



Political Thought in Ancient India

G. P. Singh

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Ancient Indians were a highly organized polity, with a well-established worldview of the Rajya (the State). And also of its seven distinct organs: svamin (the king), amatyas (the ministers), janapada/rashtra (the territory and the people), durgas/pura (the forts/capital), kosha (the treasury), danda/bala (the army), and mitra tatha niti (the allies and inter-state relations). In their togetherness, these components of the state led political ideologues to advance the Theory of Saptanga : the seven limbs each of which admitted varying emphases with ancient scholars, according to the changing political situations or their own predilections. Besides traditional/semi-historical writings, the Saptanga Theory of State finds recurring allusions in Kautilya's Arthashastra which, written sometime about the fourth century BC, remains the oldest surviving treatise of its kind on statecraft. Surprisingly, the Arthashastra itself, claims its author, is a compendium of the writings of as many as eighteen ancient teachers, like Manu, Brihaspati, Ushana, Bharadvaja, Vishalaksha, Prachetas, and Pishuna. With bit-by-bit analysis of an astonishing mass of original, indigenous sources: Vedic, puranic, epical, Buddhist, Jaina, and even non-Indian, Professor G.P. Singh tries to crystallize the political thought processes accompanying the evolution of state through the bygone centuries. Bringing fresh insights into the Saptanga Theory, his study dwells, at length, on all its seven time-honoured components and their variegated roles in lending support to the state. Also underscored here is the relevance of ancient Indian view to modern theories of politics and diplomacy. A thoroughly documented work of equal utility to scholars and students, the monograph is supplemented by a comprehensive index and a glossary of non-English words/ phrases used in the text.

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