

## The Royal Diary in Ancient India and its Criticism

Royal institutions took a firm root in northern India in the 9th–8th centuries A.D. Sanskrit literature from that period onwards never ceased to pay deep interest in subjects connected with the political and sacral aspects of kingdom and the person of the king such as education, the necessary knowledge in carrying out royal duties etc. This vast source material has been properly dealt with the specialists of different branches of the indological studies, and practically only few details remained unanswered.<sup>1</sup> Here I going to draw attention to a very important minor question namely the royal diary as it is shown in various Sanskrit and non-Indian texts and to give a short answer to contradictions if any as well as mutual criticism.

There are only two references to the problem in the secondary literature. Vincent Smith in his *The Early History of India* based his statements almost exclusively on a passage in Strabo.<sup>2</sup> Jeannine Auboyer in her *La vie quotidienne dans l'Inde* gives a list of primary sources without a detailed study in any of them.<sup>3</sup>

The first Sanskrit text that provides an exhaustive diary is the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya, a work traditionally dated in the 4th century B.C., however it is not free from interpolations from the subsequent centuries.<sup>4</sup> Kauṭilya' was a brāhmana theoretician practising politician and last but not least a man who did not subscribe the traditional religious ideas and preferred politics to religion. Otherwise his book is strongly normative as to its requirements hard to be fulfilled. It is noteworthy that in this passage Kauṭilya does not quote any former authorities of political science and his commentators also keep silent. These circumstances advocate for Kauṭilya's genuinnes and high authency in ancient and medieval India.

In order to get a true picture of royal diary a comparison of the Arthaśāstra with other texts must be made. Doing so we have to underline the coincidences and also the differences and to detect the reason of them. For this purpose we use the relevant passages

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<sup>1</sup> A. HILLEBRANDT: *Altindische Politik. Eine Übersicht auf Grund der Quellen.* (Jena 1923); H. LOSCH: *Rājadharma. Einsetzung und Aufgabenkreis des Königs im Lichte der Purānas.* (Bonn 1959 with a detailed list of special literature, J. W. SPELLMAN: *Political Theory of Ancient India. A Study of Kingship from the Earliest Times to circa A. D. 300* (Oxford 1964); J. GONDA: *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View* (Leiden 1966); J. C. HEESTERMAN: *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration.* (Den Haag 1957); as to the legal sources P. V. KANE: *History of Dharmasāstra* vol. III. (Poona 1946), 1–241.

<sup>2</sup> V. SMITHS: *The Early History of India* (Oxford 1925) 130.

<sup>3</sup> J. AUBOYER: *La vie quotidienne dans l'Inde ancienne.* (Paris 1961), 348–352.

<sup>4</sup> *Einführung in die Indologie.* Herausgegeben von H. BECHERT u. G. von SIMSON (Darmstadt 1979), 179–180; Th. K. TRAUTMANN: *Kauṭilya and the Arthaśāstra* (Leiden 1971), 174–183.

of the Manusmṛti (2nd c. A.D.)<sup>5</sup>, Yājñavalkyasmṛti (3rd c. A.D.)<sup>6</sup>, Mahābhārata (not after the 4th c. A. D.)<sup>7</sup> and the Daśakumāracita of Daṇḍin. (7th c. A. D.)<sup>8</sup> After that the picture emerged will be collated with the account of Megasthenes (4th c. B. C.) and of Yuang Chwang (7th c. A. D.).

The diary depicted by the Arthaśāstra with additional data from the above mentioned sources looks like that: „He should divide the day into eight parts and also the night... During the first eight part of the day, he should listen to measures taken for defence and (accounts of) income and expenditure.” (K) YājñSm: „Having risen the guarded king himself should supervise the incomes and expenditures.” (W) MahāBhā: „He should supervise those in early mornig who dela with the work concerning incomes.” (W) DaśKuCa: „A king must devote the first watch of the day to the examination of the day’s receipts and expenditure, admitting a handful or half a handful (of anything) and yet even while he hears, the clever superintendents will defraud him of twice as much. By the force of their own ingenuity they multiply a thousandfold the forty modes of defrauding set forth by Cānakyā.” (Kale)

„During the second he should look into the affairs of the citizens and the country people.” (K) DaśKuCa: „In the second watch, the prince, with his ears painfully assailed by the squabbles of contending subjects, lives a most wretched life. Even therein, the judges and others disposing of the suits favourably or unfavourably to the litigants as they please, join their sovereign with sind and infamy, and, indeed themselves with money.” (Kale)

„During the third, he should take his bath and meals and devote himself to study.” (K) According to ManuSm the bath follows the consultations with the ministers and the physical exercises. YājñSm repeats Kautilya, however, omits the studies. DaśKuCa: „In the third watch, he finds leisure to bathe and eat, but, untill his food is digested, he lives in dread of poison.” (Kale)

„During the fourth he should receive revenue in cash (lit. in gold) and assign tasks to heads of departments.” (K) DaśKuCa: „In the fourth he rises to stretch forth his hands to receive gold.” (Kale)

„During the fifth, he should consult the council of ministers by sending letters, and acquaint himself with secret information brought in by spies.” ManuSm puts the council with ministers after public audience and gives special instruction for the council saying: „Ascending the back of a hill or a terrace, (and) retiring (there) in a lonely place, or in a solitary forest, let him consult with them unobserved.” (B) YājñSm places the council after

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<sup>5</sup> ManuSm VII 145 and seq 216 and seq. Edition: Mānava Dharma-śāstra. Crit. ed. by J. JOLLY (London 1887); as to date: L. STERNBACH: Rural Communities in Ancient India, in: Communautés rurales. Rural communities. (Paris 1982), 82.

<sup>6</sup> YājñSm I, 327-33. Edition: Yājñavalkyasmṛti with the Commentary Mitākṣarā of Vijñāneśvara. Ed. by NARAYAN RĀM ACHARYA. (Bombay 1949<sup>o</sup>) as to date: L. STERNBACH, op. cit., 84.

<sup>7</sup> MahāBhā XV. 10. 5 and seq. Edition: The Mahābhārata. Text as Constituted in the Critical Edition vols. I-V. (Poona 1971-1976).

<sup>8</sup> The Daśakumāracita of Daṇḍin with a Commentary. Ed. by M. R. KALE. (Delhi-Varanasi-Patna 1966<sup>o</sup>), 191-192. As to date: L. STERNBACH: A Descriptive Catalogue of Poets Quoted in Sanskrit Anthologies and Inscriptions. vol. I. (Wiesbaden 1978), 395.

the financial duties similarly the dispatching of ambassadors and the supervision of spies. DaśKuCa: „In the fifth, he has to suffer great mental strain on account of the consideration of political schemes. In presenting these, too, the counsellors, appearing to be neutral enter into mutual agreement, and pervert at will merits and defects, misstate the reports of the ambassadors and spies, misrepresent possibilities and impossibilities, confound all distinctions of place and time, and live upon the friends of their own partisans or enemies; and secretly stirring up internal and external factions, and then appearing to allay these openly, they bring their helpless master into their power.” (Kale)

„During the sixth, he should engage in recreation at his pleasure or hold consultations.” (K) YājñSm: „Then he may spend his time according to wish or together with the ministers.” (W) DaśKuCa: „In the sixth, the king is to divert himself as he likes or to consult his ministers; and the time thus allotted for selfamusement is an hour and a half!” (Kale)

„During the seventh, he should review elephants, horses, chariots and troops.” ManuSm: „Adorned (with his robes of state), let him again inspect his fighting men, all his chariots and beasts of burden, the weapons and accoutrements.” (B) YājñSm MahāBhā and basically agree on Kautilya.

DaśKuCa: „In the seventh watch, he has the troublesome task of reviewing his troops.” (Kale)

„During the eighth, he should deliberate on military plans with the commander-in-chief. When the day is ended, he should worship the evening twilight.” (K) ManuSm speaks only of the ritual duty, YājñSm and DaśKuCa do not differ from the Arthaśāstra.

„During the first (eighth) part of the night, he should interview secret agents.” (K) YājñSm has a similar idea. DaśKuCa: „In the evening in the first watch of the night, after the performance of the evening twilight-duties, he must receive his secret emissaries, and through their medium instruct the extremely cruel-hearted agents entrusted with the work of using the sword or fire or administering poison (where necessary).” (Kale)

„During the second, he should take a bath and meals and engage in study.” (K) ManuSm mentions only the dinner. DaśKuCa fully subscribes to Kautilya’s prescript.

„During the third, he should go to bed to the strains of musical instruments and sleep during the fourth and the fifth (parts).” (K) ManuSm also recommends to go to bed with the sounds of music, however, does not determine the length of sleeping. YājñSm: „He may go (to bed) with the sounds of the trumpet and awake again just like that.” (W) DaśKuCa: In the third, with the sounds of trumpets he is sent to sleep, which he may enjoy in the fourth and fifth; but how possibly can the poor man get any repose, his mind being distracted by constant, anxious thought?,” (Kale)

”During the sixth, he should awaken to the sound of musical instruments and ponder over the teaching of the science (of politics) as well as over the work to be done.” (K) According to ManuSm the ruler i awakens with the sounds of the tūrya, special duties are not mentioned. YājñSm almost repeats Kautilya. DaśKuCa: „In the sixth, he must begin to prepare for the duties prescribed by the Śāstras and the business to be attended to.” (Kale)

„During the seventh, he should sit in consultation (with councillors) and despatch secret agents.” (K) ManuSm puts it after the sandhaā saying: „Having performed his twil-

light-devotions, let him, well armed, hear in an inner apartment the doings of those who make secret reports and of his spies." (B) YajnaSm also mentions the consultations with secret agents after sandhya, however, after awakening „He should ponder upon the textbooks and all his duties." (W) Despatching spies to his allies and others follows the blessings by his sacrificer, family-priest and preceptor. DaśKuCa: „In the seventh, he must consult with the ministers regarding the dispatch of agents and emissaries; and these fellows, as is well-known, increase the money obtained from both sides by saying sweet things, by trading on the road, being free from the fear of having to pay taxes and making work even in a slight degree where there in none, they wander about at all times." (Kale) „During the eight, he should receive blessings from priests, preceptors and chaplain, and see his physician, chief cook and astrologer. And after going round a cow with her calf and a bull, he should proceed to the assembly hall. Or, he should divide the day and night into (different) parts in conformity with his capacity and carry out his task." (K) YājñasM emphasises the blessings by his sacrificer etc as it is above mentioned. DaśKuCa: „In the eight, the Purohita, and the others, assembling, relate to the king -" Last night we saw a bad dream, the omens are evil; so (to avert the threatened misfortune) let propitiatory rites be performed. Let all the sacrificial implements be made of gold? when this is done, the rites are prolific in their effect, Here are these Brāhmanas, each like Brahmā himself; the benedictory rites performed by these lead to a blissful result; they are in distressful poverty, have large families, are constantly engaged in devotional rites, are endowed with Brahmanical lustre, and yet have not received any donations (from you); whatever is given to them will be rewarded by long life accompanied by heavenly happiness and good fortune,. And thus having persuaded the king to confer rich donations upon them, they secretly enrich themselves through these. Thus, leading the day and night in which not the least happiness is to be obtained, which abounds in troubles and is full of constant worry, -let alone the lack of supreme sovereignty on the part of a political prince, his own principality he will find it difficult to preserve."( Kale)<sup>9</sup>

The comparison of the single sources with the statements of the Arthaśāstra reveals a closer relation between the Arthaśāstra and the Yājñavalkyasmṛti. The later stands in intimate relation to the White Yajurveda and, with Sternbach's words, represent,, the most legal of all Indian dharmaśāstras.<sup>10</sup> Kauṭilya also could draw upon the heritage preserved in it. For the fewer number of identical thoughts in Manusmṛti the special character of the Manusmṛti is responsible. This is first of all to be noticed in the judgement of the importance of sacrifices in the diary. Manusmṛti allows the king to entrust his tasks to his servants while Kauṭilya emphasizes the personal example of the king in carrying out his duties. The position of women in royal court as Manu puts it fairly fits into the picture depicted in Sanskrit dramas. Kauṭilya in his diary does not specify the period the king may spend according to wish and does not mention a common meal with the women in the

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<sup>9</sup> The Kauṭīlyia Arthaśāstra. A Critical Edition with a Glossary by R. P. KANGLE. (Bombay 1969), I, 16, 9-25 (= Prakarana 19.)

<sup>10</sup> cf. Note 6. Among others such as important texts belong to this school as the Śatapathabrāhmana and the Taittirīyabrāhmana.

harem. It is not surprising that the passages of the Mahābhārata seem to be conventional. Being recited in royal courts they necessarily propagated conventional ideas.

The foreign accounts are not without interest. Megasthenes quoted in Strabo says: „...the king does not sleep in daytime; and even at night he is forced to change his bed from time to time because of the plots against him. Among the non-military departures he makes from his palace, one is that to the courts where he spends the whole day hearing cases to the end... A second departure is that to the sacrifices. A third is that to a kind of Bacchic chase wherein he is surrounded by women and, outside them by spear-bearers...”<sup>11</sup>

Some of his statements prove to be realistic: hunting is indeed regarded as the sport of kings,<sup>12</sup> the presence of women in such and other occasions. As to his compulsory change of bed at night there is no any evidence in Sanskrit texts. On the contrary there are instances of servants who can enter the bedroom even when the king was sleeping.<sup>13</sup> As a general rule jurisdiction was held at the royal precincts. These and other irrelevant notes of Megasthenes are due to his Hellenistic bias; he in many aspects transferred the image of the Hellenistic Egypt to India.<sup>14</sup>

Yuan Chwang the Chinese pilgrim has had a first hand knowledge of India and the outstanding contemporary ruler Harsavardhana of Kanauj. He says: „The king's day was divided into three periods, of which one was given up to affairs of government, and two were devoted to religious works. He (harsavardhana) was indefatigable, and the day was too short for him.”<sup>15</sup> Apart from the exaggerated position attributed to religious affairs which can be ascribed to the Chinese ideal of emperors it helps to again a realistic approach to a possible diary. Together with the Manuśmṛti, Yājñavalkyaśmṛti, Mahābhārata, some justified observations by Megasthenes it contains complementary elements to the description of the Arthasāstra.

But the question arises whence is the attitude of Dandin to the Arthasāstra from? Why did he transform his quasi-comments on Kauṭilya's each statement into caricature?

Dandin who was born in Kāñci the capital of the Pallava kingdom witnessed as a child the siege of his home town. He had to flee and seek shelter in various places far from his land. He experienced the political disintegration as well as the changed social situation when he returned to Kāñci. There were clear signs that the inhabitants of the cities were no longer the same what they had been. Materialized vulgarized life left deep impression on their world-view. They became highly sceptical towards spiritual and religious values of the past. All this echoed in the monologue of the courtier who is supposed to present the criticism of the Arthasāstra. But this is not the last word. The young prince who blindly

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<sup>11</sup> The Geography of Strabo. Ed. and transl. by H. L. JONES (Cambr. Mss. 1917-33) XV, 55.

<sup>12</sup> Daśakumāracarita, 196-197; Kuttanīmatam Kāvyaṃ by Dāmodara Gupta. Ed. by MADHUSUDAN KAUL. (Calcutta 1944) vv. 948-956.

<sup>13</sup> Pañcatantra. Ed. by F. KIELHORN and G. BÜHLER. (Textus simplicior.) (Bombay 1891-1896). I. 3. tale

<sup>14</sup> R. THAPAR: The Mauryas Revisited. (Calcutta-New Delhi 1986), 46; K. KARTTUNEN: India in Early Greek Literature. (Helsinki 1989), 97.

<sup>15</sup> On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India. (A. D. 629-645) by Th. WATTERS. (London 1904-05), I, 344.

follows the courtier's advices cannot escape its pitfalls. He loses his kingdom. In short Arthaśāstra remains a standard authority on politics for Dandin too and for others in the subsequent centuries. Curiously enough the nineteenth century Śukranīti strictly follows the principles of the diary laid down by Kauṭilya.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Śukranīti. Ed. by BRAHMAŚANKARA MIŚRA. (Varanasi 1968), I, 272-288. cf. K. A. NILAKANTA SASTRI: Age of the Nanda and Mauryas. (Delhi-Varanasi-Patna 1967), 189.  
Abbreviations: K-Kangle's translation;  
Kale - Kale's translation;  
W - Translated by G. WOJTILLA.