प्राचीन भारतीय राजनय में गुप्तचरों का महत्व **[The Importance of the Spies in Ancient Indian Diplomacy]** by Amlesh Kumar Mishra, New Delhi: Sanjeev Prakashan, 2015, pp. 213, INR 130

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Intelligence studies is a sub-discipline of international relations though in India, the subject is yet to become part of the academic curriculum. The topic has been covered in detail in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. In ancient Indian traditions, intelligence has always been an important part of statecraft. The book under review is written in Hindi, aided with Sanskrit sutras as notes. The book has attempted to consolidate intelligence studies as it is in a variety of ancient Indian traditions as given in the following: *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Samaveda*, *Atharaveda*, *Arthashastra*, *Shukaraniti*, Kamndaka-*Nitisara* and *Mudrarakshasa* by Vishakhadatta.

The author[1] has tried to consolidate and compile almost all the information through various ancient texts. The book provides information about ancient and historical presence of intelligence agencies and their importance in diplomacy and statecraft. The author focuses on the importance of spies called *chara* and the spy organisation, *Chara Sanghtan*. In Indian treatises, the texts and plays of classical period of South Asian history explain in detail the code of conduct or guidelines for effective diplomacy and the importance of intelligence organisation in their use in statecarft. The author tries to present the relative summary of intelligence in an effective manner and has done it successfully.

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In chapter one, the author describes the origin of the intelligence agencies and their structure. Examples are given from the Vedas and *Mahakavya*s (epics) to describe the importance of *chara*s in ancient context. In ancient Indian mythological or epic stories, whenever any threat accrues on *Swargalok* (territory of Lord Indra), Indra (the leader of *devta*s) is informed of it by his intelligence network. Spies have a wide array of operational methods for gathering external and internal intelligence. Along with that, the author also describes the importance and use of intelligence organisations in foreign policy and international relations as given in the ancient texts. Statecraft written in ancient texts mainly focuses on four types of strategies (called *niti* or *upaya*s) and operations in the internal or external dimensions. They are: *sama* (conciliation); *dama* (procuring loyalty by money, gift, bribe or other means); *danda* (by force, punishment or armaments); and *bheda* (divide and rule). The author explains the use of *sama*, *dama*, *danda* and *bheda* by the *vijigishu-raja* (king who wants to win in all situation) in statecraft.

Chapter two is about the selection of spies. According to ancient statecraft, selection of spies is an elaborated process. The author's assessment on selection of spies mainly focuses on some essential parameters like physical and mental fitness, along with loyalty and patriotism. In addition, the author gives the selection process for special category of spies for assassination and long-term conspiracy. He has summarised the assessment as given in *Shukaraniti*, *Arthashastra* and Kamndaka *Nitisara* on the selection of spies (p. 33). Author has also given similar importance to the testing of spies. The author's information on the selection and testing of spies is mostly based on *Arthashastra*. It is because Kautilya's work on intelligence studies, along with the practical use of it, is a foundational and comprehensive work on the art of intelligence.

In chapter three, the author explains hierarchy and role of *chara*s. They are divided into many types, according to their duties, undercover role, period, nature, etc. Acharya Somdeva, Kautilya and some other scholars have given importance to the *ubhayachar* (dual agents), but it is very difficult to control them and expect their loyalty. The author brings out some interesting strategies on their control, loyalty and functioning (p. 55). Beside this, the book also explains about the get-up (clothing) and deportment of spies because it always provides a first line of defence to the spies. Along with that, the author mentions the details of payment, as also additional allowance according to work and position.

The author has tried to explain the difference between a *rajaduta* (ambassador) and *chara* (spy). One who works and gathers information openly is called a *rajaduta* or *duta* and if done secretly, then he/she is called *chara* or *gupta-chara* (spy) (p. 67). The *chara*s' role in statecraft is not only limited to information gathering, assassination or subversion in enemy territories. Above all, the primary responsibility of the *chara*s is to eliminate the threat or conspiracy that could arise in the future. It could be internal, external, inter-state or intra-state (p. 102). To make sure that all conditions are in the favour of the king and the state, for internal security, the king or *mahaamadya* (prime minister) should put all the ministers and important officers under surveillance. The same intelligence on the loyalty of the enemy's officials is also to be obtained.

In chapters four and five, the author discusses the strategies to defend a king being checkmated by the enemies, which includes assassination and war strategies. The author has presented a summarised view on assassination methods used in ancient times, like hiring assassin, poisoning conspiracy, use of *visha kanya* (poison girl)[2] and *stri chara* (female spy) (p. 118), and by other methods like spreading some fake stories and rumours to break the enemy's morale. The author also mentions use of *tantra-mantra* (occult), *sadhu chara* (sage spies) and *bhikshu chara* (monk spies) to spread the glory of the *vijigishu-raja* like fire and to spread epidemic in enemy camp through rats and infected food. In epics such as the Mahabharata, we know that these strategies were employed; for example, killing of Dronacharya (*Dronacharya-Vadh*) through spreading rumour of death of his son by Drshtdumna (Commander-in-Chief of Pandvas' army) in Mahabharata, whereas the actual fact was that an elephant of same name had been killed.

In chapter six, author also mentions the famous *Saptanga* theory (p. 148), according to which the king is the centre of seven components of state (*prakrat*s). That is why king's security is a high priority and is a moral responsibility of *chara*s. The author mentions some important texts on security protocol, which are also true in the modern context, like the provision of high security to political leaders.

Tax is a primary way of revenue collection, and according to Kautilya, the tax should be just adequate so that the people can easily afford it. Therefore, a question arises as to how to increase the treasury without hiking tax. The author mentions some strategies for use of intelligence structure in revenue collection. He has highlighted various methods—overt and covert—of using spies to gather intelligence for taxation and

extraction. The king also puts the corrupt people under surveillance to get intelligence on their properties and then seizes their property for the treasury. The author also mentions use of fake monks and sages in revenue collection, who collect offerings from the people and then pass them on to the state.

The author has presented a summarised view on spies organisation and their importance in diplomacy, statecraft and foreign policy with appropriate examples. The book is heavily footnoted with references. It is meant to be a compendium and compilation of all ancient traditions on intelligence. The book is based on core Sanskrit and Hindi scripts, the analysis of which is a formidable and admirable task. Sometimes, it is difficult to understand the meaning of the words. However, the author could have given a glossary in the to aid readers' comprehension. The readers who want to know about the origin, importance and basic structure of intelligence organisations in ancient India will find this book very useful. However, analysis is not sufficient to create a link between ancient and modern statecraft strategies, which would be useful to understand the book in modern context of intelligence studies, as done by Sherman Kent,[3] Adda B. Bozeman[4] and Michael Liebig.[5]

Notes

1. The author's presentation on YouTube titled, 'Intelligence System as Described in Arthasastra of Kautilya', at a national Seminar on Kautilya held at Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) in October 2012 is available on IDSA website. See http://www.idsa.in/video/akmishra_IntelligenceSystemasDescribedinArthasastraofKautilya, accessed on 19 February 2016.

2. According to the legends, *visha kanya*s were young women reportedly used as assassins, often against powerful enemies, during the Mauryan Empire (321–185 BC). Their blood was purportedly poisonous to other humans. This strand is given in Vishakhdattas play, *Mudrarakshasa* (6–7 CE).

3. Sherman Kent, *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951.

4. Adda B. Bozeman, *Strategic Intelligence and Statecraft*, Washington, DC: Brassies, 1992, pp. vii, 2.

5. Michael Liebig, 'Statecraft and Intelligence Analysis in the Kautilya-Arthashastra', *Journal of Defence Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4, October–December 2014, pp. 27–54, available at http://www.idsa.in/jds/8_4_2014_StatecraftandIntelligenceAnalysis, accessed on 14 February 2016.