

ETHICAL CODES IN ADMINISTRATION IN ANCIENT INDIA

JOLY ROY

Though the science of politics or statecraft began with a pragmatic vision with the passage of time it was replaced by moral vision. It further evolved into other visions at modern period such as the integral vision of Sri Aurobindo, humanistic vision of M. N. Roy and so on. It is not certain when the notion of state was articulated and segregated from the ruler and its subject. Though the origin of this notion was not traceable but we can say that in *Dharmaśāstras* and *Arthśāstras* the reference of this separation was clear. In the above *śāstras* we get ample evidence that the state is an articulated notion and it had started shouldering various responsibilities with its complex structure. The thinking that we find in writings of Kautilya and other writers subsequent to him had a striking similarity with their contemporary Greek counterparts (e. g. in the writings of Pythagoras, Plato and so on). V. R. Mehata holds that Kautilya “was the first to make Political Economy an independent discipline; while paying lip service to the ideal of right, he propounded a theory of politics which dealt with the immediate practical concerns of polity.”¹ In his treatise he clearly states the organic theory of state and holds that it comprises of seven organs. Most of the writers of his time agreed with his seven organs view except the *Mahābhārata* where we find reference of eight organs though what is that additional one organ has no mention there.

A reading of Kautilya makes us think that state was a necessity in order to overcome the anarchical situation prevalent in a stateless society. He was under the impression that only a powerful ruler can bring about order in a society. It is this feeling that caused him to espouse a strong ruler and putting him on the top of the system and vesting in him maximum power. Though the king had been vested with much power, he was put under strong regimentation. He had been entrusted with the task of protecting the righteous and checking the unrighteous.

Though *Arthśāstra* mainly espoused rationalism however the *Arthśāstrakāra* indulged in what German politician Ludwig Von Rochau called Realpolitik. Still, it contains ideas which gave rise to ethical codes for all political functionaries - right from king to the lowest level's public servants. The threads of

¹ Mehata, V. R.: 2019, *Foundations of Indian Political Thought*, Manohar, p. 90.

these ethical codes were later brought about and explained in their own ways by Kāmandaka, Somadeo Suri, Sukrāchārya, Tiruvalluvar and by some other writers. In these *nītiśāstras* these thinkers clearly came out of Vedic dogmas and advocated *trivarga*, i. e. *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*. The notion of *dharma* and its injunctions were given in *Dharmaśāstras*. Kautilya and other *Arthaśāstrakāras* were exponent of *artha*, i. e., the second goal of life. Vatsayana was the spokesman and defender of *kāma*. These thinkers urged for pursuing all these three *Purushārthas*. However, while pursuing this, “the *trivarga* ideal should be pursued keeping in view the importance of *artha*.”² The *trivarga* ideal takes care of philosophy, theology, politics as well as morality. Chousalkar tries to establish that the views delineated in the *Arthaśāstra* had a close affinity with the *Lokāyata* philosophy. Hence, they broke *Dharmaśāstra* tradition and pinned their hopes on *artha* and *kāma* ideal. Thus they adopted a positivistic outlook and were confident that it will secure *Yoga-kshema* for ordinary people.

Some later treatises written under the influence of *Arthśāstra* envisaged the state as an organization meant for delivering the goods in the form of *dharma* and *artha*. Somadeo Suri’s *Nītivākyamitra*, Kāmandaka’s *Nītisāra* etc. amply exemplify our claim. All these are treatises on polity, but loaded with moral code of conduct for the rulers and the ruled. Both Somadeo and Śukrāchārya extol the state for providing us benefits in the form of *dharma* and *artha*.

Daṇḍanīti which is sometimes equated with the function of a state is actually a moral code that a king needs to take recourse to either to maintain order and deliver justice within the state though when applied to external affairs it is more a matter of expedience. This *nīti* usually meant, in case of a *vijīgisu* ruler, to get hold of things not yet possessed, safeguarding of those earned things, augmentation of these and finally distribution of such increased things to deserving people. *Arthaśāstrakāra* shows that *daṇḍa* when rightly used - which means neither its overuse nor its underuse - brings its subjects *dharma*, *artha* as well as *kāma*. Kautilya repeatedly tried to demonstrate that all the three ends of life can be achieved only when *dandanīti* is followed with utmost care. This application of *daṇḍanīti* in the science of

² Chousalkar, Ashok S. (2018), *Revisiting the Political Thought of Ancient India: Pre-Kautilyan Arthashastra Tradition*, Sage, Publications India Pvt Ltd., p.154.

politics, as well as in daily administration, brings security and well-being for the masses.

Though indeed, many ancient Indian treatises such as *Arthśāstras* and other treatises written following these are less concerned with discussing niceties of ethical principles, still they follow certain codes which are laden with their desire to make human life in this world and in this life as happy and contented as possible. As Chousalkar holds defending Kautilya and *daṇḍanīti*: “Peaceful enjoyment of the object was possible only in the state which was properly governed.”³ Chousalkar was keen to show that application of *daṇḍanīti* was not immoral as it does not seek a king to take recourse to an expansionist policy at the cost of the welfare of the masses. On the other hand in the absence of such a royal authority (i. e. application of *daṇḍanīti*) the strong few will gobble up the weak. Thus, this *nīti* is intended to protect the weak. In order to apply it properly, Kautilya wanted the king to bring complete control over his senses which will facilitate him to dedicate himself for the welfare of the populace instead of indulging in self-aggrandizement.

When we lament over the issue that why our ancient treatises gave precedence to expedience to moral principles, we find the answer in the distinct nature of politics. *Manusmṛiti* could understand this unique nature of politics and that is why it said that ordinary moral laws are not fit for application in royal conduct. It was expressed in a different way by Bhishma in the *Mahābhārata* invoking the concept of *anushāsana*. *Anushāsana*, in brief, stands for good governance but it is a complicated notion that has different strands. Among these, important are king's proper education, his self-discipline, bringing sense organs under control, having people's welfare as a focal point, protection of the subjects and also protection of the kingdom from internal enemies and external aggressors. All these elements taken together ensure that the king will not administer his kingdom in whatever way he likes rather he is duty-bound to rule the state in a way which will enhance his people's welfare. Why the king's morality is different from ordinary morality, for example, deontological moral principle has been aptly stated by Chousalkar. He writes: “While defending his control over the state, the incumbent king cannot be expected to use

³ Chousalkar, Ashok S. (2018), *Revisiting the Political Thought of Ancient India: Pre-Kautilyan Arthashastra Tradition*, Sage, Publications India Pvt Ltd., p.158.

only fair means when his enemies are bent upon taking recourse to foul means. Hence ... the interest of the state and its seven constituent elements are of the supreme importance and whosoever including his own close relatives work against the interest of the state, he or she should be punished.”⁴

Not only ancient Indian thinkers held such an extreme view about statecraft or politics. Even the Machiavelli, the celebrated Italian diplomat who came to the scene much later, also supported and advocate almost similar view. He also held that the state has to don the garb of an angel as well as a demon as the necessity demands. If any force inimical to its existence poses a threat to it, it has to be contained ruthlessly. Even Manu placed the interest of the state at the paramount. Hence all these thinkers find no unethicity in employing fair or foul means by a ruler to defend the state and its interest. The concept of *Āpaddharma* championed in the *Mahābhārata* can be interpreted as a means of giving the ruler *carte blanche* to act in a way whatever he thinks fit to meet the demand of an extraordinary situation. No set pattern can be a guiding principle for a king in such an exigency. Even taking recourse to foul means for own safeguard as well as protecting and safeguarding the interest of the state is a right action. Once the ruler overcomes such unusual situation he should go back to previous practice and rule the state as the *dharma* demands. From this it becomes obvious that the art of governing is an arduous task and the king sometimes needs to be merciless, as held in *Panchatantra*, to make foes knuckle under. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that these are requirements of extraordinary situations and for the rest of the time, i. e. ordinary times, and the king’s guiding principle is the welfare of his subjects.

One of the greatest contributions of the *Arthasāstra* teachers was that they broke away from prevailing tradition in pinning their hope on fate and holding belief in supernatural forces (such as spirituality, asceticism and other worldliness) rather they relegated that to the background and reposed their faith on human strivings. There is no gainsaying the fact that on account of this courage and spirit people have brought about stupendous changes in this world and worldly affairs. It is actually human action and their strivings that are rewarded and people garner fruits out of this.

⁴ Chousalkar, Ashok S. (2018), *Revisiting the Political Thought of Ancient India: Pre-Kautilyan Arthashastra Tradition*, Sage, Publications India Pvt Ltd., p.160.

This is a new trajectory of development that was espoused and followed by millions and we can say that by giving this these great teachers' of *Arthaśāstras* handed down to us a progressive message that was unheard of anterior to that time. The positive alternative that they provided in 6th century BC was antagonistic to Vedic dogma, rituals and sacrifices. They also raised voice against the philosophy of renunciation and strongly advocated the path of economic development thus giving primacy to *artha*. Thus we find a direct contravention of *Dharmaśāstra* tradition which accorded pre-eminence to *dharma* ideals at the cost of the other two ideals.

Beni Prasad holds that ancient Indian political thinkers adopted a synthetic approach to politics and hence considered it (i.e., politics) inextricably related to religion and ethics. Though by and large, it is true we also find a deviation from this. For example, in the early phase of *Arthaśāstra* thinkers did not adhere to this method. Śūkra, Brihaspati, and Bharadvaja derided *Vedas* and *Vedic* dogmas and considered them as a cover to trick people. Hence, these teachers held that politics was an autonomous discipline and not part of religion. Holding that social and political institutions had origin in human need and effort they refused to accept them as divine creation. For them, the only reason should be guiding principle and all principles and claims be tested on this yardstick. In various places we find arguments which gave precedence to the autonomy of human will instead of invoking authority. For example, in *Rāmāyaṇa* Jabala questions the existence of God, soul, heaven and so on and urges to judge everything on another basis such as consequence of an action and fulfilment of interest. Again, in the *Mahābhārata* while interpreting *Āpaddharma*, we find an effort to explain *dharma* in such a way that its metaphysical import is done away with. It is on this basis that they gave primacy to *artha* and *kāma* as it is these that facilitate securing pleasure and avoidance of pain and sufferings. Writes Chousalkar: "It was argued by teachers that the exact nature of *dharma* could only be understood with reference to time, place and the purpose for which it was performed."⁵ Thus the definition of *dharma* cannot be context-less or universal. Hence we find rationalism and relativism making serious inroads into idealism. However, from this we should not presume that *Arthaśāstra* teachers preached a type

⁵ Chousalkar, Ashok S. (2018), *Revisiting the Political Thought of Ancient India: Pre-Kautilyan Arthashastra Tradition*, Sage, Publications India Pvt Ltd., p.169.

of politics that was completely devoid of ethics. Chousalkar in backing up our claim writes: “The *Arthaśāstra* teachers were of the view that political actions of the rulers should not be judged on the universal moral considerations because for politics, the laws of morality were different.”⁶ These thinkers considered the existence of the state and sound functioning of all its organs bear a moral purpose. Without these two there will be total chaos and mighty people will exploit and oppress weaker people. Only a king’s intervention can save weaker sections and civilized society can pull through. Thus it is not to serve his self-interest rather to subserve the need of aforesaid moral purpose that king was needed. Proper performance of its (i. e. state’s) functions has a moral worth and it is at premium here.

The *Arthaśāstras* tradition freed politics from clutches of religion. By holding that politics, and particularly king's action, has a standard of its own which is distinct from common morality it ushered in a new direction. Again, on account of extrication of politics from religion, it urged the priestly class to refrain from intervening in state affairs and hence limited their activities.

Somedeva Suri was Jaina saint and author of repute. In his *Nītivākyanmitram* he mainly gives his ideas about politics and political life. Usually, it is thought that this *magnum opus* of him was a type of commentary on Kautily’s *Arthaśāstra*. But he skillfully narrated his opinion in such a way that it strikingly sounds new. He even presented his view by way of mixing *Dharmaśāstra* tradition with *Arthaśāstra* tradition. Kautilya separated politics from *dharma* and by and large even from ethical codes. *Nītiśāstra* tradition tried to bring back ethical codes in political life thus providing much-needed desideratum to *Arthaśāstra*. In order to do that Somedeva first clarified some of his fundamental views. For example, he defined knowledge by saying that it is that “with the acquisition of which man resorts to what is beneficial and discard what is harmful to him.”⁷ Again, he explains the relationship between consciousness and Supreme Reality. He also clarifies what, for him, is the right action as it is on this basis that political action of the ruler as well as his organs will be adjudged. He shows the tension between individual pleasure-seeking and

⁶ Chousalkar, Ashok S. (2018), *Revisiting the Political Thought of Ancient India: Pre-Kautilyan Arthashastra Tradition*, Sage, Publications India Pvt Ltd., p.170.

⁷ Somedeva, *Niti Vakyanmitram*, translated by S. K. Gupta, Prakriti Bharti, Jaipur, 1987. p. 48.

societal life which puts a curb on his individual seeking. He almost like Epicurus holds that happiness is the gratification of the senses and satisfaction of the mind. In defining virtue and vice he goes on to say that successful fulfilment of one's welfare is a virtue and that stands on the way of achieving this is vice. He was an ardent advocate of interweaving theory and practice as he thought that if a theory is not put to practice it is otiose and if something is practised without a theory backup it sounds ineffectual. Thus after defining the fundamentals Somedeva goes to explain what he considers as righteous and unrighteous actions in the art of state administration.

Considering political action inevitable for the happiness of the people he held that even if a learned man lacks skill in the art of politics and spiritual proficiency his enemy can trounce him easily. His effort to show the gap between the ideal political order with the prevailing one hints at advent of what is today called political philosophy. Somedeva thought that the greatest enemy of human beings is lacking knowledge of discrimination and propriety. His prescribed list of duties given for householders such as offerings to Gods, performing the filial duty to parents, treating guests with warmth and safeguarding the weak and also his definition of householder show that his view remarkably moved beyond Kautilya and he is trying to make room for basic postulates of dominant principles of Indian religious thinking. We can say that Somedeva's effort to accommodate main threads of religious thinking with Kautilyan statecraft smacks of his leaning towards the utilitarian point of view and in this sense; he can be called a forerunner of utilitarianism.

While discussing righteous and unrighteous acts we find him invoking the notion of *dharma* which is a bit unusual for a Kautilya follower. But if we recall the time of this Jaina saint his invoking this notion does not seem inconsistent as between him and Kautilya the *smṛiti* tradition flourished, it is easily understandable that Somedeva is trying to draw from both the sources and making effort to make it suitable for the people of his time. While defining *dharma* he holds that it is the basis of right conduct and helps a person in achieving worldly success as well as transcendental beatitude. The action that promotes it, is righteous and actions that go contrary to it, is unrighteous. His emphasis on worldly prosperity is not an unqualified one. A prosperous person needs to benefit it "with rightness of means and

continuity of tradition.”⁸ Thus Somedeva is trying to draw a balance between *artha* and *dharma*. In his framework there is no place who harbour intense selfish desires for enjoying wealth only on his own.

We discussed before that welfare of people is the final aim of the state. But this Jain saint held that this standard of welfare is not to be decided by the king himself but it is to be determined by the guardian ‘of the moral sense’ of the society. They also are required to do it on the basis of critical interpretation of texts and on the basis of reason and logic. Thus, it appears that though Somedeva’s king was the centre of power, he was not absolute. Some checks and balances have been placed in his exercise of power.

V. R. Mehta considers Somedeva’s recommendation of the fusion of politics and morals invaluable. He writes, it is “more realistic and reassuring in so far as he recognizes a bond between the rulers and the ruled in terms of superiority of principles of right which are created independently of the state apparatus. Some such bond is considered as basic to good government in all contemporary thinking.”⁹

The Kāmandakakiya *Nītisara*’s paramount aim was the cessation of miseries. He was a disciple of Kautily who persistently persuaded the king to resort to all sort of trickeries in order to overthrow his enemies. But Kāmandaka did not go to that extent and he blended finely a number of moral conducts in the general conduct of kings and his subordinates. He found Kautilyan technique (trickery) useful only for diplomacy. This small volume consisting of all of nineteen chapters address various facets of the science of polity.

In that book, he lays down a number of lessons that he considered significant for the ruler for acquisition, preservation and augmentation of the territory and wealth. Kāmandaka considers the king as the main ‘cause of the prosperity and progress of this world.’¹⁰ His activity brings ‘delight to the eyes of men, even as the moon affords delight unto the (mighty) ocean. The king needs to guide his subject ‘to the paths of rectitude.’ King’s foremost task is the protection of his subjects and he needs to do that by various means such as the even-handed distribution of rewards and also punishments. The subject also needs to reciprocate for the flourishing of the

⁸ Somedeva, *Niti Vakyanmitram*, translated by S. K. Gupta, Prakriti Bharti, Jaipur, 1987. p.2.2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

¹⁰ *Kāmandakiya Nītisara*, trans. Manmatha Nath Dutta, Scholar Select, p.3.

state by paying taxes and giving tributes in the form of enhancing agricultural products. Kāmandaka also recommends that maintenance of order in the kingdom is an important task of the ruler as without it prosperity is of no use in a state. He also exhorted the ruler that he should capture states that are hostile to him. Writes Kāmandaka: “A sovereign discharging his duties according to the rules of polity soon secures *Trivarga* for himself and for his subjects; acting otherwise he is sure to ruin himself and his subjects.”¹¹

For the attainment of prosperity, he gives certain stipulations. These are having courage, knowledge of political economy, and vigour. Further, he says that for acquiring knowledge of political economy requires having humility which in turn emanates from the knowledge of *śāstras*. He holds that persons who practice humility, the meaning of *śāstras* is revealed to him. By humility, he meant full control over the sense organs. Self-restraint though begins with the ruler gradually permeates to others in a fixed order. This order is his ministers, than his dependents, next his sons and thereafter his subjects. A self-controlled king who spreads the same thing to others earns prosperity. He enumerates a number of qualities which he considered as sources of prosperity such as sound knowledge of polity, wise judgement, courage, power of comprehension, firmness of purpose, purity of intentions, truthfulness, good conduct, controlling passions and so on. He laid great emphasis on controlling senses and hence he writes: “A king delighting in the perpetration of vile acts and having eyes (of knowledge and reason) blinded by the objects of (sensual) enjoyment brings terrible catastrophe upon his own head.”¹² Hence he asks for the enslavement of sense which will usher prosperity and prosperity breeds happiness. He denounces that prosperity as ‘useless’ which cannot give happiness.

He advised kings to renounce six passions and to bring them under complete control. These are: lust, anger, avarice, fiendish delight in inflicting injury, hankering for honour and arrogance. Renunciation of these passions makes a man self-controlled and a self-controlled king who organizes his life following *śāstra*, even though he is weak, never face defeat in the hands of enemies.

¹¹ *Kāmandakiya Nītisara*, trans. Manmatha Nath Dutta, Scholar Select, p.4.

¹² *Ibid*, p.10.

The *Śukra Nītisāra* is a systematic study of the moral polity. In śloka no. 3 Śukrāchārya writes: “By a process of selection, the essence of that *Nītisāstra*, which was an extensive argumentative thesis, has been compiled in an abridged form by *Vasiṣṭha* and others like myself for the increase of prosperity of rulers of the earth and of others whose life is of short span.”¹³ In this Śloka the name of the ruler is taken as it is in their hands that the destiny of his subjects depends. Hence if they master this *Nītisāra* it will ultimately pave the way for happiness of his people. Soon after that Śukrāchārya underlines the need for this system of morals. In śloka no. 4 he points out the specialty of this *śāstra* is that it says that it is different from other *śāstras*. Other *śāstras* are specialized segment of knowledge, i. e. they have their own concerned field. Hence they are divided under different heads and are specialized in their respective area. Hence the utility of these specialized branches is limited. But the nature of *Nītisāstra* varies from aforesaid specialized segments. The extent of this science is vast as it offers practical advice to all. Prof. Benoy Kumar Sarkar opines that *Nītisāstra* is a ‘synthetic, comprehensive and generalized science (or rather art) of society, equivalent to Sociology in its wide sense, and hence should be considered equivalent to neither *Ethics nor a treatise on Polity*, but to a system of morals, (social, economic and political)’¹⁴ What is meant is that *Nītisāstra* is valuable for all and for all matters and hence it is useful for men of all hues. Śukrāchārya seems to accept that the state is a multi-organic entity and king being at the helm he needs to be well aware of his dos and don’ts. This knowledge will ensure the happiness of his subjects. Hence in the very first chapter he states that these principles are especially required for a king. These *nītis* king needs to observe for his own interests also.

In spite of its universality of this science, Śukrāchārya emphasizes three uses of the *Nītisāra*. These are: First, the wisdom it contains can tell us authoritatively the approach or stratagem that we need to undertake while dealing with enemies, neutrals and friends. It also grooms a king to be always circumspect by keeping them alert about happenings about international politics. Second, it provides a king with skills to win over his people. It also teaches him how to know human interests and motives and the right way of handling them. And finally, it illuminates him about diplomacy

¹³ *The Śukranītiḥ* trans. Benoy Kumar Sarkar, edit with an Introduction by Dr. Krishna Lal, J. P. Publishing House, Delhi, 2018, p.1-2.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 2.

and other political affairs which helps him to navigate the ship, i. e. running the state, smoothly and efficiently.

Śukrācharya also warns that not following the precepts of *Nītiśāstra* can have disastrous effects on a state. It endangers problems of a state internally as well as externally and brings misery and damage for the king as well as his people. Peace and prosperity can grow in a state only if *Nītiśāstra*'s precepts are followed in maintenance of relations between the king and his subjects, between subjects themselves and also followed in handling issues relating to foreign affairs. If these precepts are followed results, i. e. good benefit, flows from its own.

If the ruler does not follow the precepts prescribed in *Nītiśāstra* the prosperity of the state takes a regressive turn, it becomes weak and inefficiency creeps into it. It is the art of politics prescribed there that keep every organ of the state well-functioning. By organs here Śukrācharya refers to seven organs of the state: *Swāmi* or sovereignty, *Amātya* or ministers and officers, *Mitra* or friends. *Koṣa* or treasure, *Durga* or fort, Army or force and *daṇḍa*. In short non-following of *Nīti* weakens the kingdom, make the civil services confused, army inefficient and other organs of the state are thrown into confusion and chaos. He reminds rulers that he gets the authority of ruling through his *tapa* or penance. Hence instead of depending on any other thing (e. g. destiny), he should be the maker of the destiny of his people. Everything centres on King's activity. Thus Śukrācharya seems to hold an important truth - man is the maker of his own fate. Śukrācharya, in order to maintain order in society, prescribes *svadharmā*. For Śukrācharya, a king's *svadharmā* is to ensure that his subjects do not deviate from *svadharmā*. He has been advised to use *daṇḍa* to ensure compliance with *svadharmā*. Performance of *svadharmā* is the most important penance. Such observations bring prosperity and order for the state. In order to secure it king himself first needs to observe his own *svadharmā*. King is considered as maker of his age.

1,330 couplets of great Tamil work by Tiruvalluvar available under the rubric *Tirukkural* is divided into three books out of which the first two books 'Being Good' and 'Being Politic' give us wonderful insights about the art of life and statecraft. The 69 short chapters of this second book address different aspects of the science of politics. He also admits seven organs of the state giving top echelon to the king. King is required to be always vigilant, informed and bold in order to have a strong hold

over his empire. He writes: Awake he must be, in eye awake, in brain informed and bold If on his kingdom the king's to have a hold.¹⁵ In order to be a god on earth the king is required to rule the kingdom 'with a sense of justice'. While defining a mighty king Tiruvalluvar states his four essential characteristics - help, grace, poise and devotion. It is to his that learning Tiruvalluvar gives utmost importance. Contrasting it with the material wealth he says that even a wise man has no wealth, his poverty goes away whereas a wealthy man without knowledge will ultimately become impoverished.

He alerted king to be always circumspect and to act upon after due consideration. Three things he needs to consider before action: what the enterprise will cost, 'what it'll bring' and what would be its future benefit. In order to assess these, he has been advised to examine the matter having a discussion with his counsellors and acting on their assessed counselling. Then only his actions will be cautious and calculated. Says Tiruvalluvar: To plan well is to plan a win, not to chance to amble That plan's no plan which wants with luck to gamble.¹⁶ Even a mighty king having an enormous army but with an ill plan will have to repent for their deed. The Tamil poet gave even emphasis on end and means considering both are of equal importance. Hence he reminds the king to give equal weightage to end and means and says people consider his deed's end as good 'only if the means ring a clean bell.'

In chapter-51 *Tirukkural* we find the guidelines given for the monarch to choose his executives. He tells that the person concerned should be given the option to choose virtue, wealth, pleasure and fear of life. If the person in question chooses the first one then the king may rest assured that he has hand-picked the right one. Tiruvalluvar advises the king to choose men having noble birth. Such a person will keep away from faulty deeds and will be remorseful for evil action. He also gives a clue to identify the nobility of a person. In a later chapter the poet specifies that a noble-born maintains honesty in word and deed and bears a sense of shame naturally. He does not drift away from the trail of good conduct and truthfulness. Smiling face, generosity, pleasant words and politeness are four marks of true nobility. Smile,

¹⁵ *The Tirukkural* by Tiruvalluvar (transn. of Gopalkrishna Gandhi, Aleph Book Company, New Delhi, 2015) p. 43.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

charity, pleasant words and civility - These four are marks of true nobility.¹⁷ They never sacrifice their principle even for any amount of fortune. On account of their charitable works even if their resources drops off, still they continue to do charitable works. Hailing from a noble lineage they remain circumspect and do not do ignoble activities. A person's noble birth will be a matter of doubt if in him there is want of love for others. Citing the analogy of pleasant words with fertile soil, Tiruvalluvar says that as we can understand the nature of soil seeing the sprouts of seeds sown in it, similarly one's speech tells his nature of birth. Hence in the final *kural* of chapter - 96 he says that the fountain of one's goodness is the sense of shame and desirous of 'nobility must have humility.'

Realizing that human beings are imperfect, he ordained the king to select a man of good intention, not only look for perfection as it is difficult to get. It is merit and intention that are hallmarks of a good executive. Thus, for Tiruvalluvar, the deeds of a man are the mark of his nobility or meanness. For the greatness or the meanness of men Their deeds are the touchstone.¹⁸

From the above it becomes clear that *Dhramaśāstras*, *Arthaśāstras*, *Nītiśāstras* and epics laid down moral code of conduct for the king as well as for his administrator and his people. These sages could realize that without a strict code of conduct any sort of polity will be only enjoyment of power without corresponding duty and responsibility.

¹⁷ *Tirukkural* (Trans. By M. Rajaram, Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd, 2009, p. 104)

¹⁸ *Ibid*