The expedient of policy in Panchatantra real politik: The tale of crows and owls on the cards

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The famous allegorical text “The Panchatantra” is highly influenced by the Kautiliya Arthashastra regarding the State Craft. In the preamble of the text Panchatantra, the author Vishnu Sharma pays his obescence to Manu, Brhaspati, Shukra, Parashara, Vyasa, Chanakya the composers of science of Royal Polity.

मनवे वाचस्पतये शुक्राय पराशराय ससुताय।
चाणक्याय च विवेने मनोहरु नयावास्त्रकतृभ्यः।।

The Panchatantra where in animals and birds represent the human emotional graph, is the first text on the globe that depicts the animal kingdom, clearly a transformation of the basic structure of the state craft is ArthaShashtra. Vishnu Sharma, an adept in the art of the upbringing of children has taken the task of educating the three refractory sons of the King AmaraShakti in the science of Royal Polity. SO he skilfully employs the concepts of real politik in the stories to instruct the princes who find them more palatable like sweetmeats.

We can witness how the Panchatantra deals with the classic expedients of a policy laid down in texts on StateCraft meant for princes and others concerned in government. The six fold policy or the six expedients of policy in the Kautiliya ArthaShastra is depicted in he “Tale of Crows and Owls” in Kakolukiyam - the third book of Panchatantra. The tale begins with the maxim:

“Trust not a former enemy who comes professing amity” -

न विवेनेष्विवृवववश्वसुवृववरोवितस्य शत्रूश्च वमत्रत्वमु पागतस्य।।

In their bitter enmity the cave thronged by owls was burned by deadly fire the crows kindled. Meghavarna the king of crows, nested, attended by hundreds of crow-retainers on the huge banyan tree abound with plenty of branches.

Another king of Owls by name Arimardana being served by countless numbers of OWls was obsessed by some ancient enmity with Crows and invariably killed any crow that passes his path. On account of his daily forays at night, there formed a circle of dead crows.

Any enemy or a disease disregarded due to sheer indifference and is allowed to proceed unchecked leads to devastation in no time.

Hence, the crow kin of Meghavarna summoned his ministries who sat in a council to confer in private and thought of the ways and means to area vengeance on the owls. Every minister when his turn is solicited, proposes his view. The views are in complete conformity with the six fold policy state in the text of state craft, especially the ArthaShastra of Kautilya.

Kautilya says: The circle of states is the source of the six fold policy.
Kautsilya first mentions the views of his Acharya and then Vatavyadhi before giving his view.

1. My teacher says that peace (sandhi) war(vigraha), observance of neutrality (asana), marching (yana) alliance (samshraya) and making peace with one and waging war with another double policy (dvaidhibhava) are the six forms of state policy.

Vatavyadhi holds that there are only two forms of policy, peace and war, in as much as the six forms result from these two primary forms of policy.

Kautsilya holds that, as their respective conditions differ, the forms of policy are six

The Panchatantra, the crow king Meghavarna addressing his ministers asks as to which of the six expedients of policy should be made use of to deal with the enemy whose power cannot be denied.

The first minister puts for the his view: The enemy is powerful and also knows when to strike. It is not wise to start hostilities against him. The best option is to be conciliatory. He quotes the supporting maxim: An enemy who is powerful, virtuous, rich in kin and resources, victorious is worthy for citation.

1. Sandhi (Peace) Agreement with pledge (पणबधि); सप्तिम।
2. Vigraha (War) - Offensive operations is war (अपकारो विग्रह); वतविं
3. Asanam (Neutrality) - Indifference (असधिानो भावानां); उपोक्षणमासनम्
4. Yanam (Marching) - Making preparations is marching (अरुच्छ्यो गमन); संश्रय
5. Samshrayah (Alliance) - Seeking the protection of another is policy (यस्यां प्राप्नो भव भविष्यत्); सम्पद्यत
6. Dvaidhibhava (Double Policy) - Making peace with one and waging war with another (ववग्रहस्य नास्त्येकमवप); उपेक्षणमासनम्

The purpose of war is specified here - one should not go for war when the fruits of war - land, friends, gold are not on the cards.

A firm alliance with the victor of many wars make the other enemies come to the heel awed into submission by the allies over.

Vishnu Sharma quotes Brhaspati view here- victory is never a certainty and it is better not to take risk and one has to make peace with equals in strength –

And also the other three expedients - negotiations gifts and bribery sowing dissension should be tried first before opting for hostilities -

The war when the fruits of war - land, friends, gold are not on the cards.

Wisdom lies in retreat and ripe time to act. Vishnu Sharma gives the comparison of a tortoise which wisely retreats into his shell and suffer cruel blows; and will rear up ready to strike like a deadly serpent when the time is ripe

कौमं भूमि वानस्पतिः वानस्पतिः: \[14\]

In this way, a wise man should not simply court death by direct action. He should bend like the reed by the stream, because a man gains great unremitting prosperity should not carry on at any cost.

When only the fury of fighting is foreseen without any gain, one should not start war on this own and carry it on at any cost.

It is further suggested to deal with diligence one seeking unremitting prosperity should not be对待 an angry serpent when a stronger enemy assails him. It is better for him to bend like the reed by the stream, because a man gains great prosperity in time following the low profile the reed keeps. Adopting the continued in the next page. Adopting the overbearing manners of the serpent he will simply court death –

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There is no such test that prescribed to fight a powerful enemy at any cost for a rain cloud never moves ahead if contract winds prevail. This counsel is in conformity with the view of Kautilya that whoever is inferior to another shall make peace with him

महाभारतस्य प्रवृत्तीम: सत्यिमृववहीनेन" ।

Under what circumstances, conciliation is no recommended: The second minister opines that conciliation is not recommended and the prospect of peace should not be entertained when the enemy is cruel rapacious and unscrupulous. Inborn viciousness will in not time change it spatter.

Drops of water suddenly falling on boiling butter only makes it crumble before, or else enemies are quick to fall upon a man sputtering with violent rage. Hence, offensive operations against such enemy is preferred.

The most important point is that the peace talks should not be proposed with the enemy who has humiliated once badly. Peace talks with him will amount to be becoming so weakened that he concludes suggesting that this is a time for retreat but not for peace or war.

Driven by overwhelming pride, of a weak king sets out to fight a powerful enemy will bring his own line to an end. Hence he concludes suggesting that this is a time for retreat but not for peace or war.
forming an alliance which is the most suitable for the current situation the king is in.
Kautsiya says whom the alliance be formed with: one shall make an alliance with a King who is stronger than one’s neighbouring enemy.

Following the same, the minister suggests the king to stay put right in his territory and seek a powerful ally whose strength could offset the enemy’s. He strongly advocates not to abandon his position and go else where because non will come forward to throw even a friendly word his way. He gives the example of wind and fire: The wind and the forest fire are friends indeed, but the same wind extinguishes the flame of the lamp.

He further adds that it is not the absolute rule however the only those powerful are to be sought as allies. Alliances with those warts can also provide one security just as a slender swaying bamboo that grows in a thicket, enriched by other bamboo is hard to uproot, so too a monarch however powerless he may be. So much the better to find a truly great and noble ally, because nothing but a proper alliance can possibly offset the enemy’s power.

Now the king solicits the advice of an elder statesman and an ancient counsellor who had served as a minister to his father and also who had possessed complete mastery of the texts on the political sciences. The elderly minister speaks that whatever the other ministers proposed are in complete conformity with the teaching of the texts on polity. Each is good for its own time. But in the present situation the king is facing requires the practice of last expedient Dvaitaibhaava - double dealing.
Kautsiya proposes double policy when if a king thinks:” By making peace with one, I can workout my own resources, and also wh

So too the elderly and ancient counsellor proposes to practice double dealing justifying through the proverb: towards and enemy powerful and evil always harbo

For offering tempting bait and thereby instilling confidence in him while remaining cautious oneself, the enemy can be easily extirpated. Men adept in diplomacy do encourage the enemy they wish to see destroyed to grow and prosper a while: just as phlegm increased by molasses vanishes without a trace.

Similarly an extremely heroic man if lone becomes an easy prey to the enemies

So concludes the minister suggesting the policy of indifference that is neutrality.
Next the king Meghavarna solicited the advice of another minister who gives his counsel in favour of the fifth expedient
A man who acts with candour towards an enemy, a false friend, or towards some especially of easy morals will not survive long

कृष्णद्वितीयमण्डकायमण्डात्र
यो भवेनेकभागोऽवं स सीतबति मनवः || 41 ||

Man must act with candour towards gods, brahmans, onesie and one’s’ preceptor and it is best to soft double dealing with all others.

कृष्णद्वितीयमण्डकायमण्डात्र
एकभागेन कर्तव्योऽवेष्ट्र समाभिजतम् || 42 ||

Candour is ever extolled towards ascetics prupified by prayer and meditation but never with men especially kings who lust after wordy things -

एको भावः सदा शस्त्रोऽवेष्ट्र महीभतताम्।
स्त्रीलुभयां एको बाव्येन भवेदेकभावोऽवेष्ट्र महीभत्ताम्। || 43 ||

Very confident about his advice the elderly counsellor concludes “By restoring to double dealing you will remain secure in your own realm. death will quick by extirpate the enemy obsessed with greed and hate”. After the discussion of the six classic expedients the Panchtantra speaks about another alternative that the elderly counsellor adopts to lead himself to victory. He makes himself to be noticed by the nemies. He deceives the enemy the Owl king Arimardana and his retinue puts them in a vulnerable position where they could be extirpated easily. He becomes successful in his mission just because the Owl king disregards the sae counsel of his minister who knew the twists and turns of real politic in and out. His sage counsel reflects the statement: “Trust not a former enemy who comes professing amity”

न विश्वेस्यः वृेष्ट्विवियोधितम् शवोऽवेष्ट्र महीभत्ताम्। || 44 ||

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