament. But if it is set with tin, the jem does not jingle or look beautiful. Here the jem has no fault but the man who sets it there is found fault with.

After the destruction of an innocent worker the king incurs infamy and he himself is also destroyed by a bad counsel. Here it may be mentioned that talent is not available everywhere. It is a rare and unique human resource and gift to the community which has no substitute. Hence it is the prime duty of the managers to explore the hidden talents and harness it suitably. Visnuserman observes : a king is sure to be ruined on the loss of his territory and his talented servant but this equality between the two is not properly expressed; a lost land one may get back but one can not get back the lost servant. Thus an able servant is of greater importance than land.

A cow is reared up and milked in time similarly when the servants are taken care of are made to give to the king their due. Thus Visnuserman visualized that a king wishing to have large revenue or service in return must attend to the general prosperity and well being of his subjects.

A king or executive is greatly benefited by the awareness of human nature. Visnuserman is of the opinion that co-wives being exasperated do not bear the favours shown by their husbands



to their fellow wife although of charming form. The same thing happens in case of co-workers. In most of the organizations it is observed with shock that some employees do something beneficial that catches the eye of the executive but in his absence do nothing genuine. The managers should not mistake them as really devoted and unselfish. In the word of Visnuserman : noone acts agreeably to the wishes of another merely through devotion except through fear or avarice or some ulterior motive for it. He must be able to distinguish between a well-wisher and a sweet-speaker. When an excessive regard is shown, without there being a cause for it, there a suspicion should be entertained. These wretched fellows are hypocrites who show themselves to be considerate are the cunning men turn sweet speaker. It is experienced that righteous persons do not tolerate injustice and hypocrisy. They are outspoken and expose what is reality. The king should not misunderstand him but repose faith in those persons for common welfare.

When a master treats equally without distinction between good and bad servants, the energy of those capable of doing good work is damped. When an employee is placed on level with his unequal, when respect is not shown to him along with his equals, and when he is not appointed to a high or responsible post owing to these three causes does a servant leave a king. In the words of Visnuserman an administrator who does not recognize or appreciate the genuine qualities of others, is not served by a wise man. A barren ground does not yield to though well ploughed.

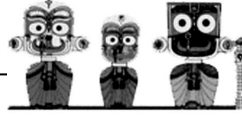
The dignity of a king is like Brahmanship. It is difficult to attain and people pay homage to it. But it is defiled even by a small misdeed committed by the king or by a wrong done by a

servant. An assistant of wicked intelligence, a servant who is disobedient and goes against the interest of the institution, and irresponsible officer who does not know or remember what is done for one's self by other i.e. who is ungrateful—all these are to be abandoned.

When we closely observe the royal surrounding we find that some evil-designed persons conspire to put innocent persons into troubles with the support but without the knowledge of the kings. As a result subjects or employees are molested by rogues, robbers and persons of wicked conduct and suffer from the machinations and frauds.

Everybody in this world desires royal favour. Though not born in high family, though not wise, although not holding a responsible post, a person who serves the king is respected every where. Everybody loves his body though broken down by many ailments. Although doing wrong or acting disagreeably, a beloved person is ever a beloved person of a king. It is evident in the Mahabharata in case of Dhritarastra and Duryodhana. But Visnuserman has elsewhere observed just the opposite situation. He maintains that who remains as a loveable friend of administrators and nobody has ever heard anybody as royal favourite.

Due to the unsteady character of human beings most of the times the king is confused and becomes unable to act righteously. Even a service or favour conferred by some through real affection is looked upon with displeasure. But direct injury done by others serves to give pleasure. So on account of the difficulty of properly understanding the nature of minds of the kings which are receptacle of a variety of feelings, the duties of servitude prove to the extremely intricate being beyond the grasp of even Yogins.



Visnuserman studies the unstable and unnatural character of administrative minds : now full of truth, now falsehoods, and now harsh now of agreeable address, sometimes cruel, at others merciful, now given to hoarding money, now liberal, at one time incurring a heavy expenditure, at another having a good treasure ate command- does the policy of a king, like a harlot, appear in a variety of forms.

But however the modern concept of managerial policy and that of Visnuserman agrees to the fact that administration and management are always to be based on ethical behaviour. One cannot be a king without servants nor can the servants exist without a king. The nave is supported by the spokes and the spokes are

planted into the nave. Thus proceeds the wheel of relation of the king and the servants.

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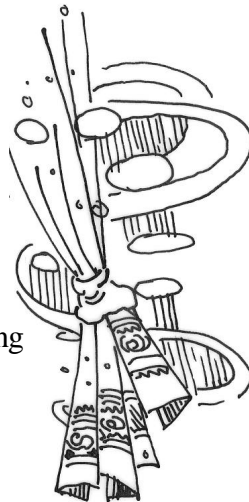


The Lonely Boatman

Dr. Balaram Das

Who knows when
The striking sound of chisel and mallet
Shall come to a halting point
From behind the closed door
And with the opening of eyes
Shall be visible the smiling face
Of the last hour of the night
Scattering the petals of flowers
All around !

Who knows when
The shadow of the sky scrapping
Compound wall of the temple
Shall be extinguished
By the gush of marine storm
And like the music of flute
Echoed through the sprouting
Of Kadamba flower,



The upsurging river of July
Shall be lulled to sleep.

Who knows when
Throughout the fourteen universes
There won't be any scope
For differentiating between
The day and night
And You would be seating
On the prow of the boat alone-
You, the lonely boatman,
Lonely eternally !!

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